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Factors Influencing Multilingual Families' Decisions to Accept or Waive English Language Services

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by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

Holding my breath, I walked up to the new kindergarten family to introduce myself and inform them that their child had qualified for English language (EL) services. More often than not, I feel a sense of dread or anxiety in anticipation of these conversations because it is becoming more common for families to cringe or question the qualification of services. This family had both responses. I introduced myself as the kindergarten EL teacher and informed them that their son had qualified for language services. As I talked with the mom and dad, a look of shock and skepticism fell over the dad's face. The conversation did not last long, and the family went into a conference with the classroom teacher right afterward. The next day, the father came into the school office and informed the EL team that he wanted to waive services for his child. He said that even though their mother speaks Spanish his child does not and will not need language services.

One essential role of an English language (EL) teacher is to screen new students for EL services (also known as English as a Second Language). Over the last several years in this role, I have had the responsibility to screen the large number of new kindergarteners who have another language listed on the home language survey, and I started to notice a pattern when it came time to notify families that their child has qualified. As I approach the students' families, I frequently feel a sense of anxiety or dread because the reactions from families range from gratitude to shock. When reflecting on these feelings and experiences with my colleagues within the district and surrounding

suburbs who also teach multilingual learners (MLs), there is an agreement that this pattern is not unique to my school.

Each year, several families within my school and dozens within the district choose to waive these language services their children have qualified for. This year alone, forty-nine multilingual families of the 1,181 total in our district have opted out of services (Ellevation, 2023). Knowing the value of explicit language instruction for our multilingual learners and believing the EL program in our district is of high quality and beneficial to students, I felt concerned and compelled to understand what influences families to accept or waive multilingual services. This led me to conduct a case study on the following research questions:

1. What *values* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

Chapter One details my professional background and experiences related to the topic, the rationale and purpose for the study, and key themes that will be further explored in Chapter Two. These key themes include the values of teachers and ML families, the knowledge teachers and ML families have relating to language acquisition, EL programming, and multilingual family experiences. The conceptual framework used in the study is reviewed, as well as my positionality as a researcher and how that may impact the research.

Operational Definitions

English language (EL) services is the term used to describe the language programming offered to students progressing toward English proficiency. These services are sometimes referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL). This dissertation will use the term EL, while the literature might use ESL.

Multilingual learner (ML) refers to students learning an additional language. This asset-based term acknowledges that students come from various language-rich backgrounds. Multilingual is also used to describe the families of these students, who speak more than one language and have immigrant or refugee background experiences, either first-hand or personal.

The terms family and families are used in this dissertation. Much of the literature addressed uses the term parent/s; however, I recognize that not all children live with their biological or legal parents, and I am conscious of the diverse family structures that exist today.

The term values are used throughout this study. When using the word values, I am referring to the expressed values of multilingual families and participants, and understand that when one person expresses a value, it does not imply that all people within that culture or group have the same value.

English Language Programming

English language programming is a legal requirement for districts with multilingual students (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The intention of EL services is to remove language barriers to academic opportunities and support students'

communication and academic language skills (United States Department of Education, 2016)). However, EL services can vary depending on your district or state. For example, EL services in states like Arizona and Massachusetts include a Structured English Immersion program that consists of 120 minutes a day of English language instruction in an immersion classroom, depending on the student's proficiency level, yet only lasts one year (Arizona Department of Education, 2023; Walker, Shafer, & Liams, 2004).

On the other hand, in states like Minnesota, EL services can range from 45 minutes daily for beginning-level proficiency students to 30 minutes per week for higher proficiency students and can last anywhere from five to seven years (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021). These services are typically provided for more than just one year by highly qualified, licensed EL teachers, which there is a growing demand for due to the ever-increasing number of MLs in the United States.

Multilingual Learner Statistics in Minnesota

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), the number of MLs in the United States has increased by a half-million over the past ten years. In Minnesota, there has been a slight drop in the overall enrollment of non-EL students. Yet, there was an increase in EL enrollment, with 77,474, or 8.9%, of PreK-12 students identified (English Learners in Minnesota Report, 2023). Furthermore, the number of MLs in primary grades is much higher than at the secondary level.

Students speak 344 different home languages in MN, with Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Karen, and Vietnamese spoken the most. Out of the 8.9% of MLs in Minnesota, 3,204 of them are students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). This means those students have had at least two fewer years of schooling than their peers

when they entered school in the U.S. (MN Department of Education, 2023). Many of the SLIFE students have come to MN as refugees. In fact, between 2005 and 2020, approximately 33,500 refugees have moved to MN.

Importance of Explicit Language Instruction

MLs are a growing population of students who require teachers with specialized knowledge and training in specific areas of second language acquisition and culturally relevant teaching practices (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2010). Yet most of the school day is spent in the mainstream classroom with a teacher without specialized training. Olsen (2010) reported how this lack of specialized training could be detrimental to multilingual learners who need targeted language instruction to participate fully in classroom content. Other researchers agree that even teachers with the best intentions can negatively impact a ML's academic success if the program does not meet their needs (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994; Delpit, 2006).

Cummins (2008) reported multilingual students experienced academic difficulties due to being exited early from the English as a Second Language (ESL) program because they appeared proficient in English. Yet, they were not proficient in academic language. Olsen (2010) supported this in her research on Long Term English Learners (LTELs), which is the term used to describe MLs who have been in the U.S. school system for at least six years but are not considered proficient in academic English. She stated that students who have had EL services eliminated too quickly are at a higher risk of becoming an LTEL and have an increased chance of dropping out of school because of an inadequate grasp of academic English. Another group of students with many dropouts is those whose parents refused language support services (Honigsfeld, 2009). These

students were identified as MLs yet were placed in mainstream programs without any language service during the day and showed a sharp decline in math and reading achievement compared to their peers in the EL program. Other researchers have confirmed these drawbacks of waiving services and placing students in mainstream classes without specialized language services (Waters, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Another example of the negative impact of removing explicit language support too soon was the 1998 voter Proposition 227 in California. Proposition 227 was a voter initiative lasting from 1998 until 2016 that severely restricted the use of primary language in instruction and reduced the English language program to one year. Students were expected to grow from a level 1 English proficiency to level 4 in the Structured English Immersion program. Once they completed the first year, they were placed in a mainstream classroom with limited language support. In these mainstream classrooms, the students were taught by teachers who had minimal knowledge of the students' primary language, second language acquisition, or best pedagogical practices in academic language instruction.

Proposition 227 had several ramifications, the first being the impact on the academic performance of the MLs in California post-Proposition 227. Gandara and Hopkins (2010) reported the achievement gap grew, test scores diminished, and teachers began to change their instruction to prepare students for standardized assessments and disregard genuine comprehension of the content due to potential penalties for their school or themselves. An additional consequence of Proposition 227 was that it fueled the notion that English language services were ineffective and hindered language acquisition. This

notion resonated nationally, as several states passed bills that limited language services for multilingual students (Zehr, 2001; Wright, 2005).

The consequences that result from removing valuable EL services too quickly are evidence that supports the importance of targeted academic language instruction that is rigorous, meaningful, explicit, and aligned with grade-level content standards (Kim & Garcia, 2014). Additionally, these services must be provided by highly qualified teachers who have a clear understanding of second language acquisition and best pedagogical practices for culturally relevant instruction. Mainstream teachers most likely have not had specialized training in these areas, which is necessary for accelerated English language development (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

Misinformation about Language Acquisition

One common opposition to EL services I have experienced from families and teachers is that the qualified students "can speak English just fine." In her research on the negative attitudes towards English as a second language in the Somali community, Kipchumba (2017) reported the families believed if a student was born in the United States and spoke English well enough, they did not require language services. The families in her study perceived the purpose of EL programming to be for new-to-the-country students who were beginning MLs. These beliefs demonstrate a misunderstanding of how language is acquired and the difference between acquiring conversational English versus academic language.

Over the last several decades, researchers have discovered a difference in conversational fluency compared to the academic language required to access grade-level content (Halliday, 1994; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Roessingh, 2006; Cumins, 2008; Ranney,

2012). This distinction is important because conversational English only represents about 10% of the comprehensive ability of an academically successful learner, and proficiency is acquired in three years or less (Roessingh, 2006). Comparatively, academic language proficiency is more complex and takes five to seven years to develop (Cumins, 2008; Halliday, 1994; Ranney, 2012). However, in conversations with families and teachers, I have discovered some of them believe that if a child can converse easily, the likelihood of academic challenges is low, and language services are unnecessary. This misconception of language acquisition could potentially influence a family's decision regarding multilingual services.

Opposition to English Language Services

In Kipchumba's (2017) research on the negative attitudes of families towards English language services in their school community, she found a common belief that students were pulled during core content, such as math and reading, which led to students falling behind academically. This idea is not unique to their school community. I have had multiple conversations with parents of multilingual students who understand the program to be primarily a pull-out model. These parents have shared their concerns about their children missing critical instruction or the fear of them being singled out and feeling 'othered.'

Concerns like these have stemmed from the parents' past personal experiences within an English language program, where they were pulled for hours each day, missing core instruction. One conversation with a father who went through the ESL program in my district thirty years ago shared how traumatizing it was for him to have missed out on the content being taught in the classroom while he was receiving language services that

focused primarily on the social aspects of English. He shared how damaging this was once he exited the program in middle school and was thrown into the mainstream classroom with significant gaps. Understandably, families would be hesitant to accept language services if they think this is how an EL program is run in the present day.

Program Models

Several different program models are used to support the academic success of English learners in schools. The models currently used in my district are targeted services in a pull-out group, co-teaching, and parallel teaching. Targeted services pull students in the same grade and proficiency level to work towards similar language goals. This happens in a small group setting in the EL teacher's room. Co-teaching is a collaborative teaching model where the EL teacher pushes into the classroom and delivers content along with the classroom teacher. This type of model is common with mainstream classrooms that have a high number of MLs needing services. The last model, parallel teaching, is where the EL teacher pulls a small group of students and teaches the core curriculum with added language support while the classroom teacher is teaching the content.

The model chosen to service a student is based on the needs and proficiency levels of the student, along with the teachers' schedules. Students receive twenty to thirty minutes of services 2 to 5 days a week, and EL teachers are restricted from pulling during core content. Instead, they are encouraged to provide support during non-instructional time (Minnesota Department of Education, 2023). These models were developed according to federal guidelines that specify MLs should have equal opportunities to participate in the core curriculum and avoid unnecessary segregation (Lhamon & Gupta,

2015). The EL teachers within the district where I work are intentional about protecting our ML's core instruction and make a strong effort to collaborate and co-teach with mainstream teachers, which provides equitable learning opportunities (Giles & Yazan, 2019).

Co-teaching is traditionally defined as a collaboration between the classroom teacher and a specialist such as a special education teacher, reading or math teacher, gifted and talented teacher, or, more recently, an EL teacher (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). This model of service is preferred because pull-out services can be more of an interruption and lead to feelings of social isolation for MLs (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Not only does co-teaching avoid these negative feelings associated with being pulled out of class, but it has also been beneficial when scheduling, as it can provide services to many students simultaneously. Another benefit is the strengthened professional partnerships and teacher learning from the collaboration (Giles & Yazan, 2019). These co-teaching relationships the EL teachers in my school community have formed make our program one that is beneficial and positively impacts our multilingual learners.

My belief in the strength of EL programming and experiencing mixed reactions to the qualification of services led me to explore whether there was a lack of communication between the school and ML families. Research has shown that communication between school staff and ML families can sometimes be challenging (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007; Guo & Mohan, 2008). Several barriers exist in the school systems that lead to these challenges.

One potential barrier is the home language survey, a requirement for all fifty states in the U.S., that is filled out during enrollment. This questionnaire can be confusing

as four statements connect to language use, yet each statement allows for three different answers, as shown in Figure 1. Though districts are required to provide a translation or interpreter for families, there have been many instances where parents of kindergartners were unaware that the purpose of the survey was to screen for multilingual students.

Figure 1.

Minnesota Language Survey

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	**Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:**
1. My student first learned:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	

If a family marks that another language is spoken other than English for any of the questions, legally, the student must be screened for services. I have seen this lead to mistrust and confusion, creating barriers between the families and the school. The home language survey is not the only document that could lead to barriers in communication. Identification notices sent home can also lead to confusion and act as an obstacle to communication.

Once a student has qualified for language services, the family must be notified within thirty days of the start of the school year (United States Department of Education, 2016). A notification letter is sent home and translated into the family's home language if possible. The contents of this letter include a description of the EL program and services provided and allow the families to accept or waive the services. The concern with this form of communication is that families may not be literate in their home language or understand the academic jargon describing the program (Yang, 2017; Cun, 2020). Families are then unaware of the language services their children receive or that they can opt out of them. In the last two years, I have received three notification letters from families, two of which were blank, and only one marked the box to accept services. This led me to wonder how many families truly understand the EL program and if their understanding influences how they make decisions regarding these services.

Multilingual Family Voices

In her research on Somali families' attitudes toward ESL services, Kipchumba (2017) reported many misunderstandings parents had relating to language services, and these misconceptions led to significant concerns. Addressing these concerns allowed for improvement in family partnerships and the EL programming in their school community, which would not have been possible if the voices of these parents were not explicitly solicited. Kalyanpur and Harry (2004) supported the necessity of inviting parents' voices into the conversation of who receives services and why, noting that these conversations typically happen within the professional community of educators, researchers, and policymakers. The lack of parent voice for EL services has led to recommendations that researchers explore how all stakeholders, especially families and teachers, engage in

conversation and collaboration on the education of ML students (Guo, 2007, 2009). The gap in research on ML family voices and the language services their children do or do not receive, along with the desire to form stronger school-family partnerships improving communication and programming, led to the purpose of this qualitative study: to examine the factors that influence families from an elementary school in a large metropolitan area of the upper Midwest and their decisions to accept or waive multilingual services.

Conceptual Framework

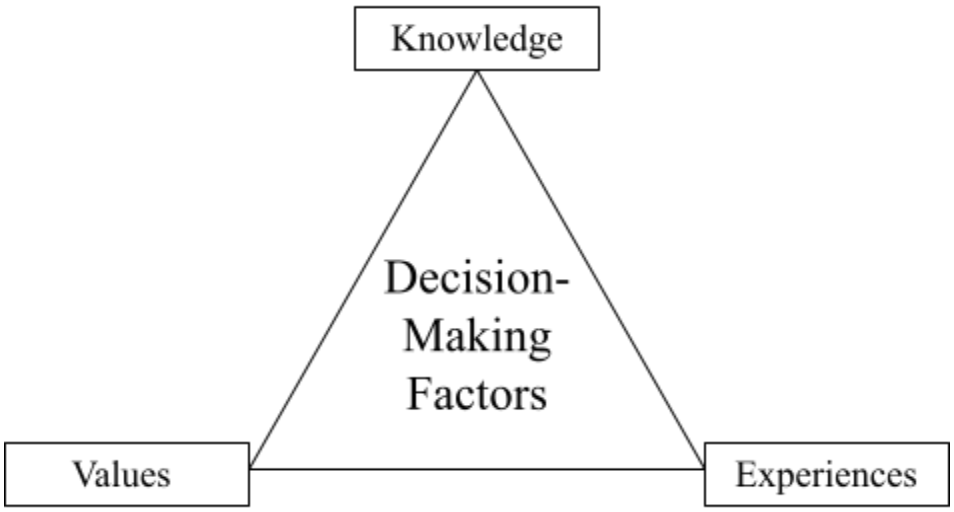
The conceptual framework I developed that guides this study is based on the review of literature and experiences I have had over the years connecting to families of multilingual students. Song (2005) asserted that parents' values concerning English education strongly influence their decisions. This is confirmed in Kipchumba's (2017) research on Somali families' negative attitudes toward ESL services, which suggested that beliefs about the purpose of language services and the knowledge regarding language acquisition influenced their decisions to waive or accept EL services. These factors identified in her study correlate with my conversations with multilingual families. Families have shared their personal experiences in a language program that have influenced their preferences for language services for their children. The combination of the research and these experiences led to the development of the conceptual framework, Decision-Making Factors.

