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Adult Immigrant English Learners' Perceptions of Their Multilingual and Multicultural  
Identities

by

Greta McElvain

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

December 2022

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Peer Reviewer: Shelley Hoehn

## **DEDICATION**

To my family and friends for your unending support. Thank you to my content reviewer, Professor Betsy Parrish and my peer reviewer Shelley Hoehn. A special thank you to Professor Julia Reimer for your ongoing support and expertise throughout the process of writing this thesis paper. And finally, to my husband and the love of my life, Mason: thank you for always pushing me to grow. Thank you for always believing in me and being there for me when I need you. This accomplishment would not have been possible without you.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Chapter Overview

In this introductory chapter, I will explain the purpose of this study as well as the order of events that led me to want to explore the views of the students in my class on their multilingual and multicultural identities. With nearly 10% of Minnesotan residents being immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018), it is important that this population feels respected, valued, and included in their state. Immigrants who are also English learners have more adjustments to make as they become familiar with both the differing cultural expectations and the change of language in their new country. With approximately 29,000 English learners participating in Minnesota Adult Basic Education English Learner programs each year (mnabe.org, 2018), adult educators have a unique opportunity to learn more about how their students are feeling in relation to their new culture and use of the English language in their lives. In addition, as an adult educator, I am interested in exploring how I can better understand and facilitate activities for my adult students to better understand their multicultural and multilingual identities. I also hope to remind them that their first languages and cultures are still valuable.

Over the course of the following chapters, I will seek to address the following questions:

1. *How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*



*2. Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

In the following sections, I share the background story on how I decided to pursue this topic of interest through the use of anecdotal stories and personal thoughts. It begins with how I became interested in the cultures and languages of others. Next, I explain how this fascination shaped my college experience and decisions surrounding my degree. I then share some backstory of my experiences teaching English learners followed by delving into how these individual experiences resulted in an interest in my specific research questions. After that, I share how the start of my literature exploration informed my study in the form it is today. Finally, I explain the importance and significance of this study for various stakeholders, including but not limited to educators, students, curriculum writers, and community members.

### **Beginnings**

When I was only two years old, I began to take an interest in languages. My mom had bought a Spanish children's book, and she had taught me how to say the numbers in Spanish 1-10 along with various household objects. I would enjoy sharing my newfound knowledge with any family member we happened to see. As an elementary school student, I enjoyed reading books about different cultures and languages. I loved to go to the school library and check out the "Dear America" books that shared stories about girls and boys living in different time periods, speaking different languages, and coming to the United States from foreign lands. I devoured the American Girl series books; I was

particularly drawn to the Kaya and Kirsten books because they focused on stories of girls with cultures and languages different from my own. I even chose the Kirsten doll as my American Girl one Christmas, despite the fact that she was one of the least popular American Girl dolls at the time.

In my late junior high and high school years, I became increasingly interested by the differences between people, whether it be their religious beliefs, cultures, traditions, or languages. I found enjoyment in finding commonalities between myself and others who held differing viewpoints or worldviews from my own. After visiting Tecate, Mexico on a mission trip, I was even more intrigued at how people could have so many different customs, beliefs, and languages yet also be similar in so many ways. During my sophomore and junior years of high school, I befriended a few foreign exchange students from Italy, Germany, and Brazil. I would love to ask them how to say different words in their first languages, and I loved discussing what they thought of the United States in comparison to where they were from. I tended to gravitate towards my foreign-born peers because of their openness, new perspectives, and differing backgrounds.

### **College Decisions**

When I started my first year at St. Olaf College, I was surrounded by fellow students from near and far; some were from Minnesota like I was, while a large minority of students were international or from across the United States. I again found myself befriending people who differed in their first languages and cultures from me. I noticed anecdotally that the majority of the time, students who came from other cultures or spoke another language in addition to English tended to be more open-minded, friendly, and fun to talk to. They had unique perspectives to bring to the table that were sometimes much

different than my own, and I appreciated that. I decided to pursue more Spanish classes and study abroad in Seville, Spain. While living in Seville, my worldview expanded, but I was also forced to see what it was like to somewhat adjust and conform to the culture and language around me. The identity I held of myself changed through my experiences there. I left St. Olaf with a degree in sociology/anthropology and an English as a Second Language teaching license, eager to continue supporting and interacting with people with different backgrounds than my own. Although I can relate to some of the experiences the students in my class have gone through by studying abroad, I know that most of their experiences have been much more life-changing and more complicated than my own, given that they have moved to a new country permanently. My hope was, and still is, to be a positive educator, a reliable support, and a passionate advocate for immigrants in the United States as they become multicultural and multilingual members of their new communities.

### **Teaching Experiences**

Throughout my field experiences as an undergraduate as well as my years as an EL teacher in kindergarten-to-adult education schools, I had a few “a-ha!” moments that informed my research decisions for this capstone. One unexpected experience was during my field experience in a local high school. I was working in a study hall with high school-aged English learners, and a few students started chatting with me about what classes I had taken at college. I told them that I was taking Spanish courses so I could better understand a second language. I then asked them if they realized how valuable it was that they already spoke Spanish and English. The girls looked back at me with confused stares. They responded by stating that they had never thought of their ability to

speak and understand Spanish as beneficial or interesting. I was taken aback by their responses; my students had been viewing their linguistic advantage as unimportant or even negative. I wondered if more immigrants and their families felt the same way.

As I continued my work with more elementary students and adult English learners, I noticed the inner struggle for many of them to continue to hold onto their home, or heritage, cultural and linguistic identities while simultaneously adjusting to United States culture and American English. Some of my elementary and middle school students did not find their families' traditions or languages very valuable because they were mostly interacting with English-speaking, American-born peers on a day-to-day basis. Some of the adult students in my class may not know how valuable it is for their children and families to be able to both speak and write in the families' first language. Other students may feel nervous or uncomfortable sharing their differing beliefs or admitting there are elements of the United States' culture that they do not understand or like. As an EL educator, I hope to help the students in my class be more confident in who they are, be proud of where they are from and where they are now, and be able to understand the benefits of speaking more than one language.

### **Literature Exploration**

When I began my graduate school program at Hamline University, I continued to find the topic of multiculturalism and multilingualism compelling. How did my students perceive themselves as American citizens or community members? How did they balance the use of the cultures and languages they used in the past with the pressures of learning a new language and adapting to a different culture? What are the proven benefits to being multilingual or multicultural? Do the adult students in my class know these benefits?

Would knowing these benefits improve how they felt towards their own identities? How could I facilitate opportunities for myself and my class to learn about, discuss, and reflect on these questions?

As I dove into the literature, I found that many immigrants *did* tend to lose touch with their families' cultural traditions and values, in addition to losing their families' first languages by the second generation (Fillmore, 2000). I also found that there *were* indeed benefits to being multilingual and multicultural, but there were not any studies I could find where students were given opportunities to learn about these benefits and then reflect on if they felt more positive or proud to be multilingual and multicultural. Thus, my capstone thesis began. I hope to learn how my adult English learners perceive their multilingual and multicultural identities, and then I hope to allow my students the time to learn, discuss, and think about the value and benefits of these identities through lessons with interactive activities and targeted self-reflection prompts.

### **Research Stakeholders**

This research may be valuable to a variety of stakeholders. First, other educators may find my study valuable because it may show that through the use of targeted lessons and classroom activities, certain perceptions adult EL students hold about being multilingual and multicultural could improve. EL students may find this study valuable because they are able to see that with more knowledge, discussion, and self-reflection, they may better understand and feel comfortable with their multilingual and multicultural identities. Educational curriculum writers may find importance in this study because it will inform them that allowing EL adults the opportunity to learn, discuss, and reflect on being multilingual and multicultural in their curricula may increase student

self-awareness and perhaps improve their opinions of themselves as immigrants. Finally, community members where immigrants live may find this study helpful because they can learn more about the positive impact and value English-learning immigrants bring to their communities. They also can gain better insight into how their local adult English learner populations feel towards themselves and their new communities in the U.S.

### **Summary and Future Chapters Preview**

In this chapter, I shared my journey that led me to researching the topic of students' perceptions of being multilingual and multicultural and how to improve them. I discussed my early impactful memories related to multiculturalism and multilingualism, my college experiences, my teaching experiences, and the effects my initial research affected my research for this capstone. Students learn better when they feel more invested, comfortable, and confident in themselves in the classroom (Norton, B. 2012), and it is valuable for them to be informed of the benefits of being multilingual and multicultural and reflect on their identities as they navigate their lives here in the United States.

In Chapter Two I will share my literature review in preparation for my own study. I will cover the topics of language and culture shift, the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism, and self-reflection used as a tool used to change attitudes and perceptions. Chapter Three will provide the methods for my study, which will include detailed descriptions on my research paradigm, participants, setting, survey, and intervention activities. Chapter Four will involve my analysis of the data I collected from the pre- and post-intervention surveys my participants completed. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I will discuss overall findings of my research and their connections to the literature

review, limitations of the study, ideas for future research and instruction, and the study's potential benefits to stakeholders.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Literature

#### Chapter Overview

Chapter Two of my capstone thesis will provide background information in the educational literature related to my research questions:

- 1. How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*
- 2. Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

In the first section, I will cover a general background on language and culture and its connection to immigrants and English learners in the United States. Some background information will be given regarding language shift and assimilation/acculturation in immigrants to the U.S. I will also focus on how language acquisition, as well as acculturation, can be impacted by immigrants' perceptions of their multilingual and multicultural identities and their investment in the process of this adjustment as they enter a new country. The purpose of this section is to share more background knowledge on how often, how quickly, and how much immigrants tend to become multilingual and multicultural along with sharing what influences this shift in their identities.

The second section will discuss the benefits associated with multilingualism and multiculturalism. I will explain some of the cognitive, career, and social benefits of being



multilingual and multicultural. All of the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism mentioned are particularly relevant to English-learning immigrants, as they can experience these advantages as they become more accustomed to the United States and become more fluent in their English.

The final section will share literature regarding how self-reflection can be used as a tool for people to change perceptions and attitudes in the long-term. These articles will explain how learners have been shown to increase their own self-confidence if they take time to self-reflect on who they are and what they think.

The end of this chapter includes an overall summary of the chapter, an explanation on why my capstone thesis is important, and a preview to Chapter Four.

### **Language Shift and Culture Shift**

Language shift may be defined as language replacement or language transfer because it refers to a group or community of people slowly shifting from one language to another, typically more culturally dominant, language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015).

Language shifts begin to take place the moment immigrants set foot in the United States and need to learn English in order to communicate effectively with others in their new country. While some immigrants easily adjust to the United States-either because they had already learned some English prior to their arrival in the U.S. or they are quicker to pick up on cultural differences-others have a more difficult time navigating the conventions of the English language and American life (Hashemi, 2011). Many immigrants struggle with when and how often to use their first languages, or whether to continue using them at all. Second generation immigrants tend to have a particularly difficult time balancing the use of the language they have used growing up as young

children and the language they use each day with many of their friends or their teachers. They also struggle with maintaining their connection to their families' home culture. Immigrants may have difficulty understanding the cultural norms of the United States or feel like their home cultures do not have any value in their new country (Hashemi, 2011). The goal of this section is to inform readers of the various ways language and cultural shifts do or do not take place and how multilingualism and multiculturalism is experienced for some immigrants.

### ***Language Maintenance vs. Language Shift***

When many immigrants arrive in the United States, they are thrust into an unfamiliar environment where they do not know the language being used around them. According to the United States Census, in 2012 50% of immigrants to the U.S. did not speak English "very well." This percentage accounted for approximately 20.3 million immigrants (United States Census Bureau, 2014). As immigrants become accustomed to the United States, they must adjust when and where they use their first languages (L1) and when they will use English, their second (or third, fourth, etc.) language (L2). This adjustment and "shift" of using strictly their L1 and transitioning to using their L2 is called *language shift*. As stated previously, language shift occurs when a group or community of people shifts from one language to another language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). *Language maintenance* is the opposite effect, where immigrants' L1s, sometimes called *heritage languages*, are maintained even as they are pushed to assimilate to another linguistic culture. In the past, researchers have found that language shift among immigrant families generally takes place between the first and third generations (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). In a case study by Fillmore (2000), the author writes about

how the L1 in a family is generally lost between the second and third generations of immigrants. This is most likely because second generation immigrants do not use their ethnic language often enough, if at all, with the third generation, resulting in language loss by generation two into generation three (Fishman & Hofman, 1966; Portes & Rumbault, 1990 as cited in Fillmore, 2000) This language loss is usually attributable to the language shift that occurs as non-English-speaking immigrants come to the United States.

In another analysis, Torres (2010) looked at data collected by various studies, such as the Pew Hispanic Center to learn how Puerto Ricans adjust and shift their language once they move to the United States. Interviews via telephone were conducted with over 2,000 16 to 25-year-old Latinos. The results showed that 7% of first generation Latinos are English-dominant, but this percentage increases to 44% by the second generation, and is around 80% by the third generation. They also found that a little over half of second-generation Latinos self-identify as bilingual, but only 15% of the third generation do.

Whether consciously or not, immigrants tend to shift their language use from their L1 to mostly or only English as each generation continues to live in the United States. However, first-generation immigrants may or may not shift from their L1 to English over time in the same way, depending on societal and linguistic factors. For first-generation children, it appears opportunity and motivation play a large role in both the maintenance of their L1 and the language shift to English. For instance, Krashen (1981, as cited in Zhang, 2010) argued that if there is a lack of opportunity for children who are second language learners to have comprehensible input of their heritage language, then the L1

will not be maintained. Comprehensible input is when the language input is at the right level for the learner but still challenging enough that they learn something from the input. When a student goes to school that does not use or value their heritage language, they may lose the desire to maintain or grow in their use of their heritage language. In addition, first generation immigrant children are highly influenced by outside forces that motivate them to learn English, which results in a language shift (Zhang, 2010). When immigrants are forced into situations that require them to use English, such as understanding the teacher or making friends at school, their motivation to learn English will go up while their motivation and ability to maintain their heritage language may go down.