The Decision-Making Factors (DMF) framework, illustrated in Figure 2, asserts that people's values, knowledge, and experiences impact their decisions. Broch and Sander (2013) argue that values are critical in all facets of a person's life that require a decision. They explain that one's values are connected to what one knows, which results

from experiences and beliefs. This can change over time because what we know to be true results from the culture and historical period that we exist in (Newman, 2009). Therefore, examining the three factors, values, knowledge, and experiences, is essential to understanding the families' decisions for their children and is the foundation for the research questions guiding this study.

Figure 2.

Decision-Making Factors Framework



Positionality Statement

It is important to acknowledge my positionality as a researcher. Reflecting on positionality, specifically in comparison to the social position of the participants in my study, helps me to have a clearer understanding of the power relations impacting my research (Day, 2012). Utilizing Jacobsons' and Mustafa's Social Identity Map (2019) as a tool to explore my positionality in relation to this study, I have identified three facets of my identity that will impact how I approach and interpret my research: my profession as an EL teacher, and being a White, monolingual English speaker.

My background and experiences as an EL teacher influence how I view the world

and approach my research. Years of experience learning about language acquisition and best practices in teaching multilingual learners have led to my belief in the importance of explicitly teaching academic language to make grade-level content accessible to all students. It is important to keep this in mind as I interact with my study participants and analyze my data, knowing my bias towards language programming in my school and district. My hope is that the participants understand the trust and respect I have in the decisions they have made for their children and that they feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me. I understand that many factors influence a family's decision regarding language services for their children, and I aim to approach the data collection without judgment.

Another facet of my identity impacting this research is that I am a White, monolingual English speaker and could never fully understand the experiences of learning multiple languages at one time while navigating White, English-dominant spaces. Sometimes, I am unaware of the barriers and linguistic isolation the multilingual families experience or the power relations ingrained in language and race. There is the potential that the participants of this study may feel an uncomfortable power dynamic working with a researcher who is a White, proficient English speaker, and I must be aware of this at all times. One way I hope to mitigate both facets of my identity that may impact my research is to utilize cultural liaisons throughout the process. I will seek their perspective and listen to their invaluable feedback.

Summary

This chapter offered an introduction to this study, which explores the research questions:

1. What *values* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

Included in this chapter were descriptions of my professional experiences and background connecting to multilingual families and services within the district where I work. Additionally, the rationale of the importance of the topic and its impact on the field of multilingual services were presented.

Chapter Two will review the literature relating to this study's key themes. In Chapter Three, a description of the methodology selected, data collection, and analysis will be provided. Chapter Four reviews the findings of the data collection, and Chapter Five discusses the data analysis, implications of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter One provided the personal and professional background of the researcher to the study, as well as background information concerning the history of English language (EL) services and models. A rationale for the study and the importance of this topic to EL education was also described. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature relating to the research questions:

1. What *values* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

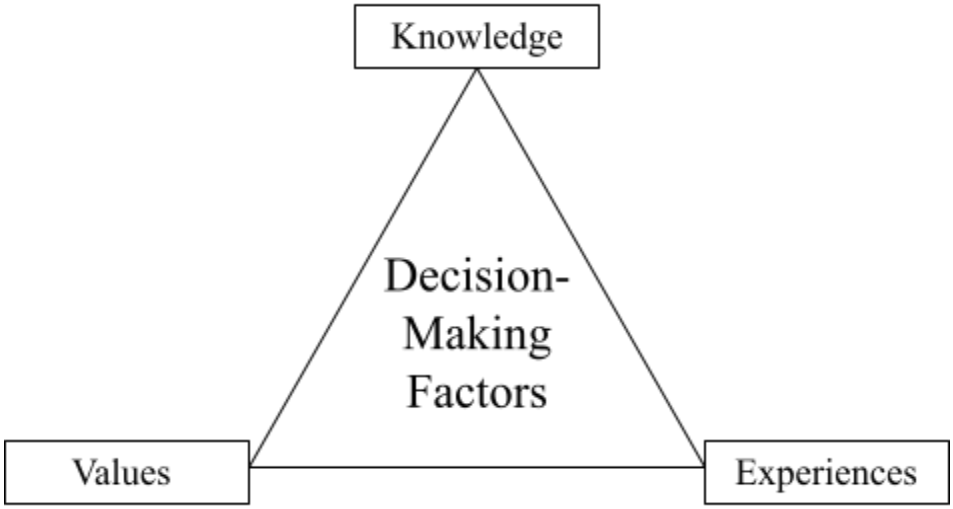
In this chapter, the term multilingual describes students and families who speak more than one language and have immigrant or refugee background experiences, either first-hand or personal. The terms parent and families are also used interchangeably in this chapter. Much of the literature reviewed for this study uses the term parent/s; however, this researcher recognizes that not all children live with their biological or legal parents and acknowledges the diverse family structures that exist today.

Chapter Two is organized according to the conceptual framework I developed guiding this study: Decision-Making Factors. The Decision-Making Factors (DMF)

framework, shown in Figure 3, asserts that people's values, knowledge, and experiences impact their decisions.

Figure 3.

Decision-Making Factors Framework



Therefore, the literature surrounding multilingual families' values, knowledge, and experiences regarding English language services was examined to lay a foundation for this study. Chapter Two is organized into three themes and begins with multilingual families' values for their children's schooling. The next theme examines what is known about English language education in the United States. This will be followed by the last theme, which explores the experiences of multilingual students and families with English language programming.

Values: Multilingual Families and Their Ideals for Their Children

A person's values can be described as a concept or belief about a desirable end state or behavior (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Values could also be explained as what one rates highly, prizes, or esteems, and many scholars agree that values influence behavior (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Song, 2005; Rangel, Camerer, & Montague, 2008; Brosch &

Sander, 2013). Therefore, it is essential to address current literature surrounding multilingual families and their values relating to education and English language services, as they most likely influence their decisions regarding these services. Research has shown that families value the teacher's expertise, meaningful and rigorous education, inclusion in the mainstream classroom, and shorter time in the EL program (Amaral, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Waterman, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Kipchumba, 2017; Yang, 2017; Perlman, 2020). This theme will examine these values.

Multilingual Families Value Academic Success

Historically, multilingual families have been labeled as uncaring or uninterested in their children's education due to a lack of involvement (Walker, Shafer, & Liams, 2004; Baquedano, López, Alexander, & Hernández, 2013; Shim & Shur, 2018). This mindset stems from the problematic term "involvement," which is primarily based on White, middle-class family norms that traditionally revolve around participation in school activities (Waterman, 2009; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Multilingual families face many barriers relating to this restrictive role of involvement, a few being scheduling conflicts, communication challenges due to language, and a lack of understanding of how the school system functions (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Waterman, 2009). This concept of parent involvement has also led to deficit thinking, placing blame on families when their children struggle academically, and creating the narrative that they do not value their children's education (BaquedanoLópez, Alexander, & Hernández, 2013; Shim & Shur, 2018). This contradicts research on multilingual families' values, which has revealed their strong desire for their children to succeed academically.

Waterman's (2009) research on ESL parents' collaboration with schools reported that families were highly motivated to support their children's education and wanted to partner with schools. All participants in the study expressed the priority they placed on their children's education and their desire to learn how to best support their schooling. Sometimes this support was provided by working multiple jobs to pay for their children's needs, as described in Kim and Garcia's (2014) research on EL's perceptions of language and academic learning. One student shared that their parents took any job available because they wanted their children to concentrate on school, succeed, and be the first in their family to attend college. Similarly, Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2009) described families' beliefs that education was the route for their children to succeed in life and not have to work as hard as they had to guarantee survival. Families view education as the key to social mobility and expect it will help their children achieve their dreams (Yang, 2017; Cun, 2020). Clearly, multilingual families have high regard and expectations for their children's education.

Multilingual Families Value Rigorous Education

Literature on multilingual families' values has revealed their desire for their children's education to be academically challenging, align with grade-level content, and prepare them for future success (Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Kipchumba, 2017; Perlman, 2020). Kipchumba's (2017) research on negative attitudes toward ESL services revealed the families' belief that mainstream teachers have higher expectations and more rigorous content than EL teachers and had concerns about their children falling behind if placed in the EL program. Guo's (2007 & 2009) research confirms this in her studies on communicating with parents across cultures and their

perspectives on ESL learning in schools. The participants in her studies explained their desire to have their children participate in more challenging coursework with a higher level of content, which they did not believe the ESL program provided. They described the ESL program as useless, a barrier to getting ahead, and lacked preparation for post-secondary education. Furthermore, they believed their children to be bored and were concerned that ESL was damaging their self-esteem.

This value for rigorous content is not limited to EL instruction, as Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2008) revealed in their study on families and teachers working together to support the literacy development of Sudanese youth. The participants in their study shared their wish for all teachers to have higher expectations of their children. One father shared that teachers' expectations are low because their children are refugees and learning English, so they are seen as "not being too smart." He explained that when teachers have higher expectations, the children are more motivated to learn. The idea that teacher expectations influence teacher behavior which in turn impacts student performance is backed by years of research and a legitimate concern for parents (Rubie-Davies, 2008; Hattie, 2009; De Boer, Bosker, & Van der Werf, 2010; Ready & Wright, 2011; Sorhagen, 2013).

Research has revealed specific expectations multilingual families' have regarding rigorous learning for their children. Families hoped for their children to have purposeful interactions with their peers to develop their English language skills, believing this is an essential component of learning English (Kim & Garcia, 2014). Another expectation identified was the wish for their children to have explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary to make grade-level content accessible and prepare their children for entrance

to post-secondary education (Guo, 2007 & 2009). Similarly, the families in Guo's research felt the focus on study skills, such as writing a lab report, compared to learning specific science concepts, did not adequately prepare their children for academic success, nor was it as rigorous as mainstream classes. However, some parents did report their appreciation for the critical thinking and writing skills developed in ESL classes which were necessary for success in school (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2009). In short, multilingual families value learning that supports academic success in the classroom and prepares their children for success in future educational endeavors.

Multilingual Families Value Time in the Mainstream Classroom

One significant concern multilingual families have shared is the time EL services take away from mainstream classes (Amaral, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Kipchumba, 2017). One family member in Guo's (2007) study called the ESL program a waste of time and was confused about why her daughter was placed in ESL in elementary school and continued through high school. Another study by Guo (2009) revealed the idea that two years was too long to be in an ESL program. Many parents were anxious that the program would slow down their children's progress and believed the exit criteria to be unclear, leaving them to wonder when and if they would ever exit the program. This belief was corroborated in Kipchumba's (2017) research on negative attitudes toward ESL services. The families in her study revealed their fears that their children were falling behind due to missing out on the content taught in the mainstream classroom. They shared their concerns about the extended stay in the program and felt the time frame in the program should be limited.

While some parents felt the EL program impacted their children's academic progress negatively, some had positive reactions to the program (Guo, 2009). These families had recently arrived in the country and did not know much about the educational system. Similarly, Amaral's (2001) study on families' decisions about program models found that families that were newer to the United States were more inclined to support their children in language programs. The families in her study preferred more language support in school during the initial years of instruction for their children. Families in Kipchumba's (2017) study also appreciated the increased support in reading, writing, grammar, and small group instruction. In summary, while some supported their children receiving EL services, many believed the mainstream classroom best fit their children's academic needs.

Multilingual Families Value Teacher Expertise

Research on multilingual family engagement in American schools has described many families' high regard for their children's teachers (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007; Yang, 2017). These families have been known to have such high respect for teachers that they have been known to delegate their children's education entirely to the teacher. They believe questioning the teacher or sharing their ideas is disrespectful and challenges the teacher's authority (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Guo, 2009). Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2008) reported parents considered teachers' recommendations to be more informed and important than their own and that the teachers will act in their children's best interest in decisions connected to grade placements, advancements, special education services, or EL services. This high regard for teachers results in a power differential and leads to the teacher having a strong influence on the decisions families make regarding

their child's education (Adair & Tobin, 2008; Coleman, 1997; Granata, Mejeri, & Rizzi, 2015; Orletti, 2000). Given families' high value on a teacher's expertise, it is important to analyze teachers' perspectives of multilingual students and EL services. How teachers see these students directly affects how they treat them and which educational opportunities they make available or withhold (Gunderson, 2020; Martinez, 2018).

One teacher perspective relating to multilingual students and services is the belief that EL services are only necessary for beginning multilingual learners (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Olvera, 2015; Froemming, 2015). Olsen (2010) stated that teachers commonly misunderstand that students proficient in conversational English should not qualify for EL services. This misunderstanding can lead to academic challenges for intermediate ML students, as research has shown that they need explicit language instruction (Cummins, 2008; Honigsfeld, 2009; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Olsen, 2010). Schleppegrell, Greer, and Taylor (2008) described this language instruction as the language of schooling, which is more than just vocabulary words and phrases. This language of schooling has been labeled as academic language and is a meaning-making resource with specific functions and purposes depending on the academic context's communicative goal, content, or demand (Halliday & Mattheissen, 1994; Ranney, 2012). Academic language, the discourse primarily used in the school environment, is incredibly complex (Ranney, 2012) Yet, as Froemming (2015) reported in her research on teachers' perceptions of EL services, many classroom teachers were unaware of or unable to connect academic language and content.

It should be noted that the concept of academic language has been rejected by some scholars (Flores & Rosa, 2015). These scholars argued the term academic language

places value on standardized language practices and is subtractive, expecting students to replace their home languages. They asserted that these approaches do not value the rich linguistic backgrounds of the students but instead marginalize them. This researcher is aware of and acknowledges that the concept of academic language can be problematic when using the term.

Mainstream teachers unaware of the differences between fluency in conversational English versus academic English proficiency, and assume that intermediate multilingual learners should succeed in grade-level content (Menken and Kleyn, 2007; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Giles & Yazan, 2019). This assumption can lead to deficit thinking if these students struggle academically because teachers believe their conversational fluency to be the same as academic English proficiency. Deficit thinking is when educators focus on what they believe is wrong with a student instead of looking for and building on their strengths (The Achievement Network, 2021).Teachers perceive the lack of academic progress as a lack of motivation or desire to do well in school, when in reality, the academic challenges may be the result of deficit thinking and insufficient language support (Tse, 2001; Valdes, 2001; Youngs & Youngs, 2001; Cummins, 2008; Olsen, 2010; Honigsfeld, 2009; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Shim & Shur, 2018). Liams, Shafer, and Walker (2004) reported the deficit mindset of teachers toward MLs and the programs that serve them has become increasingly negative over the last several decades. Sharma (2018) explained that this type of thinking leads to low expectations and adverse academic outcomes.

Studies on deficit thinking connecting to multilingual students revealed that some mainstream teachers believed a student's use of their home language puts them at an

academic disadvantage and signals low intelligence (Valdes, 2001; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Shim & Shur, 2018). This thinking can lead to language loss and identity conflict, which in turn can negatively impact a student's learning, as research has shown that using a home language has a positive impact on academic success (Cummins, 2000; De Angelis & Dewaele, 2009; Grosjean, 2010; Bialystok, 2011).

Shim and Shur (2018) reported teachers with a negative perception of multilingual students had lower expectations and offered less rigorous content within the classroom. This negative perception impacted their students' learning, leaving them feeling powerless, unmotivated, and disconnected from their education. Martinez (2018) echoed these findings in his research on the EL label and persistent deficit discourse. He detailed the assumptions educators make regarding MLs - that they are at risk or struggling, even before there is evidence of this, which leads to framing these students as problems to be fixed.

Though much research is connected to the deficit mindset of MLs and services, studies have explored the positive effects of teachers who support their multilingual students and cooperating language teachers (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). In their research on ESL and content teachers' collaboration, Giles and Yazan (2019) reported the positive impact co-teaching and collaboration had on MLs and their academic performance. Not only did the study's mainstream and EL teachers learn from one another, but students also noted the collaboration. They were motivated to participate more frequently, felt freer to ask for assistance, and their relationships with their teachers were enhanced. Other researchers have confirmed the benefits of content teachers collaborating with EL

teachers, finding that learning outcomes and graduation rates have improved (Spezzini & Becker, 2012; Dove & Hongsfeld, 2018; Giles, 2019).

As mentioned, how we perceive and make sense of our world impacts our actions (Gunderson, 2020). A teacher's perception has the potential to positively or negatively influence the lives of their multilingual students and families, especially given the regard many multilingual families hold for teachers and their expertise (Cummins, 2000; De Angelis & Dewaele, 2009; Honigsfeld, 2009; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Olsen, 2010; Shim & Shur, 2018; Martinez, 2018; Giles, 2019). Multilingual families value teachers' judgments, so it is necessary to analyze teachers' values to fully understand their impact on the families' decisions to waive or accept language services.

Summary of Multilingual Families' Values

This theme explored multilingual families' values relating to education and English language services. The literature revealed the high regard families have for teachers and the influence the teachers have on the families' decision-making (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Guo, 2009; Yang, 2017). As a result of this high regard, teachers' perspectives on multilingual students and English language services were examined. It was revealed that many teachers believe EL services are only necessary for beginning MLs, and misunderstand conversational fluency for academic English proficiency (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Olsen, 2010; Froemming, 2015). Researchers also reported educators' deficit thinking towards MLs and the programs that serve them (Tse, 2001; Valdes, 2001; Youngs & Youngs, 2001; Cummins, 2008; Olsen, 2010; Honigsfeld, 2009; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Shim & Shur, 2018).

An additional value discovered was the high motivation multilingual families have to support their children to succeed in school and their belief that education is the key to success for their children's futures (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Waterman, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Yang, 2017; Cun, 2020). Not only do families value education, but they expect meaningful and rigorous instruction that prepares their children for post-secondary education (Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Kipchumba, 2017; Perlman, 2020). Families specified their desire for their children to be included in the mainstream classroom so they do not miss out on important content being covered or their self-esteem damaged (Amaral, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Kipchumba, 2017). This led to the discussion of the belief that their children stayed in the EL program for too long and that services should only last around two years. The literature examined in this theme implies that multilingual families' values could impact their decisions regarding their children's language services. The following theme considers knowledge of English language services and how that influences families' decisions.

Knowledge: What is Known about English Language Education in the United States

"What we know to be true or real is always a product of the culture and historical period in which we exist" (Newman, 2009, P.53). Babbie (1986) stated that what one person "knows" today may not be true for others and could potentially change tomorrow. This is why it is important to explore what the families of our multilingual students currently know. The understanding a parent or guardian has of what English language services or English language development entail could significantly impact their decision

to accept or waive services for their child. These beliefs may have developed for many reasons, such as a parent's experience in EL services as a child, influence from a teacher due to their perspective, or a lack of clear understanding of the EL program or language acquisition. This theme explores current literature surrounding second language acquisition, English language service models, and the ramifications of language services.

Multilingual Families' Understandings of Second Language Acquisition

Research on the beliefs of EL services has noted specific ideas ML families have regarding how a language is acquired and EL programming (Guo & Mohan, 2008; Guo, 2009; Lueck, 2010; Kipchumba, 2017). One such idea is that this type of programming is designed to support students who have recently arrived in the United States. Kipchumba (2017) reported that some families thought services were unnecessary for students born in the United States and spoke English "well enough." This belief was confirmed in Lueck's (2010) study on ML parent perceptions, where one parent described the language program as "basic introductory English." Families who perceived the purpose of EL services as for beginning language learners were then confused when their child, born in the United States and could communicate in English, would qualify for EL services (Lueck, 2010; Kipchumba, 2017). This may result from misperceptions of how language acquisition occurs.

Similar to the research on teacher perceptions of language acquisition, Kipchumba (2017) asserted the parents in her study were unaware of the process of second language acquisition and the distinction between conversational and academic language. Participants in her study of negative attitudes towards ESL services reported that if their child spoke English, they would not need language services to succeed

academically. This misunderstanding of language acquisition is also noted in Guo's (2009) research on the discrepancies between ESL teachers' and parents' perspectives on ESL programming and education. Guo reported parents whose children were in the program for more than one year were in the program for too long, even though the program typically lasted only two years. This belief aligns with the idea that once a student can converse easily in conversational English, which takes around two years to become proficient in, EL services are no longer necessary.

An additional misconception regarding language acquisition and language services is the belief that proficiency in English is required before a child enters the mainstream classroom and that any language other than English is an obstacle to one's education (Lee, 2006; Kipchumba, 2017; Sim & Shur, 2017). Historically, this misconception has led to damaging legislation being passed, such as California's Proposition 227 in 1998, where English language and bilingual education services were restricted to one year in an intensive sheltered English immersion program (Kinney, 2018). Students were grouped by proficiency level instead of according to age, and academic content was postponed for students to develop a better understanding of the English language. The fact that this proposition passed with 61% of residents voting in favor of the bill and lasted until 2016 implies a widespread belief that this type of language programming was necessary for students to succeed in school. It is also imperative to note that research on laws such as Proposition 227 reported the motive behind the passing was more than just a belief on language programming; it was a racist attack on the education and opportunities of immigrant, non-white, multilingual children (Moreno & Garcia Berumen, 1999).

Proposition 227 was not the only bill passed restricting English language services. A similar, if not more restrictive, bill passed in Arizona in 2000 with a 63% voter approval rate (Wright, 2005). By 2001, other states like Massachusetts, Oregon, and Rhode Island were taking their cue from Arizona and California and proposing bills to replace bilingual and English language services with sheltered English immersion programs (Zehr, 2001). One representative from Rhode Island stated, "I'm against kids not learning English first" (Zehr, 2001, paragraph 25). The passing of these laws and belief that "learning English first" is necessary for multilingual learners to succeed in school has had significant ramifications: diminishing test scores, gaps in learning, a negative impact in educational opportunities, and confusion regarding language acquisition (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010).

English Language Service Models

The two most common EL service models in U.S. elementary schools are push-in and pull-out (Honigsfeld, 2009; Baecher & Bell, 2017). Though the push-in model is considered more inclusive, challenges remain with collaboration and co-teaching between the mainstream and EL teacher (Friend & Cook, 2010). These challenges stem from time constraints, lack of resources, conflicting teaching styles or personalities, support from the administration, and equal status.

Due to these challenges, targeted English instruction can become less of a priority with the push-in model, and EL teachers feel more successful pulling students out for services (Saunders, Foorman, & Carlson, 2006). However, the impact on students who are pulled from their mainstream classroom is that they miss out on instruction (Whiting, 2017). While EL teachers are restricted from pulling during core content such as math

and reading, scheduling challenges require students to be pulled from other content areas such as science, social studies, or health (Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, & Frisco, 2009; Callahan et al., 2010). This results in a gap in opportunities to learn some grade-level content that non-EL students can access and may cause some concern for the families of these students.

Ramifications of English Language Services

Researchers in the field of language acquisition and EL instruction have noted the negative consequences that the EL, ESL, and ELL labels have had on multilingual students (Gunderson, 2007; Garcia, 2009; Dabach, 2014; Umansky, 2016; Gunderson, 2020). One negative consequence is that being identified as an English learner may impact the educational opportunities of those receiving services (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010; Olvera, 2015; Kipchumba, 2017; Martinez, 2018). For example, being labeled an English learner could be a funnel onto specific paths that limit access to advanced courses or college preparatory classes (Callahan, 2005; Umansky, 2016). This funneling transpires from the fact that once a student is labeled as EL, schools have the legal responsibility to provide language services, which Callahan et al. (2010) explained could lead to schools prioritizing English acquisition over academic content exposure. For instance, scheduling challenges have led to EL coursework replacing valuable elective courses that prepare students for post-secondary. Furthermore, there have been times when staff responsible for scheduling see the EL label and then assume the student is unprepared for advanced courses (Callahan et al., 2010; Onda & Seyler, 2020). Limiting opportunities at the secondary level impacts access to postsecondary, which could be concerning to families and lead to language services being waived.

Not only does being identified as an English learner impact the educational opportunities of those receiving services, but the label of EL is frequently linked with deficit thinking (Valdes, 2001; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010; Olvera, 2015; Kipchumba, 2017; Martinez, 2018; Shim & Shur, 2018; Chaka, 2021). One example of students' awareness of this deficit thinking is reported in Monzo and Rueda's (2009) research on Latino children masking their Spanish language proficiency to pass as fluent in English. This research revealed students' awareness of their language differences and how they connected this to negative qualities like low intelligence. In addition to viewing their multilingualism negatively, it was reported that they were very aware of the power and status English holds in our society and desired to pass as fluent in English so they would be "accepted as a full member of society" (Monzo & Rueda, 2009, p.36). This idea that one is not a "full member of society" due to multilingualism has led some to avoid the EL label and services.

A separate label from English language services, yet one frequently compared to it, is that of special education. Umansky's (2016) study on the impact of classifying students as English learners described the key attributes of EL and special education that are similar. The EL and special education labels are given to students who differ from the norms of society (Becker, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2013). Furthermore, both labels specify students' rights and the educational systems' responsibilities for services specially designed to meet their academic needs. Because of these similarities, some have believed the two programs to be the same, impacting their decisions regarding EL services for their children.

Kipchumba's (2017) research on Somali parents' negative attitudes toward ESL confirms this misconception. Some parents interviewed shared their belief that the EL program was designed to help with speech, mistaking language services for special education services. This belief is unsurprising, though, as ELs have been overrepresented in special education and remedial programs, especially at the intermediate and secondary levels (Rueda, Artiles, Salazar, & Higareda, 2002; Samson & Lesaux, 2009). Kim and Garcia (2014) explained the overrepresentation as a lack of understanding of academic struggles resulting from language differences versus specific learning disabilities. Additionally, other researchers have suggested that educators do not adequately consider experiential, linguistic, or cultural factors before placing students in special education services, leading to overrepresentation (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; García & Ortiz, 2008; Liu, Ortiz, Wilkinson, Robertson, & Kushner, 2008; Sullivan, 2011). Given the deficit thinking connected to the EL label and the misidentification of ELs in special education, families may be more inclined to waive language services.

Summary of Knowledge of English Language Education in the United States

This theme examined literature relating to families' knowledge regarding language acquisition and language services. Available literature revealed that the EL label given to a student might negatively impact academic opportunities, lead to deficit thinking connected to a student's abilities, or even a misidentification for special education services (Valdes, 2001; Callahan, 2005; Gunderson, 2007; Callahan et al., 2010; Dabach, 2014; Olvera, 2015; Umansky, 2016; Kipchumba, 2017; Martinez, 2018; Shim & Shur, 2018; Gunderson, 2020; Onda & Seyler, 2020). Moreover, research on understanding language acquisition and academic language revealed some

misconceptions. For instance, some families believed that EL services were necessary for beginning language learners and unnecessary for those who could easily converse. Another misconception was that programming should not last longer than a year (Lee, 2006; Guo, 2009; Lueck, 2010; Kipchumba, 2017). The literature explored in this theme suggests that a parent's knowledge or beliefs about EL services and language acquisition could significantly impact their decision to accept or waive services. The following theme examines research surrounding multilingual parents and their experiences with language programming.

Experiences: Families' Background with English Language Programming

The decisions made in life are often shaped by a person's past experiences (Yechiam & Aharon, 2012). As individuals, we are products of our unique journeys filled with successes, failures, joys, and hardships, which research has shown can leave a lasting impact on our minds and influence our perspectives, beliefs, and values (Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015). Whether conscious or subconscious, our past experiences provide a lens through which we navigate the complexities of decision-making (Science Daily, 2009). Therefore, examining multilingual families' experiences with English language services is essential to understand their decisions.

Students' Experiences in English Language Services Varied

English language services have changed significantly over the last several decades (Callahan et al., 2010). The historic case of Lau vs. Nichols in 1964 ruled that multilingual learners must be provided with equal and comprehensible access to the curriculum (Wiley & Garcia, 2016). This meant identifying students who needed language support and implementing services designed to support MLs, yet schools were

not required to adopt any specific language assistance program (Rivera, Vincent, & Hafner, 1996; Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003). The lack of policy clarification regarding language programming left it up to districts to determine their own interpretations of the purpose of an EL program, exiting criteria, and expectations for teachers working with these students (DeAvila, 1990; Nadeau & Miramontes, 1998). For example, if a district defined language proficiency as survival oral language proficiency, this would lead to oral language assessments to determine exiting status (de Jong, 2004). Additionally, EL programs would focus on oral language development instead of literacy development, and skills developed in the EL program would not match the skills needed in the mainstream classroom leading to inappropriate referrals to special education services (Cummins, 1984; Gersten, 1996).

The inconsistent criteria not only led to inappropriate referrals to special education services, it also led to the misclassification of students for the EL program (Martinez, 2018). Abdi, Hofstetter, and Lord (2004) asserted this lack of agreement on ML identification was a significant problem in assessing and instructing these students. Furthermore, the varying identification process between schools, districts, and states meant some students would qualify and receive services in one state but not in another throughout their academic career (Ragan & Lesaux, 2006). This lack of systemic consistency led to students moving in and out of different programs, having significant gaps in their services at some point, and receiving services that were mismatched to their actual learning needs and language proficiencies (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Kim & Garcia, 2014).

Students in Menken and Kleyn's (2010) study described their experiences in ESL classes as "too easy." These classes were intended for new arrivals and failed to meet the academic needs of the intermediate learners, leading to poor academic performance and grade retention for many of the MLs. The belief that ESL classes were not cognitively or academically challenging is corroborated in Shim and Shur's (2018) research on multilingual learners' perspectives of their learning. Students in their study experienced language services that were boring, disconnected from their lives, and a place where they could take naps and stay out of trouble. Instances like these may have been avoided with consistent policies and definitions for EL identification, exiting criteria, and program purposes (Callahan et al., 2010).

Only somewhat recently has Minnesota adopted a consistent system for identifying and exiting MLs for language services (Onda & Seyler, 2020). In 2012, the Minnesota Department of Education began requiring all districts to use the ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) test to measure the English proficiency of every ML student on the same standard. This test is designed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, which shows growth in five areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and overall language proficiency (WIDA, 2023). Currently, forty-one U.S. states, territories, and federal agencies are members of the WIDA Consortium and use resources provided by the organization relating to the implementation of English Language Development Standards, instruction, professional development, and assessments.

In Minnesota, once students are assessed and identified for EL services, a licensed teacher either pushes into the mainstream classroom or pulls the students out for small

group instruction, depending on the student's proficiency level (MDE, 2023). At the elementary level, services range from 45 minutes daily for beginning-level students to 30 minutes a week for higher proficiency levels and last anywhere from five to seven years. These services and mainstream classroom instruction commonly occur in English, which has had certain ramifications on the ML's home language and identities (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Hongisfeld, 2009; Olivera, 2015).

Students Experienced Home Language Loss

The majority of MLs' education is spent in the mainstream classroom, where there is an emphasis placed on communicating in English (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). The pressure to speak solely in English has led to negative associations with speaking their home languages and language loss over time. Miller and Endo (2004) described the tension students experienced between speaking English at school and communicating with family in their home language outside of school. Students associated fluency in English with success and being American, and that continuing to use their home language hindered their acceptance in school. Menken and Kleyn (2010) reported that the combination of MLs' hesitancy in learning their home language and English-only programming in school can lead to home languages being replaced by English as early as the second or third generation.

Another cause for MLs' reluctance to speak languages other than English in school was the message they received from school staff that speaking in the home language was prohibited (Walker et al., 2004; Shim & Shur, 2018). One EL teacher reported they intentionally did not reference their ML's home languages or allow them to speak them in class (Shim & Shur, 2018). This teacher would reward their use of English

by throwing a pizza party at the end of the week if no one spoke Spanish during class. Walker et al.'s (2004) study on teacher attitudes toward MLs reported the ESL coordinator and the principal sat down with all of the MLs in their school and explicitly told them they were not allowed to speak anything other than English. Students in Monzo and Rueda's (2009) study on Latino children passing for English fluent were discouraged from speaking Spanish during lunch and recess. The message they received was their home language was no longer acceptable, not just for academic purposes but also for social purposes. These few examples were not anomalies, as evidenced by the English-only movement where bilingual education was banned in many states and efforts were made to declare English as the official language of the United States (Walker et al., 2004; Wiley & Garcia, 2016).