A perfect example of this is in the article mentioned earlier, entitled “Loss of Family Languages: Should Educators Be Concerned?” (Fillmore, 2000). In her research, Fillmore performed a case-study on the Chen family: a Chinese-American immigrant family whose language shifted from Cantonese to English over the course of one generation. While the parents and grandmother of the family continued to use their L1 through work at a Chinese restaurant and staying mostly at home, their children, who also only spoke Chinese upon arrival, quickly needed to pick up the English language in order to be successful at school and with friends. While there was less opportunity in their daily lives to use Chinese besides at the dinner table, there was much more motivation to improve their English quickly so they could participate in social situations on a day-to-day basis. Within less than a generation, the children had lost their ability to use Cantonese effectively. Their parents and grandmother, despite their desire to keep the family united, had lost connection to their children due to their inability to use English.

Working full-time did not allow them the opportunity to take English classes or to learn from their children. And so the generational bond through language had been broken.

This kind of language shift can be seen not just in individual anecdotal cases, but in statistical studies as well. In a study by Potowski (2004), 800 Chicagoan Latino students were surveyed on their use of Spanish and English language use; the results again showed a consistent pattern that as students got older, they used Spanish less often and in fewer areas of their life. They stated that while they still spoke Spanish with their family, they preferred to use English in other scenarios.

These statistics do not hold true for only young immigrants; adult immigrant English learners also tend to experience this language shift over time. Akresh (2010) found a consistent pattern of an increased likelihood to use English the longer immigrants lived in the United States, regardless of their other identities such as language background or gender. For instance, if an adult immigrant arrives in the United States as a young adult, their predicted probability of using English with their friends doubles after 15 years living in the United States. Even spouses with the same heritage language (L1) have a predicted probability increase of .15 of using English with each other after 15 years as well. Immigrants' identities and social networks tend to become more associated with others who use English over time.

These social networks amongst immigrant adults were found to be particularly important in influencing language shift or maintenance in one key study involving immigrant women in the U.S. (Stoessel, 2002) In this small-scale study, the authors asked 10 women to complete a long and detailed social network questionnaire. It was created to search for patterns in the immigrants' networks that resulted in higher or lower first

language maintenance ratings. The results find that for eight of the 10 immigrant women, there is a strong connection between the ratio of L1 to L2 speakers in the women's secondary network and their maintenance level of their L1. Another intriguing finding is that the women who maintain their L1 in addition to learning English tend to hold more pride for their home countries. They also tend to keep a stronger attachment to their heritage, or home, languages.

Some English-learning immigrants are eager to learn the new language, but they may not perceive their learned language skills as “good enough” to call themselves bilingual or multilingual. In a study by Zubrzycki (2019), non-native speakers of English or Spanish were given a questionnaire asking them their background information, whether they would consider themselves bilingual, and how they would define the term ‘bilingual’. Although the language learners’ views of themselves as bilingual were tied to their overall skill and proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in their second language, many of the results indicated that other social and demographic factors influenced whether the language learners would consider themselves bilingual. Many bilinguals underestimated their abilities and skills in their second language, casting self-doubt on their identity as a “true bilingual” (Zubrzycki, 2019).

For others, language shift actually causes anxiety and mental stress. Hashemi (2011) found that language anxiety was tied to English learners’ sense of self. They feared that they might lose their self-identity as they learned English. Some of them felt like the American culture was too different from their own as well. This fear is understandable, but adjusting to a new environment is necessary when one moves to a

new country. In the following sub-section, details will be shared about this adjustment to a new culture.

### ***Cultural Maintenance vs. Cultural Shift***

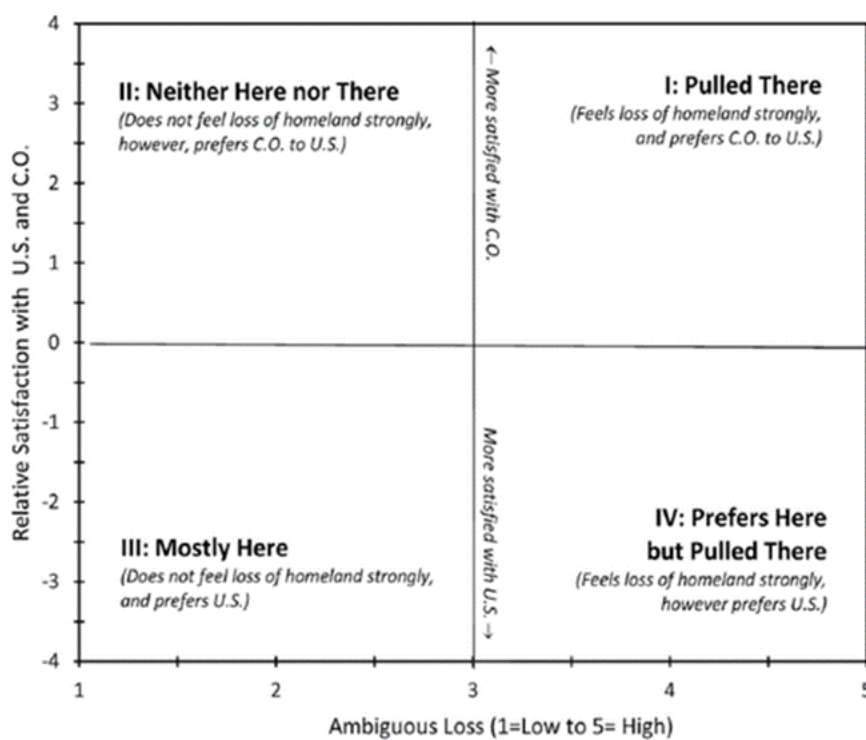
Not only do most immigrants to the United States need to adjust to using a new language in their everyday lives, they need to become familiar with the cultural differences as well. In the past, the expectation was for immigrants to become fully assimilated into mainstream American culture; this meant that immigrant families' cultural identities were lost quite quickly due to societal and social pressures. However, today the expectation has changed. Now immigrants are asked to culturally shift and adjust, but not entirely. This updated view is called *acculturation*. Acculturation may be defined as “the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact” (Gibson, 2001, as cited in Schwartz, 2006, p. 2).

Just like with learning a new language, adjusting to the United States' culture can also be a process. In a study conducted on Spanish-speaking immigrants to the U.S. (Boss, 2006, as cited in Perez & Arnold-Berkovits, 2019), 344 participants were asked to answer questions on a survey about whether they felt a sense of traumatic loss after leaving their countries of origins (CO), sometimes known as “ambiguous loss of homeland” (ALH). These feelings of sadness or longing for their COs were then further evaluated through a second dimension; the immigrants were then asked about their sense of overall satisfaction with the United States in comparison to their COs. Participants could be placed into different quadrants depending on their responses to questions such as, “Which country do you consider to be your homeland today?” Figure 1 below shows

how the immigrants could be categorized (Boss, 2006, as cited in Perez & Arnold-Berkovits, 2019).

**Figure 1**

*“Which country do you consider to be your homeland today?”*



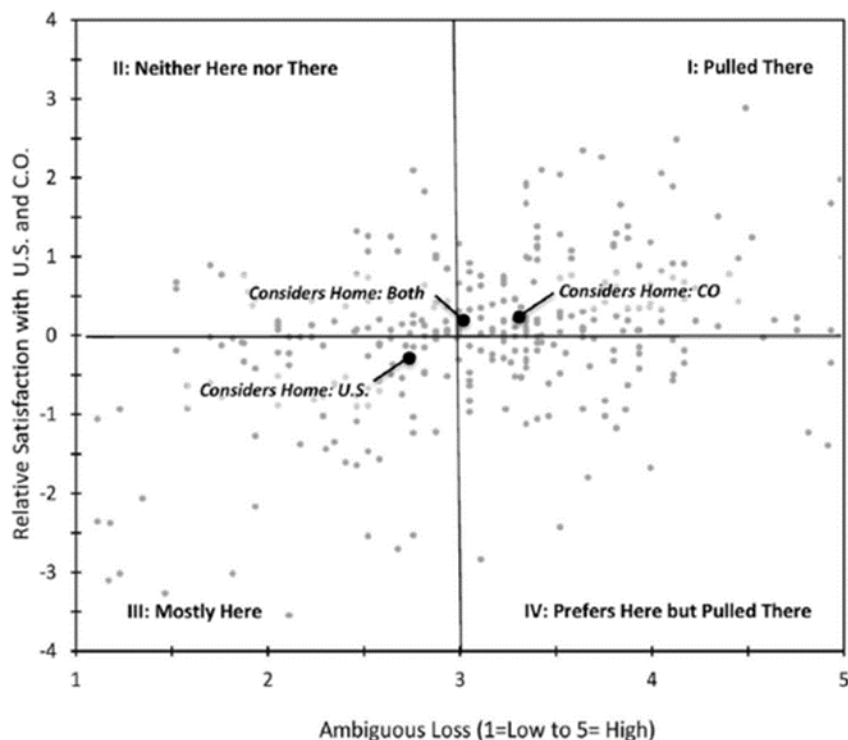
Results of the study were plotted on the quadrant to indicate where each immigrant landed. Those in the top right quadrant felt the most loss towards their home countries and had the highest levels of ALH. Participants considered part of the top left quadrant did not experience high levels of ALH, but they did still feel more a preference for their COs. Bottom left participants had answers indicating that they did not feel any ALH associated with leaving their COs, and they had more satisfaction with the United States. The last quadrant on the bottom right included participants who ranked their



feelings for loss of their homeland as very high but still preferred the United States to their CO (Perez & Arnold-Berkovits, 2019).

**Figure 2**

*“Which country do you consider to be your homeland today?”*



The findings plotted on the chart above seem to make sense intuitively: Those who viewed their COs as their homeland had higher levels of ambiguous loss, while those who thought of the U.S. as their homeland had the lowest scores. It appears that if the immigrants viewed the United States as their homeland, or at least the same way they viewed their COs, they tended to also have a higher satisfaction with the United States (Perez & Arnold-Berkovits, 2019).

One surprising finding from the study was that the demographics of the group did not seem to have a connection to the scores or quadrants that the participants ended up in

(Perez & Arnold-Berkovits, 2019). Whether looking at age, reasons for immigrating, or another demographic, there was no relationship between these variables and their resulting quadrant. This result seems to indicate that immigrants may have differing views on how they view the United States compared to their countries of origin regardless of their demographics or circumstances that brought them to their new country.

As seen in the previous study (Perez & Arnold-Berkovits, 2019), some immigrants view the United States as their home, some view their birth countries as home, and some feel both are their home. When immigrants view the United States as their home, they experience less feelings of loss and a more positive view of their new country. These immigrants are embracing themselves as multicultural, and this is to their benefit, as will be explained further in the following section. However, what happens when immigrants do not embrace this multiculturalism when they move to the United States?

**Only Maintaining C1.** One study involving Vietnamese adult and adolescent immigrants (Nguyen, 2008) looked at Vietnamese parents' acculturation, or lack of acculturation, and how it impacted their children's relationships with them. Nguyen noted that some Vietnamese parents are more likely to have more of an authoritarian view towards parenting, and this style of parenting sometimes results in more family conflict or mental health troubles. Nguyen decided to examine this style of parenting and its effects on the depression scores and self-esteem levels of the Vietnamese immigrants' adolescent children.

Nguyen (2008) surveyed 290 adolescents living in a large city and asked them questions related to their fathers' levels of acculturation, their parenting style, and how

the adolescents felt about themselves. He also asked about their levels of depression. The results of his study found that many, if not most, of the children of Vietnamese immigrants viewed their fathers as not having acculturated to the United States. Many of their fathers did not adjust to American culture and continued to practice Vietnamese traditional parenting styles at home, even after many years of living in the U.S. The adolescents whose fathers did not acculturate to the United States had more depression and lower self-esteem. On the other hand, adolescent immigrants whose fathers did acculturate to the United States culture had higher self-esteem and lower levels of depression. Their fathers had tended to change their parenting styles from authoritarian to more of an authoritative style.

The results of this study do not mean to indicate that immigrant families should discontinue holding onto their culture from their countries of origin. On the contrary, other studies indicate how important it is for immigrant families to retain parts of their cultural identities while they also adjust and embrace the culture of the United States as well. However, what it does indicate is that immigrants that experience little to no acculturation may find that they have less of a close connection to the members in their family who do adapt. However, the same can be said for those who completely assimilate to the culture around them rather than acculturate.

**Only Maintaining C2.** A great example of this comes from a narrative study by Gu and Lai (2019). The researchers follow the story of an immigrant mother and daughter in Hong Kong. They find that the mother tries to completely eliminate her heritage language and culture from her life. She tries to assimilate, rather than acculturate. She does this with the hope of blending in and becoming more socially

accepted as ethnic minorities. Her daughter, on the other hand, is a second-generation immigrant. She finds symbolism and value in her L1, or heritage language, and her C1, or heritage culture, so she tries to keep these parts of her identity while also adjusting to using the English language and living in the U.S. She embraces her multilingualism and multiculturalism as a part of her identity. Since she finds empowerment in her full identity, she does not try to eliminate one culture or language for another. The daughter in this study is an example of an immigrant who is acculturating rather than assimilating.

It is unfortunate that the mother in Gu and Lai's (2019) study does not find value in her L1 or C1 after moving to her new country. However, there appear to be some benefits to adopting this kind of attitude as compared to not integrating at all (as seen in the previous study), particularly as a first-generation immigrant. For instance, in a study entitled, "Never Mind the Acculturation Gap: Migrant Youth's Wellbeing Benefit when They Retain Their Heritage Culture but Their Parents Adopt the Settlement Culture", Sun et al. (2020) found that immigrant families tend to have the better well being when they adopt the settlement culture as compared to not adopting at all.

These studies, however, do not indicate that the best course of action is for immigrants to abandon their original culture and language. As we will see in the following section, being multilingual and multicultural is incredibly beneficial to immigrants in a variety of ways. That being said, these particular studies are highlighting that first generation immigrants are most successful when they acculturate because they already know their L1 and C1 well; in order to be multilingual and multicultural, they must focus most of their attention on adjusting to the new language culture. For second generation immigrants or first generation immigrants that are younger when they

immigrate, English and the culture of the U.S. will be necessary and easier to adjust to due to being in school and growing up surrounded by the English language and American culture. They must be more intentional about holding onto their families' language and culture because, as previous studies have shown, they tend to use it less and less over time.

This concept is illustrated in the study, Sun et al. (2020). This study looked at 153 youth and parent immigrant families and asked them to judge their levels of acculturation along with the acculturation levels of their other family members. The results of the study indicate that involving children of immigrants in their heritage culture and continuing to use their L1 was beneficial for them. On the other hand, parents that continued to have high engagement with their heritage languages and cultures and less with the C2 and L2 were not beneficial for them. In fact, it is detrimental to their children's well-being. This study again illustrates that idea that newcomers to the United States benefit from acculturating so they can be multilingual and multicultural. However, they need to keep their L1 and C1 strong as well so they can ensure their children also benefit from being multilingual and multicultural. Immigrants and their families must strike a balance between their past and present languages and cultures if they want to have strong multilingualism and multiculturalism as part of their identities. Being multicultural and multilingual allows immigrants to reap the benefits of these identities. These benefits will be explained in the following section.

### ***Summary***

Each of the studies listed above are examples of how outside forces seem to propel immigrants to either hold onto their L1 heritage languages or stop using them over

time. The literature did not include many examples of learner autonomy, or the learner having an informed or controlled decision over whether or not to continue using their L1 or not. In addition, some research indicated that immigrants were sometimes apprehensive about learning English or felt they would lose their identities or cultures as their language and culture shifted to more American-English language and lifestyle (Hashemi 2011). However, there are huge benefits to being able to speak more than one language or understand more than one culture. What are these benefits, and would immigrants benefit from knowing them?

### **Benefits of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism**

This section aims to share many of the benefits of being multilingual (speaking more than one language) or multicultural (identifying with more than one culture). English-learning immigrants hold these identities but may not be fully aware of the benefits associated with being multilingual or multicultural. Going over various studies, this section covers some benefits of being multilingual or multicultural. The evidence on these benefits included in this section are not all-encompassing; however, these examples are some of the important findings collected over the years on the benefits of knowing more than one language and being immersed in and part of more than one culture.

#### ***Benefits of Multilingualism***

In a typical advertisement for any bilingual or immersion school, it states that learning and knowing how to speak more than one language supposedly will “make your child smarter” or will “help them be more well-rounded individuals.” These statements are used to convince parents to send their American-born, English-speaking students to these kinds of schools. Are there any large benefits to being a multicultural or

multilingual person? And, if this is the case, does not this mean that immigrants who come to the United States begin to have these kinds of benefits as they acculturate and start to learn English?

The answers to these questions are a resounding “yes.” Immigrants’ multiculturalism and multilingualism have huge benefits for them as individuals and to society as a whole. Some of the major benefits are cognitive, and there is scientific evidence to back up this claim. For example, in a 1989 publication of Foster and Reeves (1989, as cited in Chibaka, 2018), cognitive function tests and metacognitive processes assessments were used with English/French sixth-grade bilinguals and then compared to monolingual English speakers. The results of the study found that the more students could use and understand more than one language, the higher of a score they got on their overall cognitive function and evaluation tasks. Tests used included The Ross Test of Higher Cognitive Process, which is designed to measure cognitive thinking. The study also found that students who received instruction in a foreign language scored higher on evaluation tasks which is the highest cognitive skill based on Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive ability (Foster & Reeves, 1989, as cited in Chibaka, 2018).

Performing well on evaluation tasks is not the only benefit of being multilingual. In another study, Marian and Shook (2012) found through the use of brain imaging techniques that multilinguals have an increased activation of their dorsolateral prefrontal cortex when they need to name pictures in one language and then another; this part of the brain is associated with attention and inhibition skills. Having a long attention span and being able to control one’s inhibitions are benefits associated with multilingualism that many people, including multilinguals themselves, may not be aware of.

The cognitive benefits do not just include how they impact multilinguals' brains in the here and now; the benefits also extend long into the future as multilinguals reach older ages. Older multilinguals have improved memory and executive control compared to monolinguals (Marian & Shook, 2012). They also are able to delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by about 5.1 years later than monolinguals. Alzheimer's symptoms are also less severe in multilingual patients, even if their level of brain atrophy is higher than that of the monolingual patient. This means that when multilinguals get Alzheimer's, they are less likely to be as symptomatic despite their level of brain atrophy (Marian & Shook, 2012).

### ***Benefits of Multiculturalism***

Being multicultural also offers cognitive benefits. In a study looking at creative thinking, Lee et al. (2012) had undergraduate students take a test to measure their creative thinking on both culture-specific and general measures; one group of students had studied abroad while the other group had not. The results after the tests indicated that the students who studied abroad performed better on all the creative thinking measures compared to the groups of students who did not study abroad (Lee et al., 2012).

While the cognitive benefits of being multilingual and multicultural are many, there are also unexpected benefits to individuals who are multilingual and multicultural when it comes to the job market and having a successful career. For instance, in a large 2014 study with over 2,100 US employers responding, Damari et al (2017) asked employers whether they would give preference to a multilingual candidate over a monolingual candidate of similar experience, and 41% said they would. 66% of employers included questions about whether candidates spoke more than one language.



The researchers also found that 93% of all employers responded that the ability to work with a variety of people of different countries, cultures, and backgrounds was an important trait.

In another study conducted by Porras et al (1970), 289 surveys were conducted asking a variety of companies and industries in California ranging from the arts to manufacturing to finance. Their representatives were asked to answer a variety of questions related to multilingualism in the workplace. When asked about considerations in the hiring process, over 56% of respondents said that they would seek out bilingual candidates for at least some of the positions (Porras et al., 1970).

The benefits of multiculturalism and multilingualism can extend to support multilingual and multicultural immigrants, their communities, and the societies where immigrants live. Through research, we know that exposure to different cultures is beneficial to the individuals who have experience with multiple cultures. In addition, these benefits extend to people they associate with throughout their lives (Chao, 2015). Multicultural exposure can reduce the likelihood of individuals to be biased against groups, increase the capacity for creative problem solving, and facilitate cooperation across cultures. In addition, it is found that having a high degree of openness to new ideas and cultures is one of the best predictors of positive vs. negative multicultural reactions. If a person is excited and open, they will be better equipped to engage with new and different perspectives and practices. Evidence also suggests confidence in one's own native culture can have a positive effect on the willingness to engage in cultural exchanges with others rather than clinging to just their culture out of fear. This means that fostering more confidence in native cultures could lead to significantly better outcomes

when people from different backgrounds interact (Chao, 2015). This also means that communities with more multicultural families are more likely to cooperate well together.

### ***Summary***

While many educational, linguistic, and sociological researchers and professors in the field may be aware of these studies, multicultural and multilingual immigrants in the United States may not be. Are these facts shared with English learner students in the classroom? And even if this information is shared, how can students' attitudes towards their multilingual and multicultural identities remain positive for the long-term? One way to encourage more permanent attitude change may be found through the practice of self-reflection.

### **Attitude Changes Through Self-Reflection**

A teacher of immigrant English learners can help influence and improve their students' confidence and self-perceptions regarding their multilingual and multicultural identities. This section focuses on a few studies that provide a potentially effective way for ELs to feel included, valued, and confident in who they are as multilingual and multicultural individuals for the long-term: self-reflection.

### ***Self-Reflection***

Surveys, although beneficial to the researchers themselves, can sometimes be incredibly valuable to the survey-takers as well because they provide an opportunity to reflect on one's own views or actions. One such example of this kind of survey was a language attitude survey created by Coronel-Molina (2014). In his paper, he created a sample of language attitude surveys that allows researchers to ask deeper questions that also provide room for self-reflection. For instance, in one question, Coronel-Molina asks

the following question: “To what degree do you associate the following attributes with the Spanish language? With English? Rate them on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 meaning not at all, 2 meaning somewhat, and 3 meaning very much.” He then provides a list of both positively and negatively associated words for the survey-taker to rate from 1-3. This kind of question not only gives researchers useful information about their students, but it also allows the survey-takers to self-reflect on what they believe. While surveys may not be something a teacher includes in their everyday instruction, using deeper probing questions such as Coronel-Molina’s example above allow ELs the opportunity to think about how they view themselves beyond an immigrant or an English learner.

Using deeper reflection questions has been shown to be successful in changing attitudes of EL students. In a study of 75 Thai English as a Foreign Language students, Lum (2015) used podcasts and self-reflections to help promote the development of their self-esteem and confidence in speaking. Students recorded themselves and used self-reflection activities related to their English speaking skills throughout the semester. Students were given both a Pronunciation Attitude Inventory in addition to participating in focus groups and a written self-reflection report at the end of the semester. Results showed that both the podcast and the self-reflection activities had a positive effect on the students in terms of their learner autonomy, the improvement of their language abilities, and their self-confidence as English learners.

In another study, self-reflection was used with the hopes of improving Chinese undergraduates’ intercultural communicative competence (Chen & Zheng, 2019). Forty-one Chinese university undergraduate students in a College English Intercultural Communication class completed reflective journal entries related to their intercultural

experiences. After months of journaling, the study found that many students viewed themselves more negatively than they did of students of other cultures. However, students also became appreciative of their own cultures over time as they had to reflect on their experiences from a wider scope. Students improved attitudes of themselves through the use of self-reflection journal entries (Chen & Zheng, 2019).

### ***Summary***

Self-reflection activities used as a tool for self-growth, self-esteem, self-awareness, and learner autonomy seem to have promising results. If study participants are able to spend substantial time thinking about, discussing, reflecting, and writing about their perceptions on a given subject, they might experience a change in their confidence and attitudes towards it. The idea of using self-reflection activities as part of a study to challenge or deepen perceptions towards a topic proves itself useful in my study.

### **Purpose of My Research**

I have chosen my specific research questions because of a gap I see in the literature: While we know a lot of the external, environmental factors that cause or prevent language or cultural shift, there is less information on how direct communication of the benefits of multiculturalism and multilingualism as well as the use of self-reflection activities could build English-learning immigrants' confidence in their multicultural and multilingual identities. There are many studies indicating the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, but I could not find an example of a study where educators or professionals shared this information with their multicultural and multilingual learners. And while I did find a few studies sharing the benefits of student

self-reflection, the studies were few and far between. I believe the sharing of these benefits more explicitly through self-reflection activities with immigrant students could be beneficial to their views of and confidence in their identities.

My thesis seeks to provide my adult English learners with the opportunity to not only learn or remember that their first languages and heritage cultures have value and worth, but also to help them recognize and appreciate how valuable it is to be able to use more than one language and be able to think from multiple cultural perspectives. In this study, I created short lesson plans that include activities that allow the English learners in my class to share, discuss, and reflect on many of the aspects and benefits of being multicultural and multilingual. I gave the English learners both pre- and post-lesson intervention surveys to ask them how they felt about their multilingual and multicultural identities. My hope was that these mini-lesson interventions would allow the students time to reflect on their backgrounds and instill more confidence in themselves and their multilingual and multicultural identities.

Throughout this past chapter, I have shared many studies related to my overall research questions:

1. *How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*
2. *Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

### **Summary and Chapter Three Preview**

Chapter Two focused on sharing important research relevant to my capstone thesis. The research I shared regarding language shift sought to provide a context for why some immigrants do or do not easily become multilingual and multicultural. My second section intended to show a few of the many benefits that multicultural and multilingual identities can give my EL students. The last section shared how the use of self-reflection can positively impact people's attitudes for the long-term.

In addition to the literature review, this chapter also included an explanation for the purpose and reason behind asking my capstone research questions and the gap I hope to fill with this research. In the following chapter, I will explain my methodology in detail. I will describe how I will plan and conduct my research, how I will gather data, and how I will analyze it.

## Chapter Three

### Methods

#### Introduction

This study was designed to explore the opinions of adult English learners on their multilingual and multicultural identities. It also served to evaluate whether time for activities and reflection on the benefits of multiculturalism and multilingualism help adult English learners feel more positively towards their identities. This study explored the following research questions:

- 1. How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*
- 2. Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

This chapter will discuss a variety of topics related to my research methods, including its background information, implementation, and analyses. In the first section, I will explain my research paradigm. The setting section will explain where my research took place. After that, I will share who the participants were in the study. Following my explanation of the participants, I will go through what methods I chose and my rationale for choosing them. Next, I will describe the intervention after the initial survey. I will then share my data collection process. Following this, I will discuss my process in analyzing the data. I will conclude by explaining the human subject research review process for my specific study.

## **Research Paradigm**

This study was designed as an investigative thesis focused on adult English learners (ELs) in my Adult Basic Education EL program and their views on their multicultural and multilingual identities. The study used a mixed methods paradigm; more specifically, it used a convergent mixed methods design. This design was particularly useful for me because it used both quantitative and qualitative questions which translated to quantitative and qualitative data. This kind of design was a single-phase approach, which means I collected both the quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, then analyzed them separately, and finally compared the findings so I could see if there are similar patterns and connections between the quantitative and qualitative data. Since quantitative and qualitative data provide different kinds of information, having both of them included in my research questions proved useful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study also involved gathering data on two separate occasions: prior to the lesson interventions and after the lesson interventions. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered during both the pre-intervention survey and the post-intervention survey was analyzed and compared to see how the participants' perceptions changed over the different time periods.

The convergent mixed methods design also worked well because my study needed to include a variety of questions related to my students' perceptions and views on their multilingual and multicultural identities. Including quantitative questions allowed me to ask more questions in a shorter amount of time than qualitative questions would. However, I also included four qualitative questions so my participants had the



opportunity to expand upon the answers they chose in the quantitative section. The participants were asked these questions before we began our mini-lessons on the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Following the lesson interventions, a second round of quantitative and qualitative questions was administered and their answers collected.