The English-only movement led students to make a connection between language and citizenship (Monzo & Rueda, 2009). One student in Monzo and Rueda's study remarked that his mother could not be considered an American citizen because she could not speak English. He had developed an awareness of the power and status of English and concluded that being different was the same as not being American. As a result, students in this study attempted to pass as fluent in English to become full members of society.

Not only was English perceived to be connected with citizenship, but MLs also linked it to intelligence (Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014). With the passing of Proposition 227 in California, students experienced a sudden switch in the language of instruction. This confused some students, who felt that Spanish and all that was previously learned in their bilingual programming was now "trash" (Monzo & Rueda, 2009). Students reported a loss of confidence in their academic abilities, describing the

shift from being at the top of the class to the bottom due to English-only programming. One student shared her fear of speaking English in public and that she was so terrified she would make a mistake and people would laugh at her. Clearly, prioritizing English had a significant impact on MLs and led to feelings of inferiority, conflicts of identity, and loss of their home language (Walker et al., 2004; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Wiley & Garcia, 2016; Shim & Shur, 2018).

Students Experienced Animosity from School Staff

Students identified for EL services have frequently been associated with deficit views (Baroutsis & Wood, 2018; Dudley-Marling, 2007, 2015; Jones, 2013). These deficit views have grown over the last several decades due to increasing negative attitudes in society toward multilingual learners and educational programs that support them (Walker et al., 2004).Research on MLs' experiences with teachers, EL teachers included, reported mistreatment, criticism, and ignorance regarding their learning, languages, and cultures.

Students in Shim and Shur's (2018) study described the treatment from their EL teachers as "mean." They explained their teachers misunderstood them, disrespected them, and saw them as lazy, which they believed impacted their learning. The teachers in this study blamed the students' multilingualism for their poor grades and did not believe there was room for a multilingual society where different languages are valued and respected.

A similar example of MLs being blamed for academic struggles was when a district's poor test scores were published in the news (Chaka, 2021). A local newspaper reported, "Annual standardized test scores show a yawning achievement gap between

high-income and low-income students in the district. English language learners, many of whom are African refugees, have even lower scores (Chaka, 2021, p.30). The students felt targeted and were enraged at this report which led to a protest against the newspaper article. This story is an example of MLs being both the victims of and responsible for poor school performance (Gunderson, 2020). MLs who performed poorly on their standardized tests are often blamed for their academic challenges when in reality, it is the system that failed them (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010).

Walker et al. (2004) reported on the failure of a school system to support multilingual learners. Students in their study experienced instruction from teachers who had no professional development or training in working with MLs, and half of those teachers stated they were not interested in any training even if the opportunity presented itself. 70% of those teachers explicitly stated they did not want any MLs placed in their classroom and that it was the EL teacher's responsibility to educate them. Students were expected to assimilate into the American school culture and were restricted from speaking their home languages at school. All school staff enforced this expectation, even denying students federally funded meals if they caught them speaking another language while waiting in line for their food. Furthermore, teachers blamed the MLs for detracting from the learning of the other students and declared the other students were more important to teach because they were the majority of the school. Experiences like this can have detrimental effects and leave a lasting impression on a multilingual learner (Walker et al., 2004).

Summary of Families' Background with English Language Programming

This theme examined the literature on the experiences of multilingual students over the last several decades. Research reported the lack of clarification in policies regarding identification, exiting, and program definitions has led to varied experiences in ML services over the years. The literature also revealed the time spent in mainstream classes, along with the push for English-only programming, has led to language loss, conflict of identities, and feelings of inferiority. Finally, research has shown the harmful experiences MLs have had with school staff. The staff's negative attitudes, deficit thinking, and ignorance led to mistreatment, criticism, and blame of MLs and their languages. These combined experiences can leave a lasting impression on a person's mind and shape the decisions they make in the future, especially regarding accepting or waiving English language services for their children.

Literature Review Summary

This chapter gave an overview of themes connecting to the conceptual framework, Decision-Making Factors, guiding this study. The three decision-making factors - values, knowledge, and experiences, were examined and are connected to the study's three research questions:

1. What *values* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

2. What *knowledge* influences a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

3. What *experiences* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

Literature on multilingual families' values revealed their strong concern for their children's academic success (Waterman, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014). They view education as the key to their children's success and place a high value on their children's education (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Yang, 2017; Cun, 2020). They also desire their education to be academically challenging and rigorous and fear that EL and mainstream teachers do not always meet these expectations (Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Kipchumba, 2017; Perlman, 2020). This led to the concern that MLs miss valuable classroom instruction while receiving EL services leading to gaps in learning (Amaral, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Kipchumba, 2017).

Last, this theme revealed many families' high regard for a teacher's expertise and have been known to delegate their children's education entirely to the teacher (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007; Yang, 2017). As such, teacher perspectives of MLs and EL services were examined. One significant teacher perspective reported was the belief that EL services were only necessary for beginning multilingual learners (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Froemming, 2015). There was a common misunderstanding surrounding the explicit instruction needed to access grade-level content (Olsen, 2010). Another concerning perspective is some teachers' deficit mindset toward MLs and the programs that serve them (Liams et al., 2004; Martinez, 2018; Sharma, 2018). All of these teacher perceptions can lead to academic challenges for MLs and insufficient language support (Tse, 2001; Valdes, 2001; Youngs & Youngs, 2001; Cummins, 2008; Olsen, 2010; Honigsfeld, 2009; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Shim & Shur, 2018).

The following theme on knowledge and what is known about English language education in the United States reported that ML families understand this type of programming to be for students who recently arrived in the United States (Lueck, 2010; Kipchumba, 2017). Many families were unaware of the process of second language acquisition and the distinction between conversational and academic language (Guo, 2009). This misconception of second language acquisition led some to believe that proficiency in English is required before a child enters the mainstream classroom and that speaking another language is an obstacle to learning (Zehr, 2001; Lee, 2006; Kipchumba, 2017; Sim & Shur, 2017).

A review of the knowledge regarding English language service models reported the two most common are push-in and pull-out (Honigsfeld, 2009; Baecher & Bell, 2017). There have been some ramifications for the students who are identified for these services, such as limited educational opportunities, deficit thinking, and confusion with special education labels (Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Callahan et al., 2010; Olvera, 2015; Umansky, 2016; Kipchumba, 2017; Martinez, 2018; Onda & Seyler, 2020).

The last theme described families' and students' experiences with English language programming. The literature revealed varied experiences over the last several decades as a result of the ambiguity of the policies for this type of programming (Rivera, Vincent, & Hafner, 1996; Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003). This ambiguity led to inconsistent criteria for identifying and exiting students, gaps in services, mismatched services for language needs, and academic challenges (de Jong, 2004; Abdi et al., 2004; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Martinex, 2018).

Another common experience was the loss of the student's home language due to the emphasis schools place on English (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). Students associated fluency in English with success and being an American, and that their home languages hindered their learning (Miller & Endo, 2004). School staff communicated their expectation that students would not use their home languages at school and that academic challenges resulted from speaking another language (Walker et al., 2004; Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Shim & Shur, 2018). Students frequently experienced animosity and disrespect from school staff, which had detrimental effects on their learning (Walker et al., 2004; Shim & Shur, 2018; Chaka, 2021).

Chapter Three presents an overview of the methodology used for this study and the rationale for that methodology. Data collection methods, tools, and analysis are detailed, along with a description of the setting and participants.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Chapter Three presents the research methodology used to determine what influences multilingual families' decisions regarding language services for their children. Multilingual learners (MLs) require explicit language instruction; without it, the risk of academic difficulties increases (Cummins, 2008; Honigsfeld, 2009; Olsen, 2010). Over the last several years in my role as an English Language (EL) teacher, several families have chosen to waive services for their children who had qualified for these services. This led to my research questions:

1. What *values* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a mulitlingal family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a mutltilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are used to drive research questions, methods of research, and interpretation of results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The conceptual framework I developed, Decision-Making Factors, that guides this study stems from my research and experiences over the years connecting to families of multilingual students. The Decision-Making Factors (DMF) framework, shown in Figure 4, maintains that people's values, knowledge, and experiences influence their decisions. This is supported by research, which has argued that values are critical in all facets of a person's life that

require a decision (Broch & Sander, 2013). Similarly, Song (2005) asserted that parents' values concerning English education strongly influence their decisions. Literature has contended that these values are connected to what someone knows, which results from experiences and beliefs (Broch & Sander, 2013). Newman (2009) stated that what a person knows changes over time and is influenced by the culture and historical period that they exist in.

Kipchumba's (2017) research on Somali families' negative attitudes toward English and a Second Language (ESL) services suggested that families' beliefs about the purpose of language services and their knowledge regarding language acquisition influenced their decisions to waive or accept EL services. My experiences and conversations with multilingual families regarding language services corroborate the factors identified in Kipchumba's study. Families have shared their understanding of language acquisition and personal stories of experiences in an EL program that have influenced their decisions for their children's language services. The combination of research and personal experiences led to the DMF framework and research questions guiding this study.

Figure 4.

Decision-Making Factors Framework

Research Methodology

The methodology used for this research is case study. Bhattacharya (2017) explained that case studies are an in-depth study of an issue, people, and place within a specific context. Case studies use multiple sources of evidence, can be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory, and focus on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, they can be done in a short period, examining issues that occur within that period to gain a rich understanding of the information gathered (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Research Methodology Rationale

Qualitative inquiry is the best methodology for conducting social studies inquiries, as they primarily focus on participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A case study approach was chosen since this type of research is an in-depth study of a particular person, people, group, or place and can be used to uncover cause-and-effect relationships (Bhattacharya, 2017). In this specific study, a particular group and place are the focus - the multilingual parents and families in one specific district.

Setting and Participants

The setting of this study is a moderate sized district in a large metropolitan area of the upper Midwest. This district includes seven elementary schools, one kindergarten through eighth-grade school, one middle school, one high school, and one alternative high school. Of the approximately 7,400 students in the district, 1,200 are identified for English language services (Minnesota Department of Education, 2023). The elementary school where the study takes place has an enrollment of 452 students, with 160 identified

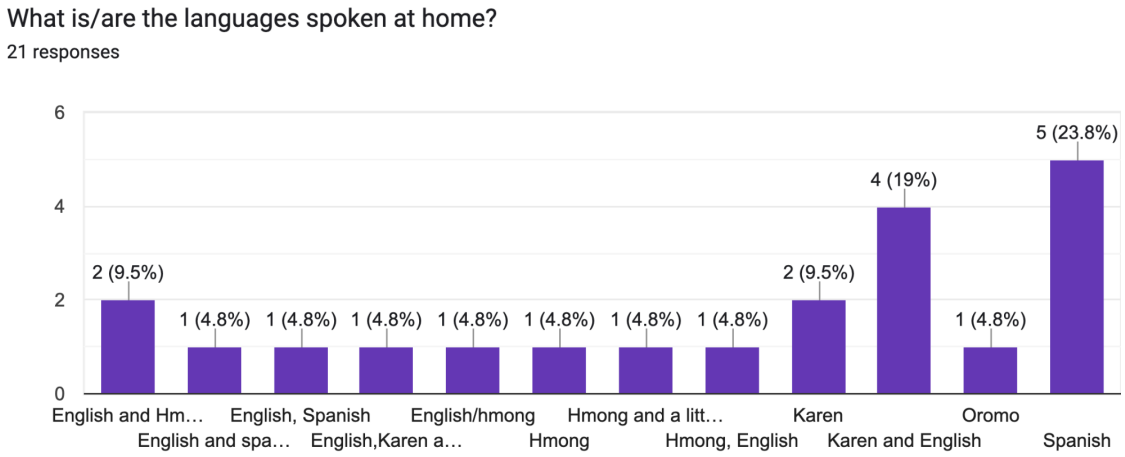
as multilingual learners (MLs). There are 16 languages spoken at the school with the majority of MLs speaking Spanish, Hmong, and Karen.

Survey Participants

Twenty one parents or guardians of MLs participated in the online survey. Figure 5 shows the languages spoken by the participants at home.

Figure 5.

Participants' Languages Spoken at Home



Out of the 21 participants, 15 identified themselves as female, and 6 identified as male. When asked about their relationship to the student, 6 listed they were the father, 12 listed they were the mother, 1 listed themselves as the step mother, 1 responded as sister and mother, and 1 responded with 'parents'.

Interview Participants

Terry. Terry is a monolingual English speaker, and the father of a second grade student. When this student was enrolled in kindergarten, their mother, who is a Spanish speaker, filled out the enrollment forms in Spanish and listed Spanish on the Home

Language Survey. Their child was screened and qualified for EL services. When notified at conferences that their child would be receiving language services, Terry opted to waive and has done so each year since then.

Chue. Chue is the father of three children at our school: a 6th grader, 4th grader, and 2nd grader. All three of his children speak Hmong and have qualified for EL services. Chue chose to waive EL services last year for only his oldest, but accepted services for all of his children this year. He is also a teacher at the high school in our district.

Leo. Leo and his family have recently arrived in the United States from Mexico. He has two children at our school: one is in kindergarten and the other is in 3rd grade. Leo and his family are just beginning to learn English, and he accepted EL services for his children.

Yareli. Yareli enrolled her 2nd grader in our district at the beginning of this year. She originally intended to enroll her child in the district's Dual Language Spanish Immersion Program because her and her husband speak Spanish at home. Even though her child does not speak Spanish, she believed that indicating Spanish on the Home Language Survey would help get her daughter into the program. Her daughter was unable to be enrolled in the program and was enrolled in our school instead. Due to the fact that another language was indicated on the Home Language Survey, her daughter was screened and qualified for language services. Once Yareli found out her daughter was receiving services, she opted to waive them.

Baw Paw. Baw Paw and her family speak Karen at home. She has one child who attends our school and is in 4th grade. Baw Paw has accepted EL services for her child every year since kindergarten.

Pay Lah. Pay Lah stepped in to be an interview participant when his wife was unable to at the last minute. Pay Lah's family speaks Karen at home and they have two children who attend our school: one in 6th grade, and the other in 3rd grade. Pay Lah's wife has accepted services for their children every year since kindergarten.

Data Collection Methods and Tools

This study used two forms of data collection: surveys and interviews. These tools align with the DMF framework guiding this study, which asserts that one's values, knowledge, and experiences influence decisions made. The survey questions target the knowledge and what multilingual families understand of EL services, the purpose of the program, and qualifications. The interviews aim to answer what values and experiences influence multilingual families' decisions. Table 1 exhibits how each tool addresses the research questions.

Table 1.

Research Questions and Corresponding Data Collection Tools

Research Question	Data Collection Tools
• What knowledge influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?	• Surveys
• What values influence a multilingual	• Interviews

family's decision to accept or waive English language services? ● What experiences influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?	

Survey Design

Surveys are frequently used in education to learn about people's attitudes, beliefs, and understandings of various topics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The survey used in this study was created using Google Forms. It was designed to capture the understanding of a larger sample size while also identifying potential participants for the interview portion of the study.

The survey begins with consent to participate and three questions about demographics: the home language spoken, gender, and relation to the child. The following five questions are closed with a yes or no answer option. If the participants answer no to question 4, which asks if they are the adult who filled out the Home Language Survey, they skip question 5. If they answer yes, question 5 asks if they understood that writing down a language other than English would lead to their child being assessed for EL services. Question 6 asks if their child qualified for EL services, and if they answer no, the survey ends for that participant.

Question 7 asks if they accepted services for their child and has three answer options: yes, no - I chose to waive services, or I'm not sure. The last response is added

since some families are unaware of accepting services. This has happened in the past when they received a notification in the mail and did not understand what it was saying.