## **Setting**

### ***School District/Program***

This study was conducted with permission from a school district in Minnesota. This school district is the largest school district in the state, and it offers adult basic education (ABE) through its community education program. The ABE program offers free classes for adults who either hope to obtain their GED or are seeking English classes to improve their reading, writing, speaking, or listening skills in English.

### ***Classroom***

The study took place online through Zoom. Teacher to class size ratio was 1:12. The students that participated in this study had English class online for two hours a night, three nights a week. This research took place during their online class time over the course of three weeks.

## **Participants**

The participants of this study were not selected; students who were enrolled in a community education ABE EL program in the summer of 2022 were asked to voluntarily participate. At the time of the study, there were 17 students enrolled in the program. The goal was for at least three-fourths of the class to be willing to participate in the study. Of those 17, 12 students participated. The participants could read at approximately a third to

seventh grade reading level. Students ranged in age from their 20s to mid-70s. They came from around the world including countries such as Belarus, China, Ghana, Ethiopia, etc. Some participants had been in the United States for many decades, while others were new to the country within the past few months.

All students were considered English learners because their first language was not English. They were attending English classes voluntarily multiple nights a week to improve their English skills. Some students had been speaking English for decades, while others had limited experience with the language. While some students were bilingual, others could speak more than five languages!

### **Methods and Research Tools**

My methods for this study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data through the use of online Google form surveys. As this was a mixed methods study, my survey (see Appendix A) first included open-ended introductory questions to understand the participants' background a bit better, such as how long they have lived in the United State. Next, I included a 5-point Likert scale for participants to fill out with response choices ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" regarding their positivity towards their multilingualism and multiculturalism. The questions posed in the first survey, prior to the lesson interventions, focused on two time periods: before arriving in the United States, and after arriving. I asked 12 language questions related to the participants' first language (L1) and their English (L2). I then asked 12 questions related to their culture in their home countries (C1) and in the U.S. (C2). These 24 questions were completed twice in the pre-intervention survey: once sharing how they felt prior to their arrival in the U.S. and once expressing how they felt after arrival.

I chose a Likert scale because it allowed me to ask questions in a scaled manner that were easy and quick to answer (Creswell & Creswell 2018). For instance, participants were asked in both the pre- and post-intervention surveys to share their agreement with the following statement: “I am proud to be from the country I was born in.” Participants answered with *strongly agree*, *agree*, *I don’t agree or disagree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. In addition, I also included four open-ended questions for the participants to answer that were directly tied to the quantitative questions. For example, participants were asked, “In general, how do you feel about being multilingual?” The qualitative questions allowed my students to expand upon their previous answers and also gave them an opportunity to share any more details about how they felt in relation to their multicultural and multilingual identities. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire two times: once before participating in the intervention mini-lessons discussing the benefits of being multilingual and multicultural, and once after the interventions. The survey before the lessons included questions tied to how the participants felt about their multilingualism and multiculturalism. It also asked them to expand on their Likert-scale responses either through long-form written responses or verbally through a recording, although all participants chose to write their responses.

After six lesson interventions focused on exploring and reflecting on the benefits of multiculturalism and multilingualism, the participants filled out a second survey where they answered the twelve language and twelve culture survey questions again along with new open-ended questions related to how the mini-lesson interventions might have impacted their perceptions.

## **Intervention**

Participants were initially given general definitions of the terms multilingualism and multiculturalism. They then completed the pre-intervention survey's Likert-scale and open-ended questions. After participants completed the initial survey, they then participated in a series of mini-lesson interventions. Excluding the two sessions used to complete the pre- and post-intervention surveys, a total of six lessons were shared with the participants. The first three lessons focused on language, and the second three lessons discussed culture. The themes of the lessons were as follows: Lesson 1: Being Multilingual, Lesson 2: The Benefits of Multilingualism, Lesson 3: Multilingualism: Planning for the Future, Lesson 4: Being Multicultural, Lesson 5: The Benefits of Being Multicultural, Lesson 6: Multiculturalism: Planning for the Future. Each lesson included the listed objectives followed by a warm-up activity. Then, an informative presentation, video, or article was used to learn and discuss a particular aspect of multilingualism or multiculturalism. Finally, participants were given a reflection question to ponder and then write about. Full mini-lesson plans can be found in Appendix C.

### **Data Collection Process**

Data was collected before, during, and after the multilingual and multicultural mini-lessons. For both surveys, the participants were given adequate time during class to fill out their survey responses on the Google Forms. When needed, some participants finished filling out the survey questions after class and returned them to me shortly after. All questions were included on the online Google Form. All participants responded to the Likert-scale questions online using the form. For the open-ended questions, participants had the option to either type their answers, write their answers down and send them to me by email or text, or record themselves answering the questions. However, all participants

chose to answer by typing on the Google Form. All Likert-scale and open-ended questions can be seen in the pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys in Appendix A.

Between the first and second surveys, the six mini-lesson interventions were shared with the participants. Throughout the course of the lessons, warm-up conversations, discussions during the lessons, and reflection responses were recorded, transcribed, or collected. These captured conversations and writings were useful in gaining a better understanding as to how participants felt towards their multilingual and multicultural identities as well as how they connected to the survey responses.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

Both the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the participants from the surveys and mini-lesson interventions were analyzed. Each Likert-scale question was analyzed through looking at participants' responses to the question at three different points in time: before they arrived in the U.S., after they arrived in the U.S. (but prior to the mini-lesson interventions), and after they arrived in the U.S. post-mini-lessons. Analysis was done on how participants' responses changed between the three time periods, with potential responses to each question ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." In addition, the qualitative questions from the surveys and the interventions were examined and coded as well to find themes in regards to participants' views on being multilingual and multicultural. The participants' responses to the open-ended questions helped inform the answers given during the Likert-scale portion of the surveys.

During the analysis of the data, I looked for common trends or patterns regarding how participants felt towards different aspects of their multicultural and multilingual identities. I looked to see how their views changed, or did not change, throughout the different time periods of before arriving in the U.S., after arriving in the U.S. (pre-mini-lesson interventions), and after the mini-lesson interventions.

### **Institutional Review Board Process**

Because my capstone research thesis involved human participants, I needed permission and oversight from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Hamline University. As per the instructions of the IRB, I followed the guidelines and procedures they prescribed. The IRB's purpose is to ensure the safety, rights, and protection of all participants.

In addition to working with Hamline's IRB, I also needed to fill out a Request to Conduct Research form and submit it to the school district to get permission to conduct research in their ABE community education program. I shared in both verbal and written form the plans for my research before I began the study. I also asked my adult EL participants to give permission through a signed form that they were willing to be part of the study. For those who were not comfortable being part of the research, they could still participate in the mini-lesson interventions but would not be assessed before or after. However, all attendees of the class signed the form, so this did not become an issue.

I kept all data that I collected safe and secure to protect my students' privacy. Completed consent forms and Google Form surveys were kept on a private folder in my password-protected Gmail account. All other data that was collected online was also

secured in my Google Drive in a private folder. In addition, all data that included specific students' information was destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

### **Summary and Chapter Four Preview**

Chapter Three discussed the research paradigm, the setting, the participants, my methods and data collection, the analysis process, and the human subject research review process. Chapter Four will delve into the results and analysis of the data collected in the surveys and mini-lesson interventions. I will share themes and patterns that I observed in the data and provide a synthesis for how the data connects back to my original research questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results and Discussion

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to allow adult English learners (ELs) to take time to reflect on and share how they viewed their multilingualism and multiculturalism at different points in time: before they arrived in the United States, before our lesson interventions, during the lesson interventions, and after the lesson interventions. I explored the following two questions:

1. *How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*
2. *Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

In this chapter, I discuss important findings of the data that I collected in four ways: participants' level of agreement with statements using a Likert scale, participants' written responses to open-ended questions, teacher notes on discussions during the interventions, and participants' written responses to reflection prompts throughout the interventions. I first share relevant Likert scale survey responses related to participants' self-perceptions of their multilingual and multicultural selves. I look at how the participants' responses changed, or stayed the same, between three time frames: before arriving in the United States, after arriving in the United States, and after the lesson interventions. Next, I explore the open-ended questions participants responded to in the



two surveys. I share trends and outlier responses. Then, I look more closely at the commentary and reflections participants shared throughout the course of the lesson interventions. Throughout these sections, I explain how the open-ended responses, comments, and reflections connect back to the quantitative responses in the surveys.

### **Likert-Scale Responses**

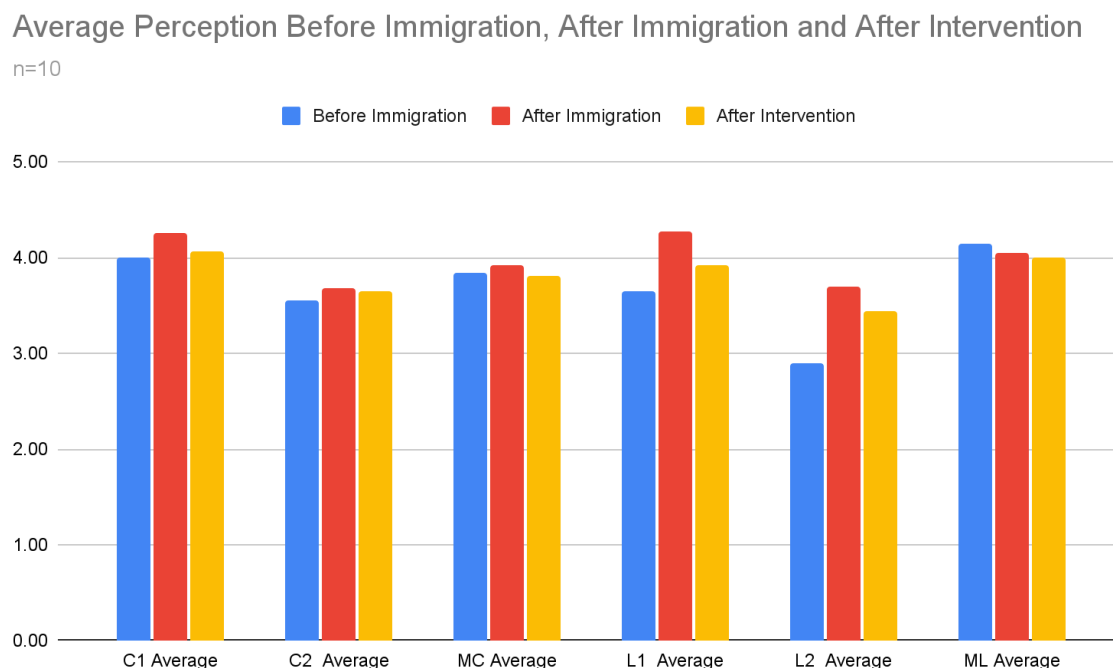
A survey with quantitative and qualitative items was given to the participants both before and after the interventions. The same 24 items about participants' self-perceptions of their multilingualism and multiculturalism were written to cover three time periods: before immigration to the United States, after immigration to the U.S., and after the lesson interventions. The first survey contained the pre- and post-immigration items, and the second contained the post-intervention items (see Appendix A). There were 12 adult English learner (EL) participants in the first survey; 10 of these participants also completed the second survey. These participants came from the following countries: Belarus (1 person), China (1), Djibouti (1), Ethiopia (2), Ghana (1), Honduras (1), Mexico (3), Ukraine (1), and Somalia (1). All participants were immigrants to the U.S.; however, none of them were considered refugees.

Respondents rated their agreement with the quantitative items using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was *strongly disagree* and 5 was *strongly agree*. Responses were coded based on the focus of the statement: C1 statements focused on the culture in their first country, C2 on the culture in the United States, MC on multiculturalism, L1 on their first language, L2 on their second language, and ML on multilingualism. Each item measured the positive or negative perceptions the participants had regarding their multilingual and multicultural identities at each time period.

The general trend of this data can be seen in Figure 3 (below), which presents the average score of each item in each of the five coding categories for each time period. An average of 1 would indicate strongly disagreeing with a statement, while a 5 indicates strongly agreeing. Scores of 1 or 2 meant participants felt negative towards these aspects of their identities, while scores of 4 or 5 meant they felt positive towards them. In the figure below, the two participants who missed the second questionnaire were excluded. Overall, there was a strong positive trend in participants' self-perceptions of their L1, L2, C1, C2, and multicultural identities from the time before the participants moved to the United States to after they moved. The only outlier was the average perception of their multilingualism, which declined slightly from before participants' arrived to after they arrived in the United States.

**Figure 3**

*Overall Average In Self-Perception on Culture 1, Culture 2, Multiculturalism, Language 1, Language 2, and Multilingualism*



After the lesson interventions, it can be noted in Figure 3 that the participants reported slightly less positive perceptions in every category after the interventions (yellow bars) compared to before the interventions (red bars). This was surprising, but these slightly lower scores also could be indicative of a variable difference between the two surveys: in the pre-intervention survey, the 24 “before immigration” questions were included, but they were not part of the post-intervention survey. It could be speculated that because there were two time frames to compare in the first survey asking about “before immigration” and “after immigration,” the participants may have felt that their scores had to have increased from before to after their arrival to the United States. However, when they took the survey after the lesson interventions, they did not have two

time periods to compare their perceptions. Therefore, participants may not have felt that there was as much of an impact on how they viewed their identities compared to before and after they arrived in the United States.

Another potential cause of the slightly lowered results post-intervention could be that the participants had a heightened awareness of what we were discussing after completing all of the lesson interventions. The participants were not very familiar with the terms “multilingualism” or “multiculturalism.” Over the course of the interventions, the adult ELs grew in their understanding of these terms and had the opportunity to think about their identities in great detail. It could be theorized that the participants could have developed more complex opinions regarding their identities compared to when they first took the initial pre-intervention survey.

One final cause of the slightly lowered results regarding their positivity towards their multilingualism and multiculturalism could be that they

Looking more closely at key individual questions in the first survey comparing before participants arrived in the United States and after they arrived pre-intervention, the largest reported change was between how the participants thought their first language would be viewed by others before immigrating versus how they feel it is viewed now. Five of 12 participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would be comfortable sharing information about their first language with others before they moved to the United States (see Figure 4). After arriving (pre-intervention), however, none of the participants disagreed that they were comfortable sharing that information.

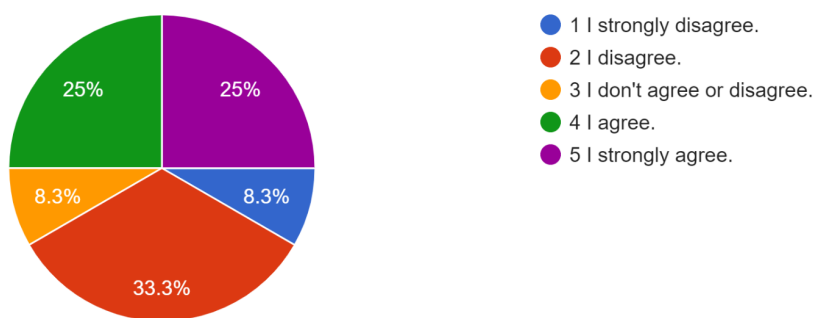
**Figure 4**

*Participant Responses to Language Statement 4-Before Moving to the*

*U.S.-Pre-Intervention Survey*

4. Before I moved to the United States, I felt I was going to be comfortable sharing information about my first language with others.

12 responses

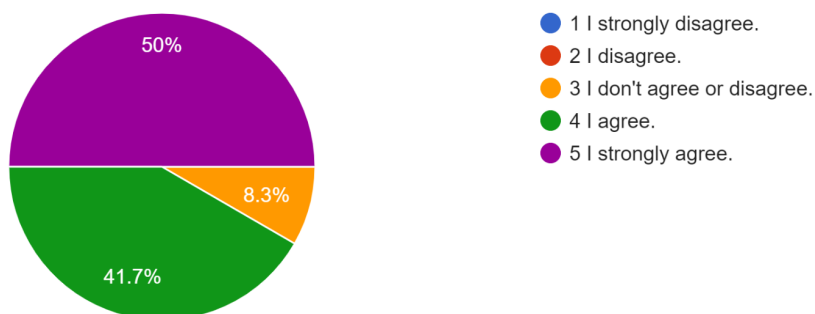
**Figure 5**

*Participant Responses to Language Statement 4-After Moving to the U.S.*

*Pre-Intervention Survey*

4. I feel comfortable sharing information about my first language with others.

12 responses



It was also found that participants felt very strongly that it was important for their children, or future children, to know how to speak their L1. Before coming to the United States, 91.7% agreed it was valuable. This percentage stayed exactly the same after arriving in the U.S. (91.7%). This viewpoint was confirmed during the mini-lesson interventions through many of the writings and conversations participants shared regarding their desire for their children or grandchildren to know their families' L1.

There was a similar trend with participants' responses regarding their first countries' cultures. Before moving to the United States, seven of 12 participants strongly agreed that their home, or first, culture was important to teach to their kids (see Figure 6). After moving to the U.S. (pre-intervention), 10 of 12 thought it was important (see Figure 7). Since the participants were now living in the United States, they felt it was more of a necessity than before they came to the United States to instill and share their home culture with their family and children.

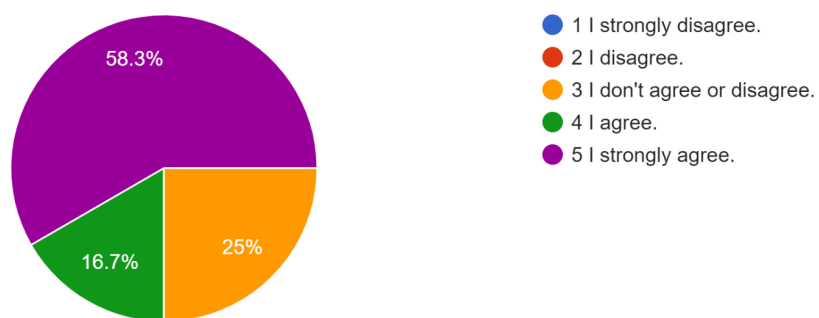
**Figure 6**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 3-Before Moving to the U.S.-Pre-Intervention*

*Survey*

3. Before I moved to the United States, I thought it was important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.

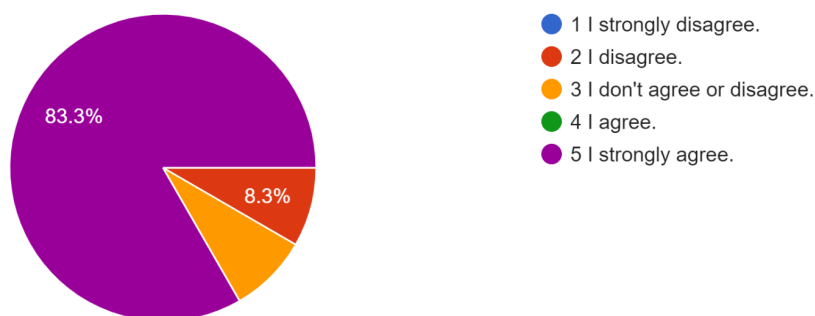
12 responses



**Figure 7**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 3-After Moving to the U.S.-Pre-Intervention Survey*

3. It's important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.  
12 responses



Another interesting finding was comparing how participants felt towards living in the United States. As seen in Figure 6, before moving to the United States, 66.6% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they would be happy living in the United States. After arriving in the U.S. the percentage jumped to 81.8% (see Figure 9). After the lesson interventions, the percentage of people stating they were happy to live in the U.S. went up to 88.9% (see Figure 10). While a higher percentage of participants viewed the statement as *agree* or *strongly agree* after the interventions, it can also be noted that the percent of participants who stated they *strongly agree* with the statement lowered after the interventions (54.5% pre-intervention to 33.3%). This change is interesting to note and cannot be said to be from any particular influence or factor; however, as shared

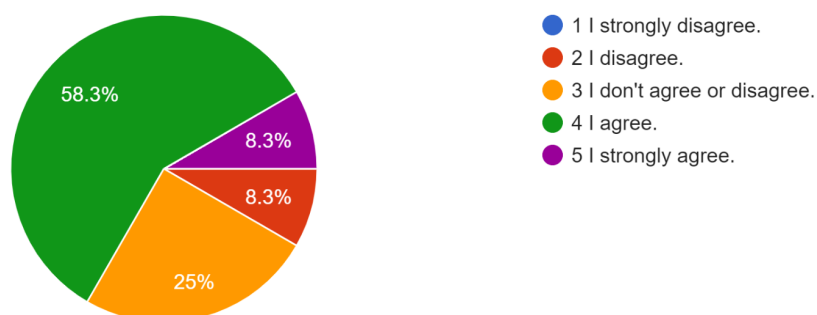


earlier, the participants might have understood what the question was asking in more depth and might have had a more nuanced perspective on the question.

**Figure 8**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 2-Before Moving to the U.S.-Pre-Intervention Survey*

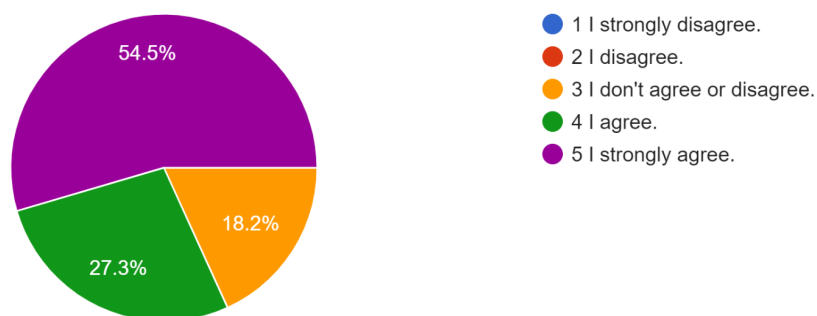
2. Before I moved to the United States, I was happy imagining living in the United States.  
12 responses



**Figure 9**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 2-After Moving to the U.S.-Pre-Intervention Survey*

2. I am happy living in the United States.  
11 responses

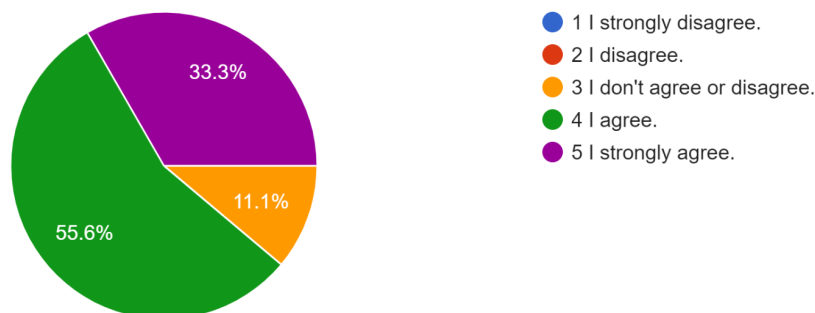


**Figure 10**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 2-After Moving to the U.S.-Post-Intervention Survey*

2. I am happy living in the United States.

9 responses



Other findings of importance included the change in participants' perceptions regarding the question, "Before I moved to the United States, I felt like people in the United States were going to respect my first language." While 50% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed before they immigrated that they felt people in the U.S. were going to respect their first languages, this percentage dropped to 41.7% after arriving and 44.4% after the completion of the lesson interventions. This drop indicates that participants felt less comfortable than they expected to while speaking in public using their first languages in the U.S.

### **Participant Responses to Survey Open-Ended Questions**

While the Likert-scale survey responses did not prove to show significant changes in perception of being multilingual or multicultural between the first survey and the second, there were many valuable remarks made in the open-ended sections of both surveys, the comments made throughout the intervention discussions, and the written

responses from their reflections. These responses provided valuable insight into how the participants thought about themselves as multilingual and multicultural individuals. In the section that follows, I share the participants' responses to open-ended questions, followed by various comments and reflections that were shared throughout the course of the lesson interventions. The discussions and reflections shared during the lesson intervention are divided into a few main themes: L1/L2, Multilingualism, C1/C2, and Multiculturalism.

### ***Pre-Lesson Interventions Open-Ended Responses***

The open-ended response sections in both the pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys were particularly important because they allowed the participants to expand upon or better share their thoughts in relation to the multilingual and multicultural Likert-scale statements. The responses to the pre-lesson intervention survey's final qualitative questions can be found in the Appendix B. The four questions asked were the following:

1. *In general, how do you feel about being multilingual (knowing 2 or more languages)?*
2. *In general, how do you feel about being multicultural (having 2 or more cultures you were/are a part of)?*
3. *What are the negatives of being multilingual?*
4. *What are the positives of being multilingual and multicultural?*

Looking through the participants' responses, a clear pattern emerged: All respondents felt extremely positive about being both multilingual and multicultural. Many of them described their views as multilingual and multicultural members of society

with words such as “great”, “good”, “proud”, “a great opportunity”. When asked in Question 4 what the positives were of being multilingual and multicultural, answers included everything from it being good for your mind and brain, making them a better person, and having the opportunity to find better jobs and make more friends.

Question 3 asked all participants to describe any negatives that they perceived with being multilingual and multicultural. Sixty percent of respondents said they could not think of any negatives to having these identities. This was unexpected, since negative aspects of identities might stick in the mind more often than positives. Of those who did report negatives, some shared that it sometimes was hard to find people to understand them or speak with them, presumably with the ability to use both of their languages. One person mentioned that it was difficult for their children to learn their first language even though they were multilingual themselves. Another stated that they felt they couldn’t celebrate their first country’s culture as easily as before.

### ***Post-Lesson Interventions Open-Ended Responses***

As stated in the section above on Likert-scale responses, there were no significant changes in participants’ perceptions of their multilingual and multicultural identities when comparing the pre-lesson interventions survey and the post-lesson interventions survey. However, the second survey gave more insight into how the participants perceived themselves as multilingual and multicultural. It also indicated growth in their understanding after the lesson interventions, which involved taking the time to learn about and reflect on the ways being multilingual and multicultural were a benefit to them. The first two questions asked what the participants learned over the course of the lesson interventions, as well as what they found important throughout the lessons:

1. *Over the past few weeks, what did you learn about being multilingual and multicultural that you didn't know before?*
2. *Over the past few weeks, what did you learn about being multilingual or multicultural that you thought was important? Why?*

Although the participants' Likert scale ratings of statements on being multicultural and multilingual stayed nearly the same from the first survey to the second survey, their open-ended responses in the second survey indicated they had grown in their knowledge of the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism. It also showed how some of their views had changed regarding what they found important about these identities. For instance, many respondents shared that they learned how diverse the American population is and how valuable it is to be able to communicate and interact with so many different types of people. Others wrote how they learned that being multilingual and multicultural gave them more opportunities for a better life. Participants mentioned that they learned being multilingual and multicultural gave them more choices for jobs, that they learned a lot about the benefits, and that their identities help them be who they are and remember where they are from.

Other open-ended responses to both Question 1 and Question 2 indicated a more positive view towards wanting their children, or future children, to learn and know about their language and culture. One participant shared in response to Question 1, "I learn about speaking my country language to my kid, my tv is always on my country station in other [order] for my wife and kid to learn more." He also stated that he learned that it's important to watch his home country's news and continue to cook his country's food to

help his kid. Another participant wrote, “I consider it important that my future children know the culture of my country and my first language.”

These responses directly connect to participants’ responses in the two surveys. As mentioned in the section above on Likert-scale responses, in the first survey participants were asked how much they agreed with the statement, “Before I moved to the United States, I thought it was important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.” They were then asked in that same survey as well as in the second survey how much they agreed with the following statement: “It’s important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.” Each time the participants were asked this question, their agreement with the statement increased. Participants went from 75% saying they agree or strongly agree with the statement prior to immigration, to 83.3% after immigration, to 100% after the intervention (see Figures 11, 12, and 13).