Question 8, asks if they knew they could refuse services for their child. If they answer no, they are directed to question 10. If they answer yes, they are asked how they knew and have the following answer options:

- I was told by school staff
- I read it in the letter from the school
- I was told about it by someone I knew
- Other

Question 10 is open-ended and asks, based on their understanding, what they believe the purpose of the EL program to be. The last question asks if they would be interested in participating in an interview with the researcher to discuss the topic of EL services. See Appendix A for survey questions.

Survey Procedure

Once the survey was developed, it was piloted with two individuals who were not participants in the study, and adjustments were made after the surveys were piloted. Parent-teacher conferences were chosen to administer the survey in order to maximize the number of participants. Spanish, Hmong, and Karen interpreters were contacted beforehand to assist in administering the surveys. These three languages were chosen because they are the top three spoken by the multilingual families in our school. I met with the interpreters ahead of time to explain the procedure, model the administration, review confidentiality, and answer any questions. I also asked a member of the EdD cohort to assist with additional families who would potentially need interpretation in a

language other than Spanish, Hmong, or Karen. I chose this cohort member because they were a former EL teacher in the school, knew how to use the district interpretation services, and had experience collecting research data.

Two weeks before conferences, I went through the online conference schedule to identify which ML families would be attending the three separate nights of conferences. My goal was to administer the survey on the night with the most ML families in attendance. The last night of conferences had 43 students scheduled, which was the highest number for the three nights.

The week before conferences, I sent a staff email asking classroom teachers to ask the multilingual families to stop by the media center to take the survey. I also sent a reminder email on the day of the conferences with the specific list of students and families that could take the survey. There were four tables with an iPad and QR code to scan for survey administration: one for Spanish, Hmong, and Karen interpreters, and one for additional languages. Families stopped by the media center before or after their conference times. The survey began with a description of the study, a review of the consent form, and a brief explanation of the term EL services. Families were told that EL services stand for English language services and happen when their child works with the EL teacher. This description was intentionally kept very brief in order not to lead families toward any answer to the open-ended question that asks about the purpose of the EL program. The survey took about five to ten minutes to complete, and was securely stored on my Hamline University, password protected, Google Drive account.

Interview Design

The second data collection method used in this study was interviews, which are frequently used for basic qualitative studies (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Qualitative interviews involve unstructured and open-ended questions to obtain the participants' views and opinions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Brinkman and Kvale (2015) identified qualitative interviews as one of the best methodologies for gathering data on participants' thoughts and experiences. Therefore, the design of the interview questions attempted to prompt the subjects to share their values and experiences regarding EL services for themselves and their children.

The interview questions target two factors in the DMF framework: values and experiences. Five questions relate to the families' values, and three questions relate to their experiences with EL services. Questions regarding values examine feelings towards the EL label, where they stem from, reasons for accepting or waiving services, and how the families believe those services could benefit or negatively impact their child. The questions targeting experiences explore families' personal experiences with EL services, conversations with others regarding services, and how they were informed that their child qualified. See Appendix B for interview questions.

Interview Procedure

The interview questions were piloted with two individuals who were not participants in the study. Once the pilot interviews were complete, potential participants who had responded to the survey with an interest in participating in interviews were contacted over the phone or email. I also reached out to two participants who had waived services but had not completed the survey. I did this because I had hoped to interview three who had waived and three who had accepted. Each participant was given the option

to meet over Zoom, at a public space such as a library or school, or in their own home. Five chose to meet over Zoom, and one chose to meet at school. The Karen cultural liaison interpreted for two of the interviews and the Spanish interpreter who assisted with surveys interpreted for the Spanish interview. The other three participants did not need interpreters. Interview questions were shared with participants at least two days before. All interviews were conducted within one week and took about fifteen to thirty minutes.

For the interviews conducted over Zoom, I requested to video record them. The Otter transcription app and Microsoft Word audio recording and transcription tools were used for the in-person interview at school. All recordings were securely stored on my password protected phone, as well as my password protected Google Drive account. At the beginning of the interview, verbal consent was obtained and a brief description of the study was given, along with a simple explanation of the definition of EL services and what it means to waive services. Once the interviews were concluded, a $25 Amazon gift card was sent to participants. The data collected was stored on my phone and computer, which are both password-protected and promptly deleted at the completion of the dissertation.

Data Analysis

An inductive approach was used in data collection as I approached the survey and interview data without too many preconceived notions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Furthermore, inductive analysis is appropriate as it is frequently used in qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Not only is an inductive analysis approach appropriate for this type of research, but McMillan and Schumacher (2014) also asserted it is critical so the researcher can be open to new ways of understanding. Researchers

who use an inductive approach code data in order to identify patterns and formulate potential themes to explain these patterns (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

Bhattacharya's (2017) approach to inductive analysis was applied to analyze and make sense of the data collected. The first step in this approach was to familiarize myself with the data, which meant I re-read both the survey data and interview transcripts several times and took anecdotal notes during this process. Additionally, I was able to re-listen to the interviews using the Zoom recordings and Otter app, which provided audio and text, to compare the transcript texts and ensure accuracy. While re-reading the data, I began to chunk it into manageable units of analysis by pulling out words, phrases, and sentences that stood out to me and gave these color-coding labels. The coding utilized for this research was data-driven, as I started without codes and developed them through many readings (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

The analysis of the surveys and interview transcripts for this research was iterative, which Bhattacharya (2017) described as a non-linear format because the researcher moves back and forth between steps in the process as many times as necessary. Doing this allowed me to identify emergent themes from the data that connected to the values, knowledge, and experiences that influence the participants' decision-making.

For further analysis, I uploaded each transcript into Claude.AI (Anthropic, 2023), which can process large documents and summarize and answer questions about specific data points. I then asked the AI to answer the following research questions. I prompted with:

- According to this transcript, what *values* influenced this participant's decision to accept/waive EL services for their child?

- According to this transcript, what *knowledge* influenced this participant's decision to accept/waive EL services for their child?
- According to this transcript, what *experiences* influenced this participant's decision to accept/waive EL services for their child?

I then took the answers for *values* from all six interviews and pasted them onto one document. I repeated this process for *knowledge* and *experience*. Once I had all answers for each of the research questions on separate documents, I uploaded each one into Claude.AI and asked the following questions depending on the DMF:

- What are common themes between the six interviews and the *values* that influenced the families' decision to accept or waive EL services?
- What are common themes between the six interviews and the *knowledge* that influenced the families' decision to accept or waive EL services?
- What are common themes between the six interviews and the *experiences* that influenced the families' decision to accept or waive EL services?

For the survey, I took all the responses to the open-ended question that asked about the purpose of EL services and pasted them onto a document. I uploaded this document to Claude.AI and asked it to identify themes. Overall, the themse identified by Claude.AI were similar to the themes I identified with my color-coding analysis.

Institutional Research Approval

An application for IRB approval was submitted to Hamline University on August 26th, 2023, and obtained on September 28th, 2023. Consent from the cooperating district was obtained on September 11th, 2023. Once IRB approval was obtained, I contacted potential participants for pilot surveys and interviews over the phone. The interpretation

service and cultural liaisons provided by the district was utilized for those needing interpretation. Pilot surveys and interviews were conducted and the tools were adjusted as necessary. Participant surveys were completed on October 12th, 2023, and potential interview participants were contacted by phone, email and text over the following two weeks . Interviews were conducted over a three day span and concluded on November 10th .

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the research question and conceptual framework, Decision-Making Factors, guiding this study. Given the nature of this study, a case study was chosen to explore the following research questions:

1. What *values* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

These decision-making factors were examined using interviews and surveys, and an inductive analysis approach was utilized to identify emergent themes. Chapter Four will present the themes that emerged in answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence multilingual families' decisions regarding language services by answering the following research questions:

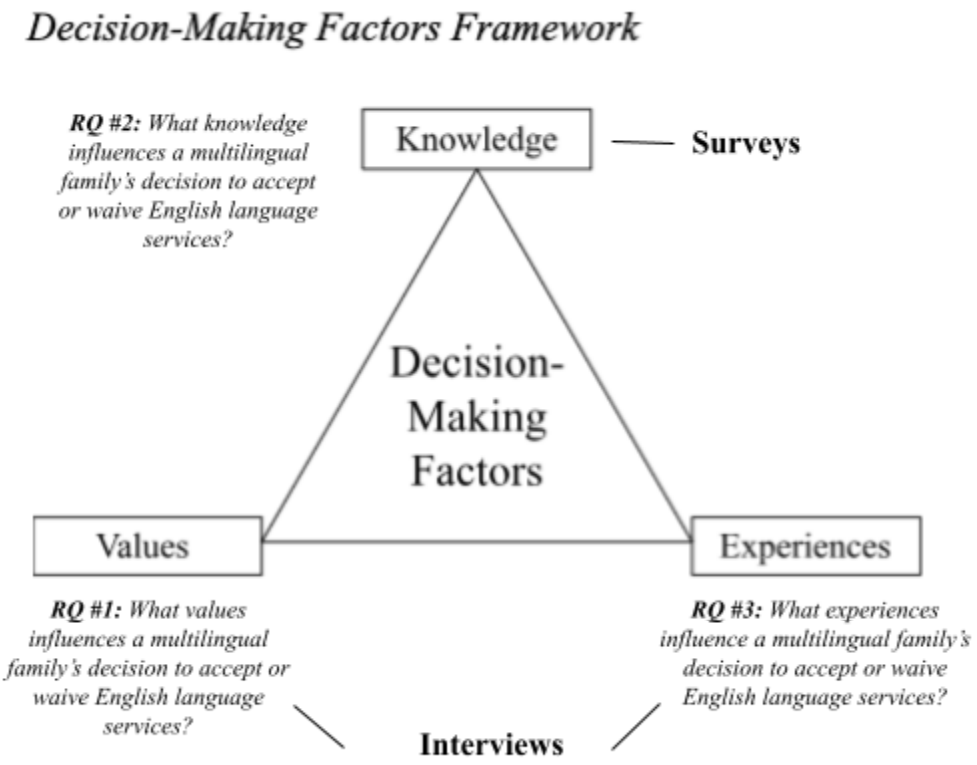
1. What *values* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

This chapter will present the findings for each of these questions.

This study utilized two data collection methods: an electronic survey with closed and open questions and six interviews. The surveys addressed the second research question regarding the knowledge that influences a multilingual family's decision-making for their child's English language (EL) services. In contrast, the interviews addressed research questions one and three, which examine the values and experiences of multilingual families. Once all data was collected, transcripts were uploaded to Claude.AI (Anthropic, 2023) to analyze for themes. The themes were organized according to the conceptual framework guiding this study, Decision-Making Factors (DMF), which maintains that people's values, knowledge, and experiences influence their decisions. The connection between the DMF framework, my three research questions, and my two data collection methods is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6.

Research Questions and Data Analysis Connection to Decision-Making Factors Framework



This conceptual framework I developed grew out of my research and experiences over the years connecting to the families of multilingual families. Research has shown that values are critical in all aspects of an individual's life that require a decision to be made (Broch & Sander, 2013). When it comes to decisions that concern English language education, Song (2005) asserted that parents are strongly influenced by their values. Furthermore, values are connected to what a person knows, which evolves from beliefs and experiences and can change over time (Newman, 2009; Broch & Sander, 2013).

Research on Somali families' negative attitudes towards English as a Second Language (ESL) services proposed that a family's belief about the purpose of language services and their knowledge concerning language acquisition influenced their decisions to accept or waive ESL services (Kipchumba, 2017). My experiences and conversations with multilingual families regarding language services align with the factors identified in Kipchumba's study. I have had families share their understanding of language acquisition and personal experiences in an EL program that influenced their children's language services decisions. The combination of personal experience and research led to the DMF framework and research questions that guide this study. This chapter presents a complete analysis of the findings pertaining to this study's three research questions and the DMF framework. An overview of the findings can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2.

Major Findings Pertaining to Research Questions and Decision-Making Factors Framework

Research Questions	**Decision-Making Factor**	**Major Findings**
Research Question #1: What *values* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?	Values	Values that influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive services include:
		1. The value of English language acquisition
		2. The value of educational advancement
		3. The value of embracing and leveraging available opportunities
		4. The value of societal integration

Research Question #2: What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?	Knowledge	Knowledge that influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive services include:
		5. The knowledge of their child's English abilities
		6. The knowledge regarding the specifics of EL program models
		7. The knowledge of the status English holds in society
		8. The knowledge of systems
Research Question #3: What *experiences* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?	Experience	Experiences that influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive services include:
		9. Personal history with language learning
		10. Observations of others navigating English language services

Findings from Research Question #1: What *values* influence a family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

The findings relating to research question #1 mainly transpired from the six interviews. The interview questions were specifically intended to target this research question, along with research question #3. Though the survey was designed to answer question #2 regarding families' knowledge, additional data from the open-ended question on the survey contributed to the findings for research question #1, which connected to values.

Decision-Making Factor: Values

The findings for this study's research question and DMF relating to multilingual families' values that influence their decisions to accept or waive services are the following:

- The value of English language acquisition
- The value of educational advancement
- The value of embracing and leveraging available opportunities
- The value of societal integration

This section will address each of these findings along with evidence from interviews and surveys that corroborates the findings.

Finding 1: The Value of English Language Acquisition The first finding connecting to research question #1 was that multilingual families who participated in this study see English abilities as crucial for their children's academic success and life success. Several participants described the necessity of their children developing their English language skills. For example, Leo directly stated, "...it's necessary for them to learn English" for educational and professional success in "this country" where English is widely spoken. Similarly, Baw Paw explained how critical she believes learning English is, saying, "The English language is using either or global and really important language." Pay Lah echoed these beliefs in the importance of English language acquisition, repeatedly emphasizing that English is a vital "global language," stressing the importance of EL services helping his children to improve their "English reading and writing." This clearly shows the importance and value placed on English language acquisition. This is corroborated by Guo's (2007 & 2009) research, which reported that

families expect explicit language instruction to make grade-level content accessible and prepare their children for their futures.

Yareli, who was one of three participants who waived services, also expressed her value of strong English skills. Though she and her husband both speak Spanish, they intentionally chose to speak English to their daughter starting at the age of two due to their daughter's speech delays and temporary hearing loss. She shared, "We decided to only speak English to her. It was just to like, not delay more for speech than it needed to be…The first language is English, and then later on we'll introduce Spanish as a second language." They wanted their daughter to have strong foundational English skills and be bilingual in Spanish later in life.

Terry, who also waived EL services, communicated values similar to those of English acquisition and fluency. He and his wife, whose first language is Spanish, decided to speak only English at home. When asked how EL services could be good or bad for a child, he explained that there are benefits to services that support English language development. Not only would "furthering their knowledge with the English language…help in daily situations where they can understand what a person is telling them," but they could also "teach their parents how to speak English."

Survey responses echoed the values shared in interviews. When asked about the purpose of English language services, the most common theme was to learn/improve English skills. For example, participants responded with answers like, "Get better at English," "speak better English," and "Learn and understand better English and in classes." Overall, the open-ended question's major overarching theme was building English capacity.

Finding 2: The Value of Educational Advancement The second finding relating to research question #1 is that families value academic achievement. Some see EL services as a support for academic success and welcome EL services if they are perceived as advancing learning. For instance, when asked how EL services could be good for his child, Chue described how his oldest entered kindergarten and was behind their peers due to the fact that they weren't proficient in English. He stated:

> Particularly my oldest, she struggled with, you know being at well, lack of a better word that entry point for kindergarten where she didn't know her. ABC's didn't know her colors then. Didn't know the things that I've come to realize as what middle-class America deems to be kindergarten-ready. You know my first child was below that particular arbitrary, whatever standard that they use to view kindergarten children when my children were below what the school deems incoming kindergartener, or first grader or second grader should know in terms of English. I would say, and if I felt that the assessments were correct, and I would say, put them in EL, provide that service for them. Let them catch up.