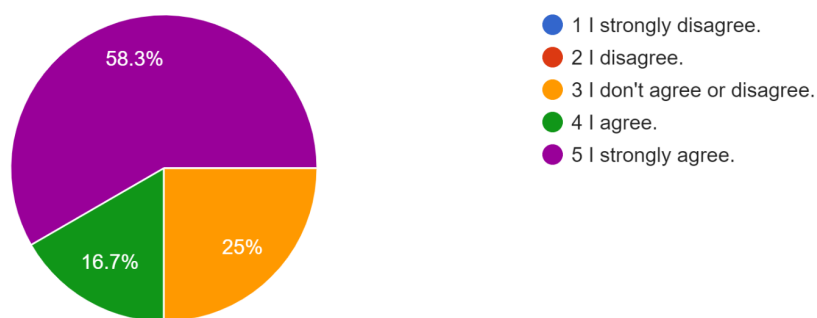
**Figure 11**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 3-Before Moving to the U.S.-Pre-Intervention*

*Survey*

3. Before I moved to the United States, I thought it was important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.

12 responses

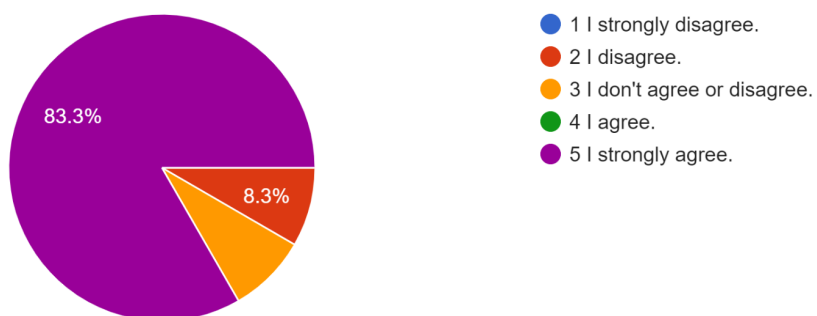
**Figure 12**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 3-After Moving to the U.S.-Pre-Intervention*

*Survey*

3. It's important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.

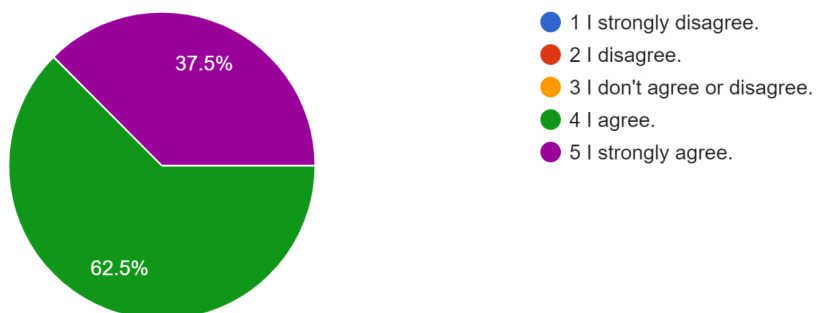
12 responses



**Figure 13**

*Participant Responses to Culture Statement 3-After Moving to the U.S.-Post-Intervention Survey*

3. It's important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.  
8 responses



Question 3 from the second survey's open-ended questions asked, "Has your opinion changed about being multilingual in the United States? What changed your mind? Explain." The responses to this question were consistent with the participants' responses to the related Likert-scale statements in the second survey: Their overall perceptions of being multilingual and multicultural did not change significantly from after they arrived in the United States to after they completed the lesson interventions. For instance, some participants responded to the question with, "My opinion about the multilingualism of the USA has not changed," or "No my opinion had never change because I knowing different languages in the USA helps alot. There are different people from different countries living in the USA."

There were, however, a few responses that indicated an improved perception of their identities. For instance, one participant wrote, "I feel more confidence [confidence]"; another respondent shared, "Just be generous and help each [other]..."; and



another wrote, “I learned that in the USA they use many languages and treat everyone with respect for different cultures.” Their statements indicated that they felt more confident in their identities and that they recognize that there are many different people from many different cultures in the United States that should all be treated with respect and support.

Participants were also asked in the final open-ended question, “Has your mind changed about being multicultural in the United States? What changed your mind? Explain.” Just as with the open-ended question related to multilingualism, most respondents did not indicate that they felt their minds had changed regarding their multicultural identity. Participants shared responses such as, “It’s the same I think is good”, “I am very happy”, and “I don’t changed idea.” However, a few participants shared that they felt more positively towards their multiculturalism, sharing “I was surprised by the great benefits for people of libraries [multilingual] by how many benefits there were for multilingual people,” and “Yeah, I do a lot”. Respondents also indicated that they felt it was important to understand other cultures. One participant wrote, “It is very important to respect the cultures of other countries and feel safe.” Another shared, “Yes, learn able to communicate different culture langue.” One particularly striking comment was from a participant who wrote, “It has help me at home to teach my kid and my wife know my culture.” Responses like these indicate that although the majority of participants didn’t change their mind about being multicultural, this was not a bad result, as it showed that most already felt strongly that being multilingual and multicultural are benefits, not detriments.

Overall, throughout the open-ended survey questions in both surveys, the participants shared how they liked that they were multilingual and multicultural, that it was a great opportunity, and that it was useful to be able to communicate with more people. When asked in the initial survey if there were negatives to being multilingual, nearly 100% of participants stated they didn't see any negatives to their identity. When asked about the positives, however, they shared many ideas including that they had access to more opportunities, it helps your mind, and that it makes them better, smarter people. The post-intervention survey asked if their minds had changed regarding their multilingualism, and they all either stated no, they still felt very positive about it, or they shared how they had grown in their understanding of being multilingual in a positive way. Post-intervention open-ended questions regarding participants' multiculturalism were also enormously positive, with all participants stating in one way or another that they are proud to be multicultural, they think it is interesting, and it is an asset.

### **Intervention Group Discussions and Written Reflections**

#### ***L1, L2, and Multilingualism***

Throughout the course of the intervention lessons, participants had the opportunity to learn about the positive benefits to being both multilingual and multicultural. They also had the chance to have large and small group discussions as well as responding in writing to prompts in order to reflect on their multilingual and multicultural identities. Participants were given the opportunity to think about the following questions related to their L1, L2, and multilingualism over the course of the lesson interventions:

- “Where do you use your first language in the United States?”

- “Where do you use English? In your house, at the grocery store, at work, with your friends, with your family, etc.”
- “Do you use English or your first language more? Why do you think that is?”
- How much English do I use now vs when I first came to the United States?
- “Do you enjoy learning English, or do you wish that you could use your first language all the time to communicate in the United States? Explain.”
- “How often do you use your first language with family or friends? Do you try to share your language with others-like your children or other family or friends? Think about these questions, and then share your answers with the class if you feel comfortable.”
- “How do you plan to continue growing in your English language skills?”
- “How do you plan to continue to be fluent in your first language?”
- “If you have children, how do you plan to ensure they are multilingual?”

**Multilingualism.** Participants were able to think about and discuss their views on using both their first languages (L1) and second languages (L2). One such example was when participants discussed in which locations in the United States they spoke their first language versus English and then which language they used more often. Although participants used English in almost every context outside of the home, and in many cases also inside the home with their families, they were also more likely to say they used their first language more than English. One participant commented, “I use my first language more because I’m not good enough to use English. I prefer my first language.” Another stated, “I use Spanish most. I use English in the grocery store or in the clinic. With friends I only speak Spanish.” Nearly all students shared that they used their first

language more because it felt easier for them or they had many situations where they would use it even though they spoke mostly English in public contexts.

**Perceptions of L2.** When asked in a reflection question whether they enjoyed learning English or wished they could use their first language all the time instead, all participants responded equally that they preferred having to learn English and enjoyed it. Although this answer should not be surprising given that each of them are enrolled in an English class, it was still interesting to learn. None of the participants were resentful or frustrated that they had to learn another language. In fact, they were quite happy about it. For instance, one student wrote, “First, learn English well to communicate with others. I must learn English. The English language is rich and colorful. I am very interested in learning English. It is my pleasure to learn English well. Secondly, learning English means that I am not dementia, and I am happy for my progress.” Another participant shared, “I like to learn English because the language is very interesting, and I’d like to speak more english with other people.” A third person explained a positive of learning English, stating, “I do like having to learn the English language because is my second language back home and its easy to go everywhere.”

**L1 Usage.** Participants were given the option to reflect on how much they use their first language with their family and friends, as well as how much they try to share their first language with them. This reflection question allowed the participants to think more deeply about how often they actually use their first language with others. One participant shared with the class, “Only my friends from Spanish, yeah. I have two brothers uh they speak English-bilingual. And sometimes try to speaking with they uh speak English a little bit. I’m trying with them.” For him, his brothers and friends already

know Spanish, his first language, fluently, so he spends most of his time speaking Spanish with them. However, he also stated that he tries to use English with his brothers so he can improve on his L2 as well. Having a supportive family that can speak both languages is a huge asset to this participant since he can continue to use both languages often in his life. Another participant shared with the group, “Yes, I speak my language first language with my family, my daughter, my son. And then when I go outside at work I do speak English only. The first one write and read in first language. The second one she tried to tried, but (laughs).” In this situation, the participant indicated that she uses her first language with her family at home, and she also has attempted to have both her children learn how to read and speak in her first languages as well.

**L2 Growth.** This leads to the follow-up reflection question: “How do you plan to continue growing in your English language skills? Some of their written reflections included, “Continue to work with people who speak English, memorize words. Continue to work with people who speak English, memorize words, attend English classes,” “By speaking English with friends and coworkers at work,” “My plan is always reading different kinds of books, i talk with people, wach different kinds of moves i Record my voice and lesson.” Writing these ideas down on paper makes the tasks seem more doable and can be turned into action.

**L1 Maintenance.** In the second part of the reflection, participants were asked to write about how they would continue to use their first languages so they do not lose their skills, as well as how they would help their children be multilingual as well, given that second and third generation immigrants tend to lose their families’ first language over time. Their answers touched on a few themes, which included continuing to speak in their

first language with their families and friends whenever possible and explicitly teaching their children and grandchildren how to read and write in their first language. One participant wrote, “I plan to continue teaching my great-grandchildren to speak and read and write in Russian.” Another father shared, “Plan to continue to speak more of my first language with my wife and my baby... though my wife doesn't speak but teaching her together with the baby... Got them some of the app that will be more easier for them to learn.”

### ***C1, C2, and Multiculturalism***

During other parts of the lesson interventions, participants were asked the following discussion and reflection questions regarding their first culture (C1), new culture (C2), and their multilingualism:

- “Do you feel proud to be from your home country? Why or why not?”
- “Do you feel proud to live in the United States? Why or why not?”
- “How much do you feel part of your first country’s culture compared to the United States’?”
- “Think back to when you first arrived in the United States: How did you feel? What was familiar and similar to your home country? What was different?”
- “Do you like that you have a multicultural background? Why or why not?”
- “Do you feel comfortable being yourself in the United States? Where do you feel most comfortable? Where do you feel least comfortable? Why do you feel comfortable? Why do you feel less comfortable? Would you want

to change anything about the United States to make it more comfortable for you?”

- “What are some of the traditions or beliefs that you have in your home culture that you want to continue having part of your life in the future?””

**C1 vs. C2 Pride.** The students shared with each other the pride they felt for their home country and the United States, and nearly everyone said they feel proud to be from their home countries and have pride living in the United States. One student said, “All my family there, my mom, my brother, my sister, everybody in that country....so I love so much uh my friends and people I grow with uh so my country...is my first country. Love so much.” The same student had this to say about the United States:

...For me America I just yeah, I get in, and uh it’s very supportive. Everybody minding their own business and nobody bother you. You can make whatever you want as long as you don’t bother other people so it’s so beautiful. Everybody is scared to break the law, nobody coming in your space. Back to my country it’s not like that way. We don’t have freedom like we have over here. In Djibouti, it’s where I’m from. You can make your dream life. The land of opportunity. I mean, if I try to talk what I like over here it’s I think I cannot finish all life. So basically that’s why I like here and I can make my dream true.

Another student shared the following:

I am from a beautiful country. It’s very large and also is very cold, and it’s also very beautiful. I loved it. And different, every state have a different food. It’s rice, all different, maybe seven, maybe midnight-very large...I don’t know. I think I like but I proud to be an American too. I’m very proud to be here in the United

States. I think there is braver, and people very nice. Each other is very nice, very nice and friendly. I think people very happy. If you go outside, you're shopping look at people all very at each other smile, and inside, outside open. Yeah, I'm very happy. I think that now is a better home life.

**Feeling of Connection.** When participants were asked to reflect on how much they feel part of their first country compared to the United States, feelings were mixed. Three respondents shared that they feel more part of their first country and its culture compared to the United States. For example, one person wrote, "I am feeling proud in my first country culture 100% compared to USA." Another from Ukraine shared the following:

It was only recently that I began to feel like *a small part of the culture of the United States*. I liked the lobster + Hamburgers + turkey with apples. I like baseball-I often watch league competitions and I like basketball-I play with the neighborhood guys. I like country music-I listen and play the harmonica.

Others, however, felt more in the middle or more strongly American. They wrote, "Is feel 50% Ghanaian and 50% American." Another explained, "I want to integrate into American culture and I'm trying to change. Including language learning and future study of American culture and history." A third participant wrote, "There is two kinds of culture in my first country's good side and bad sides. So I like more my present country's culture I like."

**Multicultural Pride.** In another lesson, participants were asked to reflect on the question, "Do you like that you have a multicultural background? Why or why not?" Responses were 100% positive. Respondents answered with strong opinions; among the



responses was, “I like having multicultural background because it help me learn different cultures and different backgrounds.” Another participant wrote, “Yes i like have Because reminds me where i come from and I like their traditions, i am proud.” Other participants shared, “I love my multicultural background, I have a very nice family. Everyone is excellent. But I am willing to make friends with people from different cultural.” One other participant wrote, “Yes! I like having multicultural background. Because it is beautiful, diversity, more spirituality, love and hope in it.”

**Level of Comfort with C2.** While all responses were positive regarding their multicultural pride, respondents shared both negative and positive thoughts regarding their feelings of being comfortable in the United States. The participants were asked, “Do you feel comfortable being yourself in the United States? Where do you feel most comfortable? Where do you feel least comfortable? Why do you feel comfortable? Why do you feel less comfortable? Would you want to change anything about the United States to make it more comfortable for you?”

The majority of participants described themselves as being most comfortable at their own homes with their families. One participant stated, “I feel most comfortable in family and forest. I feel least comfortable speak American people.” Another participant shared, “I feel comfortable in my house, in my family, with people who speak the same language. And I feel least comfortable um the store speak I don’t know English. Because I have to speak English.”

Still another shared the following:

I feel most comfortable um in my house um cause being at my work sometimes in the storage, but I feel a little nervous speaking with them, the Americans. But I’m

tried every day. And I feel less comfortable in I think uh in the street and sometimes at the malls because it's a mas Americans, and this is difficult for me sometimes you know?

On the other hand, many other respondents shared that they feel very comfortable almost everywhere in the United States. Responses included statements such as, "I feel more comfortable here because of job. My wife is here, my son is here so I feel more comfortable here than back home"; "I think that everywhere is comfortable..."; "Yeah I'm usually comfortable most of the time. I am most comfortable at home and more similar social around teachers or around the community"; and "I'm comfortable everywhere in the United States. Especially at home when I'm working and going to different states and different people every day...".

### **C1 Maintenance.**

The final intervention reflection question asked all participants, "What are some of the traditions or beliefs that you have in your home culture that you want to continue having part of your life in the future?" This question was one of the most important because it focused on how to take action and retain their first culture while being part of a new place. Common themes included cooking traditional foods, celebrating holidays from their C1, teaching their children their religion, reading poetry, dancing, and continuing to use their first language. It was interesting to see what the participants shared regarding their own children and what they hoped to pass down to them. One participant wrote, "I will teach my religion for my children. Will teach them history. -I will read books. -Watch some videos. -I will go church every week." Another shared, "I will teach my children and my grandchildren how to cook the food of our country."

### **Summary and Chapter Five Preview**

Throughout this chapter, I have shared key findings from the participants' ratings of statements using a Likert scale in both the first and second survey. I then described the participant responses to the surveys' open-ended questions. Finally, I described pertinent comments from the participants during the lesson intervention discussions and written reflections sharing how they felt about their multilingual and multicultural identities. I also described how participants reflected on how they could use these language and cultural skills with their families and out in the world.

While the results between the first and second survey did not prove to show many significant changes in participants' overall perceptions of their own multilingualism and multiculturalism, there were positive trends within the first survey from before the participants left their home countries and after they arrived in the United States. There were also positive trends between the first and second surveys related to participants' perceptions of multiculturalism and multilingualism and how they should share their backgrounds with their families.

In the next chapter, I will briefly review the results of the study and explain how those results tie to the literature review. I will explain the limitations of the study as well as share how this study may be valuable to various stakeholders. Lastly, I will make suggestions for potential further research to be done on this topic to benefit adult English learners.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to allow intermediate-level adult English learner (EL) students the opportunity to reflect, understand, and potentially improve their views towards themselves as multilingual and multicultural individuals. Throughout my research, I focused on addressing the following questions:

1. *How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*
2. *Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

After collecting data through a survey with Likert-scale statements and open-ended questions, student discussions, and student written reflections, it was found that the participants for the most part felt quite positive about being multilingual and multicultural and having multilingual and multicultural identities. In addition, the results of the first survey indicated that participants showed a general increase in positivity towards their first language (L1), second language or use of English (L2), home country's culture (C1), their new culture in the United States (C2), and their overall multilingual and multicultural identities from before they left their home countries as compared to after they arrived in the U.S. They also appeared to show an increase in overall

understanding of what it means to be multilingual and multicultural, then reflected on and articulated how they would continue to use their multilingualism and multiculturalism in the future with themselves, their family and friends, and their community.

In Chapter Five, I will briefly review the results of the study and explain how those results tie to the literature review. I will explain the limitations of the study as well as share how this study may be valuable to various stakeholders. Lastly, I will make suggestions for instruction and further potential research to be done on this topic to benefit adult English learners.

### **Results and Findings**

Data collection tools used in this study included a pre-intervention survey and post-intervention survey with Likert-scale and open-ended questions, teacher notes on discussions during the intervention, and participants' written responses to reflection prompts following the interventions. The Likert-scale items in the survey allowed me to collect data on participants' perceptions of their multilingual and multicultural identities and compare the results quantitatively over three time periods: before arriving in the U.S., after arriving in the U.S., and after completing the lesson interventions. The qualitative data, including the open-ended survey questions, the class discussions, and the written reflections, gave me better insight into how the participants viewed their identities in their own lives and in their own words. Having both the quantitative and qualitative data gave me the opportunity to compare perceptions of how the participants felt about their multilingual and multicultural identities to each other, as well as go in more depth with each participant to understand how they felt regarding their L1, L2, C1, and C2.

As mentioned in chapter four, positive perceptions towards aspects of participants' multilingualism and multiculturalism decreased slightly in the post-intervention survey's Likert-scale questions. Although it is not certain as to why the average positivity rating lowered after the mini-lesson interventions, a few theories seem plausible. Since the first survey had a pre-immigration and post-immigration section in it, participants may have felt that there needed to be a significant difference in their views between the two time periods. However, in the second survey post-intervention, there were only questions regarding one time period: right now. Participants may not have felt the need to inflate their views since there was no other time period to compare their perceptions to. Other reasons for the dip in average positivity rating towards participants' multilingualism and multiculturalism could be that they had a heightened understanding or awareness of the terms they were being asked about, or the change in response rate (from 12 to 10 participants) in the second survey could have skewed the results. For more thoughts on why this occurred, please refer back to the previous chapter.

However, it was also noted that the qualitative data gathered from the two surveys' open-ended response questions, the class discussions, and the written reflection responses were all extremely positive. Participants showed not only a very positive view towards being multilingual and multicultural before the mini-lesson interventions were completed; they also shared many ideas as to how they planned to continue to maintain their L1 and C1 while also making a plan to continue improving in their understanding of their L2 and C2. The post-intervention open-ended survey questions also indicated that they had not lowered their level of positivity towards their identities. On the contrary,

they wrote that they had new ideas as to how they would utilize the benefits of their identities in their daily lives.

A more detailed look at the results and findings of this study are found in chapter four. Overall, a few themes and connections to the literature review emerged through analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data. They are discussed in the following subsections.

### ***Increased Positivity and Pride Towards L1 and L2***

Participants in the study felt quite positively towards being multilingual before they arrived in the U.S., but they tended to increase their positivity towards their identity after they moved. The participants also felt more pride for being able to speak more than one language the more they reflected on being multilingual discussing its benefits. They also expressed wanting to teach their children their L1 in order to ensure their families continued to know the language into future generations. This high desire to use their L1 with their families is needed in order for their children to successfully maintain the families' home languages. As Zhang (2010) writes, first generation immigrant children are very influenced by outside forces that motivate them to learn English; children must use English every day in order to understand their teachers, make friends at school, or feel included in activities. This makes their language shift faster and may make them feel less motivated to maintain their families' L1. Being intentional about helping family members continue to know their family's L1 is important in order for them to successfully keep it.

### ***Strong Desire to Teach L1 to Family***

Participants consistently felt strongly that it was important to share their L1 with their children while living in the United States. These results are consistent with the literature review study where immigrant women who maintained their L1 in addition to learning English tended to hold more pride for their home countries as well as a stronger attachment to their heritage languages (Stoessel, 2002).

### ***Decreased Feelings of Respect Towards L1***

Participants did not feel as respected using their first languages after arriving in the U.S. as they perceived they would before arriving. As mentioned in Chapter Four, before arriving in the United States, 50% either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt like people in the United States were going to respect their first languages. However, after arriving in the U.S. this percentage lowered to 41.7% (before interventions) and 44.4% (after interventions). This feeling of less respect towards their L1 after moving the U.S. is not surprising. As Hashemi (2011) writes, when immigrants move to a new place, they may experience language anxiety regarding their L2, and they also may struggle with navigating the new cultural conventions. This anxiety makes them question their sense of self and feelings of positivity towards their new home.

### ***Strong Desire to Teach Traditions to Family***

Compared to the time before moving to the U.S., participants felt a stronger desire to continue the traditions of the C1 and share their C1 with their children once they had moved to the U.S. In fact, percentages shifted from 75% before immigration, to 83.3% after immigration, to 100% of participants strongly agreeing or agreeing that they wanted their children to know about their C1. Sharing traditions and values of immigrant families' C1 with their children has been shown in studies such as Sun et al. (2020) to be



positive. In the study, it was found that involving immigrant children in their heritage culture (C1) and using their L1 in the home with their children was beneficial for their children. It was interesting to see how the increased time spent in the U.S. along with the mini-lesson interventions made an impact on the participants' perceptions regarding their home cultures.

### ***Positivity Towards C1 and Increased Level of Comfort with C2***

Participants indicated throughout many of their Likert-scale responses and their open-ended responses that they felt positive towards their home countries and home cultures (C1). As shared in Chapter Four, participants stated again and again how they felt pride for both their C1 and C2 and that they felt “happy” and “good” to be multicultural. They also felt increasingly more comfortable with living in the United States and its different cultural aspects (C2). For instance, participants improved their perceptions towards how they felt about living in the United States. Before immigrating, 66.6% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they would be happy in the U.S. This percentage increased to 81.8% after arriving in the United States and then 88.9% after the interventions. This increased feeling of positivity towards their new country and C2 ties to evidence in the literature that suggests having confidence in one's C1 allows a feeling of more willingness and openness to engage with and feel positive towards other cultures (C2). It appears that participants' positivity towards their home countries and cultures allowed them to feel increasingly more positive towards their C2 (Chao, 2015).

### ***Benefits of Reflection Time***

Just like Lum (2015) found podcasts and self-reflections as useful tools to improve his students' self-esteem and confidence, this study also showed how beneficial it can be to include opportunities for immigrants to self-reflect on their identities. Each mini-lesson included an opportunity to deep self-reflection through a writing prompt. These prompts allowed participants the time to think more deeply about themselves, their multilingualism and multiculturalism, and how they would use their knowledge of multiple languages and cultures into the future.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was an incredible opportunity for me as both a newer researcher as well as a teacher of adult EL students. I was able to take time as part of my regular adult EL online class to learn more about how the students felt about themselves as multilingual and multicultural individuals. I was also able to give them time to discuss with each other and reflect on how they felt about their L1, L2, C1, and C2. Being both their instructor and the researcher put me in the unique position of already having established relationships and trust with the participants. This same study cannot be as easily replicated if the researcher did not establish prior trust with the participants.

In addition, the population that was studied throughout this research is unique. All participants were adult English learners in an intermediate English class living in the suburbs of Minnesota. They all attended English classes and had a strong desire to learn. They also were technologically savvy, as they had to attend classes online. Replication of this study may prove to be difficult with a different population.

Another limit to this study was that I missed opportunities to analyze the survey data comparing participants' responses based on their backgrounds. For instance, I could

have analyzed the results of the survey based on which parts of the world the participants were from, how long they had been in the U.S., or how many total languages they knew. I had asked these questions in the initial open-ended response section at the beginning of the surveys, but I did not use the data during the analysis portion of the study. This information could show important patterns related to how the participants felt about their multilingual and multicultural identities, but those connections are unknown due to not focusing on this data during analysis.

Another limit of the study was simply the time factor and how the mini-lesson interventions had to be set up. Ideally, the study could have been ongoing for a number of months with more time to delve into each topic in the lesson interventions, whether that be allowing the participants more time and space to think about what it was like moving to the United States, reflecting on how they felt about their current language skills, making and implementing goals for themselves to continue with their C1 traditions, or other topics. Because the study only lasted a total of eight class periods, the time and depth of the interventions were not enough to show a significant change in perception surrounding participants' multilingual and multicultural identities.

Lastly, the study conducted only had twelve participants; the second survey also only had ten respondents instead of the original twelve. These numbers were too low in order to find statistically significant results. Patterns can be noted but cannot directly translate to every English-learning adult immigrant population.

### **Suggestions for Future Research and Instruction**

As mentioned in the limitations section, this study was created and completed within eight lessons. If this study were to be conducted again, results could prove to be

more significant if more time were given to each of the lessons; they could also be revised and expanded upon in order to provide more depth of content and more opportunities for discussion and reflection. Another idea for future research would be to include more detailed background questions for the participants to answer in order to have more data to be analyzed and compared after completion of the second survey. For instance, other important questions of consideration might be the participants' immigration status, their reason for coming to the U.S., whether their families or friends were already living in the U.S. prior to emigrating from their home countries, and when they began learning English. My sample size was also only twelve participants, so having the opportunity for a study with a larger group of participants could be beneficial to finding more consistent trends and patterns.

This particular study could be continued in future research by conducting follow-up interviews with the participants to see how they feel about their multilingual and multicultural identities long term, months or years after the study was completed. Getting participants' perspectives about their multilingualism and multiculturalism in a follow-up study could help with gauging how their opinions of their multilingual and multicultural identities have stayed the same and how much they have shifted. Conducting interviews with the participants could also provide them an opportunity to share if the intervention had an impact on them over the long term.

Another research possibility would be to conduct the same study with a different population sample. For instance, it would be interesting to offer this kind of research study with mini-lesson interventions to other groups of immigrant English learners such as newcomers to the U.S., immigrants who are still in the K-12 school system,

immigrants currently not participating in an adult English class, or English learners who are the second or third generation of an immigrant family. Second or third generation immigrants in particular tend to lose their families' L1 over time (Potowski, 2004), and their families' C1 tends to shift towards the mainstream culture as well (as cited in Schwartz, 2006). Conducting a study focused on any of these groups of adult ELs could potentially generate very different results.

Finally, this research could be used by teachers of adult learners in future instruction by using the surveys and intervention lessons in action research in their own classrooms. Teachers could incorporate the surveys and mini-lesson interventions into their class lesson plans in order to gain insight into how their students view themselves as multilingual and multicultural learners. The students in their classes would also have the chance to reflect and grow in their understanding of these identities as well.