However, when Chue was asked how EL services could be bad for his child, he explained that he felt the services could hinder growth, specifically in the older grades when they get stuck at a certain proficiency level for years. He stated:

> I believe EL becomes detrimental when working on the same thing year after year when we know the mainstream class doesn't do that. They're moving on, 3rd grades doing this, 4th grades doing this, 5th grade is doing this. If you're in EL working on EL basic skills while your 3rd-grade, 4th-grade, and 5th-grade peers are being exposed to new content while you're in EL class.

Research on multilingual families' values confirms this concern and has reported that families believe education is the key to their children's future success and that being pulled from the mainstream classroom means they are missing out on important content being covered (Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Kipchumba, 2017; Perlman, 2020).

Other participants shared how they believe that EL services help their children be successful in school. Baw Paw explained that the teachers help her children improve their English reading and writing. She stated, "EL service is good because it support my child to learn more and more English, and if she learning more English, then she also will increase her knowledge." Leo echoed this belief when asked how EL services could be bad for their child. He stated, "There's no disadvantage. It helps us, and it helps her in school, and in the future, if she wants to keep having an education."

Several survey responses to the open-ended question regarding the purpose of EL services mentioned a desire to have their children get help in classes and succeed academically. One stated, "My child needs more support in her classes." Another described EL services as a way to, "...get help with language barriers that may hinder their education" In summary, multilingual families value learning that supports academic achievement in the classroom and prepares their children for future success.

Finding 3: The Value of Embracing and Leveraging Available Opportunities

The third finding connected to research question #1 is that families value access to opportunities in order for their children to progress. Some participants viewed EL services as a support and would create more opportunities for their children, while other participants believed opportunities would be limited as a result of EL services.

Leo, Baw Paw, and Pay Lah all referenced English as a global language and that they were proud their children were learning the language. Leo shared his excitement about his children learning English, “It’s a feeling of excitement that my children are learning English, especially in the United States, where English is spoken. It’s going to help them in the future to know English in this country.” Baw Paw also shared her happiness that her children were learning English:

> Yes, I don’t know a lot of English, so I’m really so proud if my kid are learning about English. I’m happy that if they get English language learning and also because English is really important and a lot of people use in the global. So I’m really happy.

This finding is supported by the literature on multilingual families' beliefs about education. Researchers described the families prioritizing language learning and education because they believed that was the route for their children to succeed in life and achieve their dreams (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014).

Participants 2 and 4, who waived services, also value access to opportunities. When asked about her reason for waiving services, Yareli explained, “I think it was mostly more of like I don’t want her to be pulled out of the classroom and then missing out on classroom work that she needs to be done.” She believed that services did not meet the standards and felt strongly that missing mainstream classroom instruction would hinder her daughter’s opportunities.

Similarly, Chue believed that high school students who received EL services lacked the same academic opportunities as their non-EL peers. He stated:

> Looking at high school students, a student is stuck at level 2 or 3 for two to three

> years, and in those two or three years their mainstream peers are learning something new every year. You have a set number of classes that you can take during your high school career, right? If they're being filled up with EL courses, you have less options to take additional classes…you would have less opportunity.

Having access to the same academic opportunities and receiving the same education as his children's non-EL peers was a high priority for this participant.

Literature on multilingual families' values revealed similar findings. Guo's research (2007 & 2009) reported parents' concerns that EL services would not adequately prepare their children for future opportunities in education and that services were not aligned with grade-level standards. Another significant concern reported in research was the time taken away from mainstream classes (Amaral, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Kipchumba, 2017). Scheduling challenges have led EL teachers to pull during classroom instruction, causing MLs to miss out on important academic content (Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, & Frisco, 2009). Past studies have shown that this has happened at both the elementary and secondary levels (Callahan, 2005; Umansky, 2016). These researchers noted there had been ramifications for students receiving EL services due to the fact that EL coursework has replaced valuable elective courses and has limited opportunities at the secondary level. All of these concerns were shared by Chue and Yareli in this study. Clearly, whether a family waived or accepted services, access to equal educational opportunities was highly valued.

Finding 4: The Value of Societal Integration The last finding concerning the

values of multilingual families and research question #1 is that families expressed their aspirations for their children's social inclusion. Several participants viewed English and EL services as a tool for inclusion and participation. For example, Leo notes his excitement about the fact that his daughter can now help translate basic interactions while running errands. He stated, "It's giving her an advantage by learning English at school and also outside. She has helped translate for us at grocery stores or gas stations. There's no disadvantage. It helps us." Similarly, comments made by Baw Paw and Pay Lah about English being a global language and very important imply the belief that the more proficient their children become, the more they will become a part of mainstream society.

Yareli mentioned her concerns that her daughter was being pulled out of class by herself. She shared how that reminded her of her own childhood when she was excluded from her class while she received EL services as a child and how she did not want that for her daughter. She stated, "I remember being pulled out and then going back to class, and it was like, ok, what happened? Like, what did I miss? And I didn't want her to have that experience.

Chue had similar feelings regarding his children being in class with the general population. He stressed the importance of his children building their skills in order to participate alongside their non-EL peers rather than being isolated in EL services. He explained, "Once I got to a point where my child's test scores and academic progress, where they're sufficient to be in class with the general population, then I waive the services." Later on in the interview, he stated:

> The moment I feel like they can, you know, be successful in a mainstream class, they don't have to be the top of the class, just as long as they're successful, I want

them to receive the same education as a mainstream kid. In this case, mainstream meaning your average White student.

Both of these comments imply Chue's value of integration and social inclusion within the mainstream classroom.

Some survey responses also suggest a high value of societal integration. One participant responded that the purpose of EL services is to learn more about the culture. A second participant replied, "Because most people in the USA speak English." This may imply a value around integrating into an English-dominant society.

Research on multilingual families' values revealed an awareness of language differences along with the power and status English holds in our society (Monzo & Rueda, 2009). Becoming fluent in English meant being "accepted as a full member of society" (p.36). This idea of not being a full member of society has also led some to avoid the EL label and services (Becker, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2013). On the other hand, some research has reported students associating fluency in English with being a successful American (Miller & Endo, 2004), which may explain the excitement about and acceptance of EL services of some participants in this study.

Summary of Findings from Research Question #1

In summary, the first research question for this study was: What *values* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services? Four findings surfaced in connection with this question and the Decision-Making Factor Framework that guided this research.

The first finding was that families highly value English language acquisition and see English abilities as crucial for their children's academic and life success. Several

participants emphasized the necessity of their children developing strong English skills.

The second finding revealed the families' value of educational advancement. Some see English language services as supporting academic achievement. However, others worry about students missing mainstream classroom content. Overall, families want services to help their kids succeed academically and be prepared for the future.

The third finding that emerged was that families value embracing and leveraging available opportunities. Some see language services as expanding opportunities for their kids. However, others believe too much time in language services limits access to electives and course options, especially at the secondary level.

Lastly, Families value societal integration. Several participants discussed wanting their children to be included alongside non-English learner peers and become full members of mainstream society. They believed that fluency in English was tied to successful participation in the broader culture.

In summary, the multilingual families in this study place a high priority on English language development, academic achievement, access to opportunities, and social inclusion. Their views on whether English language services support or hinder these goals varied. The next section will examine this study's second research question and the findings that emerged in connection to the Decision Making Factor of Knowledge.

Findings from Research Question #2: What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

The survey designed for this study was intended to examine research question #2. While many of the findings related to this question come from survey data, the six

participant interviews also significantly contributed to to answering this question.

Decision-Making Factor: Knowledge

The findings for this study's research question and DMF relating to multilingual families' knowledge that influences their decisions regarding English language services are the following:

- The knowledge of their child's English abilities
- The knowledge regarding the specifics of EL program models
- The knowledge of the status English holds in society
- The knowledge of systems

Further exploration of these findings with additional evidence from the surveys and interviews is provided in this section.

Finding 5: The Knowledge of Their Child's English Abilities A common theme throughout both the surveys and interviews was that families make their decisions about language services based on their assessments and assumptions about their own child's English language proficiency and capabilities. This was true for both the families that accepted and waived services.

Baw Paw explained that she accepted services for her daughter because of not being proficient in English and how that has impacted her in school. "My daughter told me if she does something not in Karen, she feels dumb and sad. She's worried about her schoolwork." Monzo and Rueda's research (2009) on Latino students' language proficiency corroborates this participant's response. Their study revealed that Spanish-speaking students were aware of their language differences and connected this to negative qualities like low intelligence, which led to a loss of confidence in their

academic abilities.

Leo also brought up their daughter's English abilities when describing the benefits of EL services, "My daughter she doesn't speak the English language very well, but it's giving her an advantage by learning English in school and also outside." Both Leo and Baw Paw were aware of their children's levels of English proficiency, which led them to support and accept EL services.

Participants who waived services seemed to rely heavily on their knowledge of their child's English ability when making decisions about language services. For instance, Terry explained, "Our household just decided to waive it (services) because all of our children speak English. Their mother is Spanish, but we chose everything in English in our home." Yareli had similar reasons for waiving services. She shared:

> In this case, with my daughter, she is only one language. So she only speaks English. We speak Spanish to her in small little conversations or give her commands in Spanish, so we rarely have a full conversation with her, because she only speaks English.

Later on in the interview, Yareli described in more detail her knowledge of her daughter's English abilities, which she had gained through the process of attempting to enroll her daughter into a Spanish Immersion program. She explained that an assessment was given to measure her daughter's Spanish proficiency, and it revealed her daughter was not at the Spanish proficiency level needed for second grade, which is why she ended up sending her daughter to our elementary school. This understanding of her daughter's proficiency in Spanish influenced her decision to waive EL services. She reported:

> I feel like she didn't need a service where it didn't meet her standard and her

> language. I was told by the immersion school that she's not where her Spanish needs to be. So she didn't need it. So that's why I waived the service.

She later shared that EL services do a great job for the children who need it, but in her case, it just would not be helpful for her daughter.

Chue also relied on his knowledge of his children's English language abilities to waive or accept EL services. Multiple times throughout the interview, he reported he would accept services if he felt that his child needed it. For example, when asked about what feelings come up when thinking about his children receiving EL services, he explained:

> I feel like it's absolutely fine that they get EL services when the school and I, as the parent, feel that it's necessary. Knowing that my child doesn't speak English at home, or I don't speak English at home, it may be a service that's necessary. So I just feel like, if they needed it, and if both parties agreed on that, then it would happen.

He also shared that he would waive services if he felt his child "had a good enough stronghold on English" and if they could "survive in the English population."

Chue would also encourage other Hmong families to be aware of their child's English language abilities when making their decisions for EL services. He described conversations he has had with some parents regarding services. He said, "I also warn families, wait a minute, I've spoken to your child. Your child is fluent in English. Why are they still in EL services? You should be questioning that."

Several studies corroborated this idea that the ability to converse in English with ease meant that EL services were unnecessary. Kipchumba (2017) reported that

multilingual families believed their children did not need EL services if they spoke English "well enough". Similarly, Lueck's (2010) study revealed that parents were confused about why their child would qualify for EL services when they could communicate in English. Both of these studies described multilingual families' perceptions that proficiency in conversational English meant their children were no longer in need of language services, which aligns with the findings in this study.

Ten out of the eighteen responses to the open-ended question on the survey that asked participants what they believe the purpose of EL services to be, mention a student's English language ability. One replied, "For the child to learn English and learn how to speak," while another answered, "For her to learn English and learn more about the culture." Other responses stated, "Get better at English," "To speak better English," "To learn more English," and more similar to those statements. Clearly, families are aware that their children need support in their English language proficiency and that knowledge impacts their decisions for language services.

This section detailed the knowledge parents had about their children's English abilities and how that influenced the decisions they made regarding their language services. The following section discusses the knowledge parents have of EL program models.

Finding 6: The Knowledge Regarding the Specifics of EL Program Models

Another recurring theme in relation to research question #2 was an uncertainty about what common EL service delivery models entail in terms of instruction, content, and qualifications. Many participants were unsure of what was taught during language services. Some confused instruction with services provided by special education, others

believed instruction targeted basic English skills, and others were not clear on how their child qualified.

For example, Terry asked at the end of the interview if EL helped with other forms of speech, such as stuttering, which unknown to him, is a service provided by special education. He explained that he assumed something like that might happen as a person who is transitioning from one language to another. Another participant in the survey echoed this understanding by stating the purpose of EL services to be “speech”.

This misconception is not uncommon, as reported in Umansky’s (2016) study on the impact of classifying students as English learners. Due to the fact that EL and special education labels are given to students who differ from the norms of society and that both labels specify students’ rights and the educational systems’ responsibilities to provide services to meet their needs, some have believed these two programs to be the same. Kipchumba’s (2017) research on Somali parents’ negative attitudes towards ESL revealed similar findings to this study. Participants in her study shared their belief that the EL program was designed to help with speech and mistook language services for special education services.

Kipchumba’s (2017) research also revealed similar findings regarding a misunderstanding of content taught during language instruction. Participants in her study believed that if their children spoke English, they did not need language instruction to succeed academically. She asserted that this belief stemmed from the parents' being unaware of the process of second language acquisition and the fact that academic language, not just conversational skills, was being supported during language services. My research findings corroborate Kipchumba’s and have revealed similar beliefs.

For example, Chue shared a potential negative impact of EL services. He said, “If you’re in EL working on EL basic skills while you’re in third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, peers are being exposed to new content while you’re in EL class.” Later on in the interview, he shared his belief that if a child can converse with him in English, they do not need to be in EL services. Both of these examples may imply a misunderstanding of the content taught during language services and the goal of EL programming.

Baw Paw and Pay Lah openly shared a lack of understanding regarding EL programming. Pay Lah stated, “I don’t know about my child if they get the EL service or not.” When asked about how EL services could be good for his children, he shared how he appreciates that they stay after school to get help improving their English language, even though EL services are solely provided during the school day. Baw Paw shared similar confusion and said at the end of her interview, “I don’t really understand about the EL service, but I see my son doing it. It’s really good, but I don’t know a lot about EL service.”

These statements reveal the trust and regard the participants have for the teachers and school. Even though they do not fully understand the specifics of their children’s language services, they believe that the staff are acting in the best interest of their children. Beliefs such as these have been confirmed by many studies over the years, which have reported the high respect multilingual families have for teachers and how they have delegated their children’s education entirely to the school staff (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2008; Guo, 2009; Yang, 2017).

The last uncertainty regarding EL programming concerns the details of qualifying for services. Terry asked at the end of the interview, “I’m just kind of curious how the

process goes of picking the students that need it and don't need it…how does a student get chosen, I mean, in my situation?" He was unaware that because his wife, who speaks Spanish, filled out the home language survey at enrollment and wrote Spanish down as a language spoken at home this would mean his children would automatically be screened for EL services.

Yareli was also confused about how her daughter had qualified for services. She shared that she had not known she was receiving services, and when she found out, she messaged the teacher and asked, "Why is she going to the EL teacher?" When she found out that it was because of the home language survey and the fact that she filled out Spanish for one of the four questions, she was frustrated at the lack of communication. "I wrote on the documents that we were a Spanish-speaking home for the immersion. It was more an idea that she was going to be taught Spanish." She shared, "It does bring up frustrations that if it would have been communicated with me at first, I would have been able to explain it to you. I wasn't asked why or why she doesn't need EL." Not only was there confusion about how her daughter had qualified for EL services, but there was additional confusion about enrollment processes and the qualification of immersion programming.

This section detailed the finding that families of multilingual learners sometimes have misconceptions about EL programs and services. Some participants were unsure about what is taught during EL instruction and confused it with special education services. Some believed EL only supports basic English skills or speech, not realizing the support of academic language development. Others felt that children who were proficient in conversational English did not need language services, and some misunderstood the

qualification process. The following section examines the finding that multilingual families are aware of the status of English in today's society and how that has influenced their decisions.

Finding 7: The Knowledge of the Status English Holds in Society Another finding connected to research question 2, and the knowledge multilingual families have that influences their decisions is their understanding regarding the status of English in society. Several participants conveyed a conceptual knowledge relating to the global significance, opportunities, and advantages tied to the English language.

One example of this was Pay Lah's response to why he accepted EL services for his children. He replied:

> I don't know a lot of English, so I am really proud of my kids learning English. I am happy that they get English language learning because English is really important. A lot of people use it in the world. So I'm really happy, and that is why we accept this for our children.

Leo made similar comments relating to the advantages and significance of English in the United States. He stated, "It's a feeling of excitement that my children are learning English, especially in the United States, where English is spoken." Later on, he shared why he accepted services for his children when he said, "It's necessary for them to learn English for their education and in their regular lives. It's going to help them in the future to know English in this country." This participant was very aware that there are certain opportunities and advantages to speaking English.

Several participants in the survey echoed this understanding. One commented that the purpose of EL services was "because most people in the USA speak English."

Another shared that language barriers hindered opportunities, education, and daily decisions and that EL services would help with these challenges. These responses convey the importance of English proficiency for access to opportunities and success in the United States.

Researchers reported the association between fluency in English and the idea of being a successful American (Miller & Endo, 2004). Not only have multilingual learners connected proficiency in English with success, but they have also believed it was related to citizenship and being full members of society (Monzo & Rueda, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014). These beliefs are corroborated in this finding of my research and may have influenced the decisions of the participants regarding language services. The next finding details participants' knowledge of systems and how that has impacted the decisions they make.

Finding 8: The Knowledge of Systems The last finding relating to research question 2 and the knowledge of multilingual families is that some participants demonstrated deeper insights into the systems for EL identification, entrance, exit, and consequences of long-term placement. This was evident specifically in interviews with Chue and Yareli.

Chue exhibits knowledge of the educational and EL systems when asked how he found out about EL services. He stated:

> I kind of knew because I was an EL learner myself. I came to America as an immigrant and had gone through and received EL services. And the fact that I listed my child as not speaking English at home, I assumed that when they go to the school, the school would run some tests and figure out they need additional

> support in English, and I was assuming that they would get the support they needed.

He also demonstrated his understanding of systems when he shared about the ramifications of EL services at the high school level. He explained:

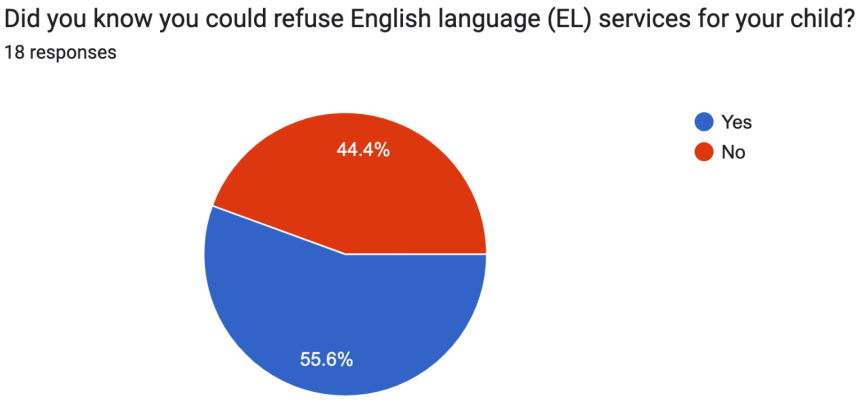
> If they're being filled up with EL courses, you have fewer options to take additional classes; you would think the more advanced classes come as you are an upperclassman and you have more choices. But if those choices are filled up with your EL classes, you would have less opportunity.

This knowledge comes from both his personal experience and his professional role as an educator and clearly influenced his decision to waive services for his child.

Later on in the interview, he shared how other Hmong families come to him for advice on EL services because he is an educator. He said, "EL service is a conversation I openly have with friends and relatives because they know I am an educator, and they have questions about their own children receiving or not receiving services." He explained that in his conversations with other families, they don't understand the benefits of early exit and how detrimental services could be long term. When asked if he believed other families were aware they could waive services, he said he would say many families do not know. Survey results in this study would support this statement as almost half of the participants responded that they did not know they could refuse services (see Figure 7).

Figure 7.

Survey Response Reflecting Families' Knowledge of Opportunity to Waive Services



Notification of services and the option to waive those services is sent home in a letter at the start of the school year (United States Department of Education, 2016). Although the letter must be translated into the family's home language, literacy in multilingual home languages is varied, and academic jargon can be a potential barrier to comprehending the contents of that letter (Yang, 2017; Cun, 2020).

Yareli demonstrated her knowledge of educational systems when discussing the enrollment forms for the district. She explained that she knew that filling in Spanish on the Home Language Survey would give her daughter access to the immersion program. However, she was unaware that the district was going to do an assessment to measure her language proficiency. She shared:

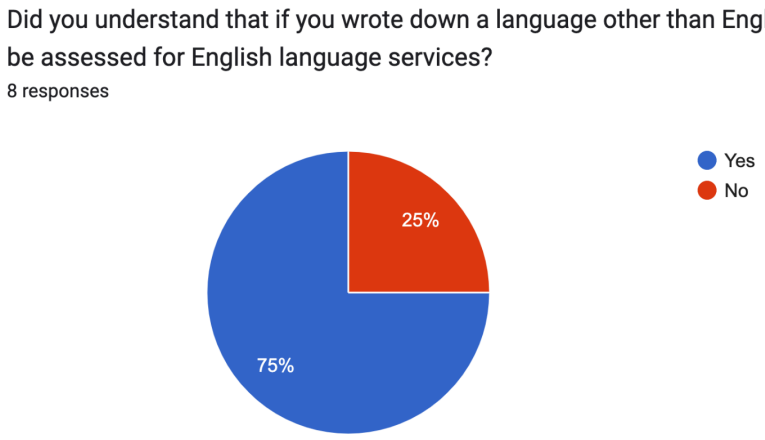
> I wrote on the documents that we were a Spanish-speaking home, and I guess it was more for the immersion, that she was going to be taught Spanish…then the district never communicated with me, like, hey, we're going to do an assessment to see where she's at. They never did anything like that.

This was also true for a few survey participants who could recall filling out the Home Language Survey at enrollment. When asked if they understood that writing another

language down meant their child would be screened for EL services, some responded that they were unaware of this (see Figure 8).

Figure 8.

Survey Response Reflecting Families' Knowledge of Language Assessment



Finding #8 demonstrates that some multilingual families have deeper knowledge and understanding of the educational and EL systems compared to other families. Overall, the finding illustrates that families have varying levels of systems knowledge and that this deeper understanding may inform their decisions.

Summary of Findings from Research Question #2

To summarize, the second research question for this study was: What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services? Four findings developed in connection with this question and the Decision-Making Factor Framework that guided this research.

First, families make decisions about language services based on their assessment of their child's English proficiency. Both families who have accepted and waived services relied on their perceptions of their children's English abilities. Second, many families

were unsure about the specifics of EL program models, instruction, and qualifications. Some confused it with special education services or believed it only supported basic skills. Others were unclear on how their child qualified. Third, families were aware of the high status of English in society and saw proficiency as tied to opportunities and success in the United States. This influenced their decisions about language services. Last, some families had deeper knowledge of the educational and EL systems, including identification, entrance, exit, and long-term placement. This systems knowledge informed their decisions about EL services.

Overall, the level of families' knowledge about their child's English language abilities, program specifics, societal status of English, and educational systems varies. Greater understanding in these areas seems to shape their perspectives and choices regarding English language services. The next section will examine this study's third research question and the findings that emerged in connection to the final Decision-Making Factor: Experiences.

Findings From Research Question #3: What experiences influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

Interview questions for this study were designed to examine research question #3 and the families' experiences. The survey data did not add to the findings in this section.

Decision-Making Factor: Experiences

The findings for this study's research question and DMF relating to multilingual families' experiences that influence their decisions regarding English language services are the following:

- Personal history with Language Learning

- Observation of Others Navigating English Language Services

This section will address each of these findings along with supporting evidence from the interviews.

Finding 9: Personal History with Language Learning In almost all of the interviews, the participants' own background in language impacted their decision-making. Whether they themselves dealt with language barriers, solely spoke English at home, or experienced language services at school, their personal history shaped their perspectives.

Several participants expressed their support of English language services for their children due to their own experiences with language barriers. For example, Leo shared how his family has had to depend on their daughter to help them navigate everyday interactions in places like grocery stores or gas stations because they lack the ability to communicate in these circumstances. He explained that this is one benefit of Engish language services, that it not only helps his children in school but also has a positive impact on the entire family.

Similarly, when asked about what feelings come up when thinking about her children receiving EL services, Baw Paw shared that she was happy, in part because she is not proficient in English. She stated, "I cannot speak and read English, so I cannot help her. I'm really happy the school will help my daughter to improve her English." Clearly, her experiences with language barriers have influenced her perception of EL services.

Along those same lines, Pay Lah's response to the interview question asking why he accepted EL services for his children revealed that one motivating factor was that he was not proficient in English. He said, "Yes, I don't know a lot of English, so I'm really

proud if my kids are learning about English, and I'm happy that they get English language learning." He went on to explain, "I also want to learn about learning English because I don't know a lot of English. So I also want to learn more English." This parent's lack of proficiency in English influenced his decision to accept services for his children.

Conversely, Terry shared a lack of experience with language learning, which may have influenced his decisions surrounding language services. He explained that he did not know a lot of people who received EL services when he was a student. He said:

> When I was in middle school I knew there were kids that would go to a separate class for their English…I would notice that they would have that class. So I knew where the EL class was, but I didn't understand.

He also shared that even though his wife is multilingual, he did not know much about her experience. He explained:

> Well, she went to a school in her country, and here to learn English. From what she told me she learned a lot of English in her country and then just kind of brushed it up when she got here. But that's pretty much all I know about that.

A result of this participant's limited experience with multilingualism is that he may not fully understand language acquisition, which could in turn have affected the choices he made around language services for his children. For example, he described his understanding of EL services to be for recently arrived "foreign-speaking families who struggle with English." Since his family did not fit that description, he did not believe that services were necessary for his kids.

Lastly, participants who had personal experience with language services shared

their unique perspectives and how their participation in EL influenced their decisions for their own children. For example, Chue, who immigrated to the United States at an early age, received EL services through the first several years of elementary school. He shared, "I can vividly remember myself and two other students and the EL teacher. The EL classroom was a janitor's closet, just one table with enough chairs for us to sit around. And we worked on basic proper grammar." These experiences would explain his concern that EL services can be detrimental for students who receive services past the primary grades. He said, "I believe EL becomes detrimental with working on the same thing year after year when we know the mainstream class doesn't do that. They're moving on. Third grade doing this, fourth grade doing this, fifth grade doing this." Later on in the interview, he again connects EL services to the basic grammar he experienced and his apprehension that essential grade-level content is missed. He explained:

> I feel like even at the elementary level that general knowledge base isn't built. If you're in EL working on EL basic skills while your third-grade, fourth-grade, and fifth-grade, peers are being exposed to new content while you're in EL class.

Yareli had similar experiences. She attended public school and received EL services until about fourth grade. She recounted, "Most of the time it was just having fun…there were some days where we would just play games. So it wasn't like I actually learned from it." Not only did she feel like she did not learn anything, she felt like she had missed something important while pulled out for her EL group. She reported:

> I do remember being pulled out and then going back to class and it was like, okay, what happened? Like, what did I miss? And I didn't want her to have that experience…I don't want her to be pulled out of the classroom and then miss out

of classroom work that she needs to get done.

This participant's personal experiences as a child led her to believe that EL services were more of a disruption to learning with no clear benefits. Literature on multilingual students and family beliefs regarding EL services corroborates this participant's perceptions and has reported that it is a significant concern for some (Amaral, 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Guo, 2007 & 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014; Kipchumba, 2017) Families and students detailed the loss of valuable classroom instruction while receiving language services, questioning the need for so many years in the EL program (Guo, 2007; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009).

Additionally, experiences such as Chue's and Yareli's were not uncommon due to the lack of policy and inconsistent criteria regarding EL programming services (DeAvila, 1990; Nadeau & Miramontes, 1998; Zehler et al., 2003; Callahan et al., 2010). This lack of systemic consistency led to students moving in and out of different programs, having significant gaps in their services at some point, and receiving services that were mismatched to their actual learning needs and language proficiencies (Kim & Garcia, 2014; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). Some students in Menken and Kleyn's (2010) study described their EL experience as too easy as the classes were more geared towards recently arrived students and did not meet the language or academic needs of the intermediate learnings, which led to academic difficulties. Experiences such as these would impact any decision a family member makes for their own child's EL services. This study's next and last finding discusses how the observation of others navigating EL services has influenced families.

Finding 10: Observation of Others Navigating English Language Services In

several of the interviews, participants referenced how seeing other students or family members participate in EL affected their points of view. Observing MLs remain in beginning-level EL classes, missing core content and opportunities for advanced courses, or even find success with language services has influenced the participants of this study.

For example, Chue, who is a high school teacher, shared his observations of MLs in his building. He believed some students were "stuck" at level two or three for too many years, which led to fewer choices for advanced courses. He explained:

> I can look at my own recent experiences here looking at high school students. A student is stuck at a level 2 or 3 for two or three years, and in those two or three years, their mainstream peers are learning something new…and you only have a set number of classes that you can take during your high school career, right? If they're being filled up with EL courses, you have less options to take additional classes and less opportunity.

He also described his observations of his Hmong peers when he was a student who recently exited from EL services. He expressed concern that they remained in EL from elementary school through high school. He said, "After I was exited from EL, most of my non-English speaking peers, my Hmong peers, were still in EL, you know, growing up from elementary school to middle school to high school." Observing his peers as a child along with current observations of high school students, was a strong motivating factor in why he waived services for his older children.

Yareli also mentioned observations she made of her ML peers as a child. When she was pulled out for EL services, the majority of their lessons were games and having fun. She noted, "It wasn't like I actually learned from it, it was mostly fun. And I

remember going with the group and they were like yeah we're out of class! We don't have to be there!" The group did not take their services seriously and viewed EL as a way to avoid their mainstream classroom. This did not sit well with Yareli and she did not want her daughter to have the same experience.

Baw Paw had a different experience with the observations she made of others navigating EL services. Her observations of her older children receiving services and growing in their English proficiency led her to appreciate the services. She shared, "I have experience before with my son, my oldest, and when he received EL services I saw the development and improvement. So I do like EL service." Later in the interview she again expressed her positive perception of EL. She said, "I don't really understand about EL services, but I see my son doing it, it's really good. When I see my son's experience in EL service, I think it's really good for the students." Observing her son navigate EL impacted her decisions regarding services for her other children.

Summary of Findings from Research Questions #3

In summary, the third research question for this study was: What *experiences* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services? Two findings emerged in relation to this question and the Decision-Making Factor Framework that guided this study.

The first finding revealed that personal experiences with language learning impact decisions. Participants who themselves experienced language barriers were appreciative of EL services for their children, while those with minimal language learning experience did not see the need. In addition, past experiences in EL services shaped perspectives. Some participants felt they missed academics in their mainstream classes and others did

not see the benefit.

The second finding reported that observations of others navigating EL influenced their decisions. Seeing peers stuck in EL services long-term made some cautious of services. On the other hand, observing others thriving in EL led them to appreciate the services. Witnessing how EL impacted others shaped the participants' viewpoints.