### **Implications and Benefits to Stakeholders**

This research may be valuable to various stakeholders. First, teachers in the field of EL education, particularly teachers of adult immigrants, may find this study valuable because they can see the positive impact knowledge and reflection on students' multilingual and multicultural identities can have on both their students and themselves as educators. Through this study, educators become more aware of who the students they teach are and how they view themselves. They also are able to facilitate opportunities for students to take action so their L1, L2, C1, and C2 can stay a strong part of their identities in a positive way.

The students themselves also may find this study valuable; targeted lessons with discussion and self-reflection activities allow students the space to think about how they

view themselves as well as learn more about the positives of being multilingual and multicultural, which can build up confidence and self-esteem. Adult EL students can become more knowledgeable about the positive attributes of being multilingual and multicultural and how these identities can be valuable to themselves and those around them.

Education curriculum writers may find this study transformative in what and how they choose to write curricula centered around adult EL immigrants. The opportunities and results of this study show that allowing ELs the opportunity to learn, discuss, and reflect on their multilingualism and multiculturalism in a more structured way can benefit their self-awareness and even opinions of their identities.

Lastly, community members where English-learning immigrants are living may also find this study informative because they can use the study's results to better understand their neighbors and how they are an asset to the community. They also can gain empathy and understanding as to how immigrants in their community feel.

I plan to share this study and its findings with my local Adult Basic Education colleagues, EL conferences such as the MELEd conference or TESOL conference, and online on the Hamline University Bush Library database. My hope is that sharing this research will result in more teachers, administrators, and local officials taking the time to ensure their adult EL population know the value of their multilingualism and multiculturalism and feel more self-aware of how they perceive themselves as multilingual and multicultural immigrants in the United States.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to find out how adult immigrant English learners felt about their multilingual and multicultural identities. It also sought to allow participants in the study the time and space to reflect on their identities through mini-lesson interventions and then to see how these interventions impacted their perceptions. My specific research questions asked the following:

1. *How do adult English learners in an adult EL program view their multilingualism and multiculturalism as they enter a new country and experience a new language in the United States?*
2. *Through activities and reflections centered on the benefits of being multicultural and multilingual, how do students' understandings of multiculturalism and multilingualism, and their views of these identities, evolve?*

In Chapter One, I shared the reasons why this topic resonated with me and my personal history on the topic. I also explained the purpose and reason behind why I wanted to complete this study and shared my research questions. In Chapter Two, I discussed prior research done in the fields of education and linguistics, specifically related to language and culture and how immigrants adjust to a new language and culture in another country. I also shared important benefits of being multilingual and multicultural followed by a third section on the benefits of self-reflection in changing attitudes and perceptions. In Chapter Three, I explained background information on my study's participants, the methodology, and the data collection tools used in the study. In Chapter Four I summarized my data collection process and the tools I used to collect the data. I also presented interesting results and findings from the data, and analyzed these

findings. In Chapter Five, I reviewed the results and findings and discussed potential relationships to existing research. I also shared limitations of the study, suggested future research, explained how the study could impact stakeholders, and discussed how this study could be shared in the field of adult education.

From this study a few tentative conclusions can be drawn regarding these particular EL students. Adult English-learning immigrants become more comfortable with the idea of continuing to use their first language in public as well as sharing their first languages with others after moving to the United States. These immigrants also strongly desire their children to be able to understand their family's L1 and C1 even as they adapt to and use their L2 and C2 in the U.S. They hold pride for their multilingualism and multiculturalism and view it as an asset. The participants feel like their first languages are less respected after arriving in the U.S. compared to what they hoped prior to arriving in the country. Adult EL immigrants tend to feel increasingly happier to live in the United States over time. Opportunities for discussion and self-reflection on adult EL immigrants' perceptions of their multilingual and multicultural identities allow immigrants the ability to think about who they are and how they can maintain these identities into the future.

These conclusions are specific to this particular study. More research related to the topics of adult EL immigrants, self-perceptions on ELs' multilingualism and multiculturalism, and self-reflection in the adult ESL classroom would be needed to confirm these conclusions. This future research would benefit adult ELs, their teachers, and the adult EL field as a whole.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Surveys

#### Pre-Intervention Survey Likert-Scale Questions

Initial Background Questions:

Where are you originally from?

How many languages do you know or use?

How long have you lived in the United States?

**Look at the sentences. Do you agree or disagree? Use the Likert scale: (Rate on a scale from 1-5: 1=I strongly disagree, 2=I disagree a little, 3=I don't agree or disagree, 4=I agree a little, 5=I strongly agree**

**Before Moving to the United States Culture Questions (Pre-Intervention Survey)**

Before I moved to the United States, I was proud to be from the country I was born in.

Before I moved to the United States, I was happy imagining living in the United States.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought it was important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt comfortable sharing my traditions and culture with my neighbors and friends.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt comfortable with American culture.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought having an understanding of more than one culture made me smarter.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought being part of multiple cultures makes it easier to get a job.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought being part of multiple cultures made me a better person.

Before I moved to the United States, I planned to keep doing the traditions of my native country in the United States.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt like people in America were going to respect me for who I was.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt like the United States was going to be safe.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought it was going to be easy to be part of multiple cultures.

### **Before Moving to the United States Language Questions (Pre-Intervention Survey)**

Before I moved to the United States, I was excited to speak two or more languages.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt I was going to be comfortable speaking English in public.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought I was going to feel comfortable speaking my first language in public.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt I was going to be comfortable sharing information about my first language with others.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought it was important for my children to know how to speak my first language.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought knowing multiple languages would make me smarter.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought knowing multiple languages would make it easier to get a job.

Before I moved to the United States, I thought knowing multiple languages would make me a better person.

Before I moved to the United States, I planned to keep using my first language in the United States.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt like people in the United States were going to respect my first language.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt like people were going to treat me equally to others.

Before I moved to the United States, I felt like I was going to be treated nicely when I spoke my first language in the United States.

**After Moving to the United States Culture Questions (Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey)**

I am proud to be from the country I was born in.

I am happy living in the United States.

It's important for my children to know about the traditions of my country I was born in.

I feel comfortable sharing my traditions and culture with my neighbors and friends.

I feel comfortable in American culture.

I think having an understanding of more than one culture makes me smarter.

I think having multiple cultures makes it easier to get a job.

I think having multiple cultures makes me a better person.

I try to keep doing the traditions of my native country here in the United States.

I feel like people in the United States respect who I am.

I feel safe in the United States.

I think it is easy to have two cultures in the United States.

### **After Moving to the United States Language Questions (Pre- and Post Intervention Survey)**

I am proud to speak two or more languages.

I feel comfortable speaking English in public.

I feel comfortable speaking my first language in public.

I feel comfortable sharing information about my first language with others.

It's important for my children to know how to speak my first language.

I think knowing multiple languages makes me smarter.

I think knowing multiple languages makes it easier to get a job.

I think knowing multiple languages makes me a better person.



I try to keep using my first language in the United States.

I feel like people in the United States respect my first language.

I feel like people treat me equally to others in the United States.

I am treated nicely when I speak my first language in the United States.

#### Pre-Intervention Survey Open-Ended Questions

***1. In general, how do you feel about being multilingual (knowing 2 or more languages)?***

***2. In general, how do you feel about being multicultural (having 2 or more cultures you were/are a part of)?***

***3. What are the negatives of being multilingual and multicultural?***

***4. What are the positives of being multilingual and multicultural?***

#### Post-Intervention Survey Open-Ended Question

***1. Over the past few weeks, what did you learn about being multilingual and multicultural that you didn't know before?***

***2. Over the past few weeks, what did you learn about being multilingual or multicultural that you thought was important? Why?***

***3. Has your opinion changed about being multilingual in the United States? What changed your mind? Explain.***

***4. Has your mind changed about being multicultural in the United States? What changed your mind? Explain.***

## Appendix B: Open-Ended Responses

### Pre-Intervention Survey Open-Ended Questions and Responses

<b><i>1. In general, how do you feel about being multilingual (knowing 2 or more languages)?</i></b>
good, I have a positive attitude towards being multilingual and therefore I am learning a third language-English.
I feel great because i am able to communicate in 2 different languages.
Good
It feels nice to express yourself in public
I think speaking all languages is the same but knowing English is more helpful.
I feel nervous when I speak English and embarrassed. because I don't know if I'm pronouncing it right.
I feel so happy
I am very happy.
I feel so good.
i feel good about me know more then one languages.
I think it is great opportunity
I think I have to hard study English.

<b><i>2. In general, how do you feel about being multicultural (having 2 or more cultures you were/are a part of)?</i></b>
I feel proud to be a multicultural.
I am very good.
Sometimes I use my first language.
I like to learn different cultures, it is interesting for me.

Yes, I am part of it i feel in medium.
Its good because i am able to know more cultures
I feel you are lucky if u have 2 or more multicultural and u r smart person
Great
I feel good
good
I feel apraund to be part

<b><i>3. What are the negatives of being multilingual and multicultural?</i></b>
No one
May be can't get meny purple sepik with. (Maybe can't get many people to speak with.)
I don't think there are negative things
Some or few people do not understand so you can't use it wisely.
There is no negative things with being multicultural and multilingual.
None
Doesn't have
Is hard for my kid to learn my language at time
No
I think waht i can't celebrates of my contry on here

<b><i>4. What are the positives of being multilingual and multicultural?</i></b>
mind
You have more opportunities for job and getting to know other cultures and people.
Makes me better at everything

Easy to get job and easy to move around
I think it help you who you are and where you are from.
I could have a better job with better salary and have more friends
I meke be better person and smart
Peuple cange experience eche other.
Get more opportunities and easy life.
You smart human being your open-mind

### Post-Intervention Open-Ended Questions and Responses

<b><i>1. Over the past few weeks, what did you learn about being multilingual and multicultural that you didn't know before?</i></b>
I learned ti meet the People different (I learned to meet people who are different.)
I have not met so many people from different countries in Ukraine as in the USA
Yes. It is important to learn different cultures and meet different people and speak several languages to have a better job or better communication with people.
Good for my better life.
I learn about speaking my country language to my kid, my tv is always on my country station in other for my wife and kid to learn more
To respect and believer there is difference between two different cultures
I have better opportunities
Multilingual and multicultural are a major feature of the United States. People live happily here
it is very important that you do not forget your country and support the culture of your country
I learn it is very important to communicate with others.

**2. Over the past few weeks, what did you learn about being multilingual or multicultural that you thought was important? Why?**

I learn how respect the law

I think it is important in monoculturalism (multiculturalism) to have a tolerant attitude of people when communicating.

It is important to learn different cultures and meet different people and speak several languages to have a better job or better communication with other people

Yes it is important . I got very big knowledge about being multilingual and multicultural.

Learn alot about watching even country news and cooking my country food will help my kis since he was born here

Yeah. Definitely Help earth

I can use my 2 languages in many ways.

People respect each other.

I consider it important that my future children know the culture of my country and my first language.

It helps me who I am and from where I am .

**3. Has your opinion changed about being multilingual in the United States? What changed your mind? Explain.**

No i doun't

My opinion about the multilingualism of the USA has not changed

I still think that it is very important to learn 2 languages

I feel more conference. (confidence)

No my opinion had never change because I knowing different languages in the USA helps alot. There are different people from different countries living in the USA

Just be generous and help each especially homeless ppl

No it hasn't

I want to learn American culture and language.

I learned that in the USA they use many languages and treat everyone with respect for different cultures
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<b><i>4. Has your mind changed about being multicultural in the United States? What changed your mind? Explain.</i></b>
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I don't changed idea
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I was surprised by the great benefits for people of libraries (multilingual)
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It's the same I think is good
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I am very happy.
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My opinion hasn't change because it has help me at home to teach my kid and my wife know my culture
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Yeah, I do a lot
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Nothing
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It is very important to respect the cultures of other countries and feel safe.
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Yes, learn able to communicate different culture langue
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## Appendix C: Intervention Lesson Plans

[Link to Full Curriculum with All Lesson Plans and Slides](#)

### Mini Lessons for Self-Reflection and Growth

#### Mini-Lesson Themes

1. Background Knowledge for Multilingualism and Multiculturalism and Pre-Survey
2. Lesson 1: Being Multilingual
3. Lesson 2: The Benefits of Multilingualism
4. Lesson 3: Multilingualism: Planning for the Future
5. Lesson 4: Being Multicultural
6. Lesson 5: The Benefits of Being Multicultural
7. Lesson 6: Multiculturalism: Planning for the Future
8. Post-Intervention Survey

#### Mini-Lesson Example

##### **Day 4: Mini-Lesson 3: Multilingualism-Planning for the Future**

**Objectives:** *Students will discuss how they feel about being multilingual in the United States.*

*Students will orally or through writing reflect on how they plan to maintain their first language and/or maintain it in their families.*

**Warm-Up (7-10 min):** Reflect and discuss with the class, taking turns sharing orally:

How often do you use your first language with family or friends? Do you try to share your language with others-like your children or other family or friends? Think about these questions, and then share your answers with the class if you feel comfortable.

**Article (15 min):** Let's take a look at an article that shares what happens when you lose your family's first language:

(We will take turns reading the article and then summarize what happened every couple of paragraphs.)

<https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2021/10/18/losing-your-parents-language>

Article Reflection (15 min): Have you or anyone in your family or friends experienced loss of your first language? How does this affect you and your family or friends?

#### Ways to Maintain Your First Language While Learning English

Let's look at some ways you can maintain your first language and while continuing to find ways to grow in your English:

1. Continue to use your first language with certain family, coworkers, or friends.
2. Use English with other coworkers, family, or friends.
3. Listen to music, read books, or watch television in both languages
4. Write in a journal in both languages.
5. Talk positively about your language abilities to others-don't belittle your language skills.

Reflection Questions (written or recorded) (15-20 min): How do you plan to continue growing in your English language skills? How do you plan to continue to be fluent in your first language? If you have children, how do you plan to ensure they are multilingual?