Summary of Chapter Four

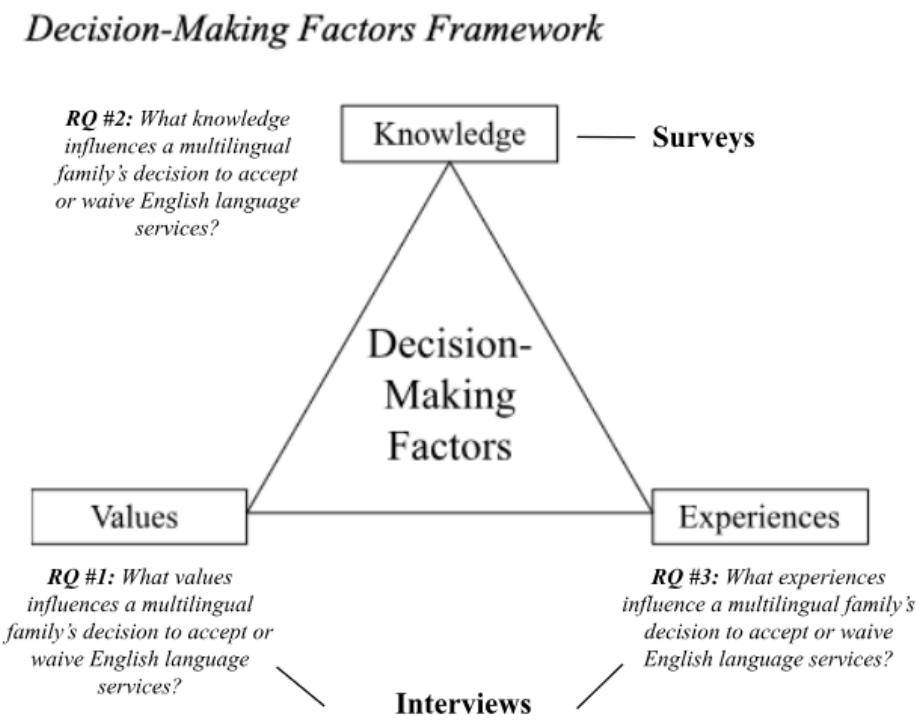
This chapter aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What *values* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

Data analysis and the organization of findings connected to the three research questions were guided by the Decision-Making Factors Framework (see Figure 9).

Figure 9.

Research Questions and Data Analysis Connection to Decision-Making Factors Framework



Taking the DMF framework into account, ten findings emerged and are summarized in the following three sections.

Values

This Decision-Making Factor is connected to this study's research question one: *What values influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?* Four findings emerged in answer to this question:

- Families value English language acquisition
- Families value educational advancement
- Families value embracing and leveraging available opportunities
- Families value societal integration

These findings were based on data collected through interviews and surveys.

Knowledge

The Decision-Making Factor, Knowledge, is related to the second research question for this study: *What knowledge influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?* Four findings emerged concerning the knowledge that influences family decisions:

- Knowledge of their child's English language abilities
- Knowledge about the specifics of EL program models
- Knowledge of the status English holds in society
- Knowledge of systems

These findings were based on data collected from both interviews and surveys.

Experiences

This Decision-Making Factor corresponds to research question number three: *What experiences influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?* Two findings emerged related to the experiences of the participants and the influence that had on their decisions:

- Personal history with language learning
- Observation of others navigating English language services

These findings were based on data collected from participant interviews.

Research on multilingual families' values, knowledge, and experiences corroborates many of the findings in this study. First, this study found that the families' values of English language acquisition, educational advancement, embracing opportunities, and integrating into society influenced their decisions regarding language services. Literature confirms that ML families place a high priority on their children's education and want their children to concentrate on school so they can be successful in

the future (Walker-Dalhoue & Dalhouse, 2009; Waterman, 2009; Kim & Garcia, 2014). Not only do ML families believe that education and English language acquisition will lead to more opportunities and advancement, but they also believe that it is the key to social mobility and achieving dreams (Yang, 2017; Cun, 2020). As this study and previous studies have shown, ML families place a high value on English language acquisition and education.

Literature on ML families' knowledge also corroborates the findings in this study, that what families know about their children's English abilities and EL program specifics influenced their perspectives and decision-making regarding language services. Kipchumba (2017) reported in her research on families' negative attitudes toward ESL services that families believed those services were causing their children to fall behind their peers because the content was not rigorous enough. They believed that their children's ability to converse in English easily meant they did not need services. Participants in this study also reported similar beliefs. For example, Chue remarked several times that if he talked with his friend's children and felt like they were fluent in English due to that conversation, they should be questioning their need for EL Services. Likewise, Lueck's (2010) study on ML parent perceptions described their belief that language programming was for basic introductory English. Knowing that their children do not need instruction in beginning English language skills, along with a misunderstanding of EL services, has influenced decisions regarding language services.

The findings in this study revealed that the misunderstandings of EL service specifics may result from personal experiences with such services. Literature on ML experiences with language services confirms this finding and has described the

significant change over the last several decades (Callahan et al., 2010). In the past, EL programs would primarily focus on oral language development, and the skills developed in the EL program would not match the skills needed in the mainstream classroom, which led to significant gaps in learning (Cummins, 1984; Gersten, 1996; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Kim & Garcia, 2014). Experiencing this type of programming caused some participants in this study to be concerned for their children's education and influenced their decisions.

The next chapter will conclude with recommendations for stakeholders resulting from this study, discuss the limitations and implications of the findings, and address future research recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

This case study aimed to examine the factors influencing multilingual families' decisions about language services for their children by answering the following research questions:

1. What *values* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
2. What *knowledge* influences a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?
3. What *experiences* influence a multilingual family's decision to accept or waive English language services?

This chapter will offer a brief summary of the study's findings, make recommendations to key stakeholders, discuss limitations, make suggestions for future research, and conclude the study with final thoughts.

Summary of Findings

The conceptual framework guiding this study, Decision-Making Factors (DMF), asserts that people's values, knowledge, and experiences impact their decisions. This framework is aligned with the study's three research questions and drove the data collection methods and analysis. The following is a brief summary of the findings for each DMF and research question.

Values

Findings relating to multilingual families' values that influence their decision-making revealed the following:

- Families value English language acquisition
- Families value educational advancement
- Families value embracing and leveraging available opportunities
- Families value societal integration

The first finding that emerged was that the participants placed a high value on English language acquisition and perceived English abilities as critical for their children's success in life. The second finding revealed the families' value for educational advancement. Some participants believed EL services would support this, while others were concerned that their children were missing core instruction when pulled out of the classroom for services.

The third finding was that the participants valued embracing and leveraging available opportunities. Again, participants were divided on whether they believed EL services would expand or limit opportunities. The last finding revealed that families valued societal integration. Participants expressed the desire to have their children included alongside their non-EL peers and that fluency in English led to successful participation in the broader culture.

Knowledge

Four findings developed in connection to the Decision-Making Factor of Knowledge. There are the following:

- Knowledge of their child's English abilities
- Knowledge about the specifics of EL program models
- Knowledge of the status English holds in society
- Knowledge of systems

The first finding revealed that the participants decide about their children's language services based on their perception of their English language proficiency. This was true for both families who accepted and waived services. Second, many participants were unsure about the details of EL program models, instruction, and service qualification. Several confused EL services with special education or believed they targeted beginner-level English skills. Others questioned why their children qualified for services and were unclear about the criteria and system for identifying students for screening. Third, the findings reported the families' awareness of the high status English holds in society, and they believed English proficiency was a tool to access more opportunities and would lead to success in the United States. Last, several participants had a deeper understanding of educational systems, specifically those relating to EL services, such as identification processes, entrance and exit criteria, and long-term placement in the program. The knowledge of these systems influenced their decisions about whether or not they accepted or waived services for their children.

Experiences

This study revealed the following experiences influenced the participants' decisions for English language services:

- Personal history with language learning
- Observation of others navigating English language services

First, participants who themselves experienced language barriers were more supportive of EL services for their children, while those with minimal experience relating to language services did not perceive a need for their children. Additionally, those who experienced EL services in the past regretted missing out on core content while in their

pull-out groups and did not believe they benefitted from the support.

Second, observing others navigating EL services influenced decision-making for their children's services. Participants who saw their peers in EL programming long-term led to concerns regarding their academic opportunities. However, some participants noticed others thriving in EL, which made them appreciate such services. Witnessing the impact of EL services on others shaped their perception and influenced their decisions.

Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this study, three stakeholders have been identified for recommendations: district English language departments, district enrollment centers, and state departments of education. See Table 3 for an overview of the recommendations. Each recommendation will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

Table 3.

Recommendations for Key Stakeholders

District English Language Departments	**District Enrollment Centers**	**State Departments of Education**
Increase Communication with Multilingual (ML) Families Regarding English Language Service Specifics ● Reduce caseload numbers for EL Teachers ● Purposefully plan for events or opportunities to share information with ML families related to language acquisition and support	Increase Accessibility with the Enrollment Process ● Provide visual and auditory support for components of the online enrollment process ● Utilize cultural liaisons in the enrollment process ● Engage ML families in feedback on the enrollment process	Revise Home Language Survey for Clarity in Purpose and Family Rights

Recommendation for District English Language Departments

The first group of stakeholders identified for recommendations is the district English Language Department (ELD). The primary recommendation that emerged from this study's findings is that there should be an increase in communication with multilingual families regarding the specifics of English language services. To do this, caseload numbers for EL teachers should be reduced, and the ELD should purposefully plan for events or opportunities to share information related to language acquisition and support with ML families.

Recommendation #1: Increase Communication with Multilingual Families Regarding English Language Service Specifics The main recommendation for the district ELD is that communication between multilingual families and the school district should increase, specifically regarding the details of English language services and language acquisition. Several misconceptions emerged relating to the specifics of EL services, including the delivery of those services, what content is covered, and how their children are qualified. These misconceptions developed due to past personal experiences and a lack of communication, or miscommunication, from the district.

For example, those who had participated in EL as a child experienced instruction that they did not believe was beneficial. Interview participants Chue and Yareli expressed the belief that EL services were for basic skills since that is what they experienced as EL students. They were concerned that their children would miss important content covered in the mainstream classroom. However, their concerns could have been put to rest had they been aware that missing core content due to language services is restricted (Minnesota Department of Education, 2023). For example, Not only are EL teachers

restricted from pulling students during core content, but they are also aligning their instruction to the grade-level content and standards and explicitly teaching the academic English necessary to master the content learning in the classroom (English Language Development Program Enrollment Packet, 2023). Additionally, students are grouped according to language proficiency, and those more proficient in English would not be working with those who have recently arrived and need more support with introductory English.

Another misconception was that students who could easily converse in English would not need English language instruction. Chue expressed this belief and explained that if he thought his children spoke English well enough, EL services were unnecessary. If there were more opportunities for the ELD and staff to converse with ML families about language acquisition and how the language of schooling is more complex than conversational English, some of these misconceptions could be avoided.

The last misconception surrounding EL services was that such services were similar to special education services. Survey responses and comments made during the interviews that EL targets speech or students who have a hard time speaking imply that the two labels have been confused with each other. Some participants needed clarification on the purpose and goal of EL services, which influenced their decisions.

Kipchumba's (2017) study on the negative attitudes towards EL revealed similar misconceptions. She noted the need for more precise communication with families and suggested that a notification letter or even family/teacher conferences are insufficient communication. Like Kipchumba's study, this study's findings imply that there must be more than letters in the mail or conferences. It is not surprising that these two forms of

communication are not adequate communication. Oftentimes, academic jargon or language barriers hinder the letter's important content and can be confusing to families. As for family/teacher conferences, this time is typically used for the classroom teacher to connect with the families and does not leave much room for meaningful conversations around language services or language acquisition. As an EL teacher, I have experienced classroom teachers telling me that I could attend the conference, but I would not be given any time to say anything because they had too much on their agenda to share with families. Sometimes, this was a relief, as my caseload numbers were so high that I would have four to six conferences to attend in twenty minutes. Servicing sixty to sixty-five students makes communication with families a significant challenge. Therefore, one specific suggestion to increase communication with ML families is to reduce the number of MLs on the EL teacher's caseload.

Reduce caseload numbers for English language teachers. Currently, in our district, the EL teacher-to-student ratio is 1:50. While this number has been reduced over the last few years, as it was previously 1:55, EL teachers frequently end up with more than fifty-five students. As a full-time EL teacher, I would average sixty-five students on my caseload. Not only does a large caseload equal a significant amount of planning time for lessons, but it also means more classroom teachers to collaborate with. Typically, in my experience, EL teachers work across multiple grade levels and collaborate with at least six to ten teachers. This takes up most, if not all, of a teacher's free time and makes it difficult for meaningful connections with multilingual families.

Caseload decisions for EL teachers are made at the district level based on budget and priorities. Previously, legislation in MN required a teacher to student ratio of 1:45,

however, this is not the case anymore (A. Young, personal communication, February 5, 2024). There are discrepancies in caseload requirements across districts in the metro area, with some districts having a mandated caseload of 1:30. For example, District 196, a district that is a first ring suburb like ours, has deemed 1:30 an appropriate number, which is significantlly lower than 1:50.

As the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education reminded us in 2015, “School districts have an obligation to provide the personnel and resource necessary to effecitvelly implement their chosen EL program” (Lhamon & Gupta, p.14, 2015). However, large caseloads make it difficult to do this. Prioritizing smaller caseloads would not only allow for quality programming, which is a federal requirement, but it would also increase communication opportunities with ML families (Casteneda v. Pickard, 1981). This leads to the second specific suggestion to increase communication: to purposefully plan for events or opportunities to share information related to language acquisition and support with ML families.

Purposefully plan for events or opportunities to share information with multilingual families related to language acquisition and support. Guo (2009) described a school event facilitated by EL teachers to increase communication with ML families regarding programming and education. This event was an opportunity for ML students to showcase their learning and for teachers to share the content covered during language services. An event such as this would allow for dialogue between families and staff and could clarify misconceptions. Additionally, it would allow ML families to ask questions and give feedback or suggestions about language services. This feedback and suggestions from families are critical, as ML family voices and perspectives are often

missing from conversations regarding the planning of language programming (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2004).

Another simple yet efficient way EL staff could share information about language programming would be to set up a table at the Meet the Teacher event the week before the school year begins. This would allow the teachers to connect positively with the ML families right away and answer any questions they might have, not only about language services but also about the school year. Beginning the year with an opportunity for connection and communication could build trust and strengthen the partnerships with ML families.

Recommendation for District Enrollment Centers

The second group of stakeholders identified for recommendations is the district's enrollment center. The recommendation that emerged from this study's findings is that there needs to be an increase in accessibility with the enrollment process. To do this, visual and auditory supports can be put in place for specific components online, cultural liaisons can be utilized, and feedback should be sought from the ML families' perspective on their experiences with enrollment.

Recommendation #2: Increase Accessibility of Enrollment Process The primary recommendation for the District Enrollment Center is to increase the accessibility for ML families. This recommendation stems from the participants who shared the frustration and confusion that resulted from their enrollment experiences. For example, Yajaira believed that filling in Spanish on the Home Language Survey would lead to enrollment in the Spanish Immersion Program. Instead, that response led to her

daughter being screened for EL services. She expressed her frustrations and desire for clearer communication during enrollment.

Terry's family had a similar experience. His wife, who filled out the enrollment forms in Spanish, was unaware that marking Spanish on the Home Language Survey would mean their son, who only speaks English, would be screened for EL services. At the end of the interview, Terry still did not understand why his son had been screened, and he asked if it was a requirement for all students to be screened for language services. Simple supports in place during the enrollment process could ensure this clarity for families.

In my conversations with families in our school community, many shared that enrolling a child in a new district can be overwhelming and confusing. Even knowing where to start can be a challenge. Families of incoming kindergarteners were confused by due dates for enrollment paperwork, where to find the paperwork, language barriers in filling out the paperwork, and even the knowledge that new siblings need to complete the paperwork even if there is already one sibling attending the school.

Once the necessary paperwork to enroll is obtained, there are 12 pages of forms and papers to read regarding ethnic and racial demographics, health records, immunization history, preschool health history and development, and a home language survey. Interpreters can assist in this process, yet families may need to be made aware this service is available. To access the interpreter's (or cultural liaison's) contact information, families must first know to go to the district's website, click the tab 'enroll, and choose from one of five options: I would like to enroll a student for kindergarten, I am a district resident and would like to enroll a student in grades 1-12, I am NOT a

district resident and would like to open enroll a student in grades 1-12, my child attends a non-public school and wants to transfer, and my child is homeschooled. Once they choose the appropriate option, they must read through multiple paragraphs of directions, none of which say that interpretation is available. The only way a family member would know that this resource is an option is if they scroll down to the bottom of the page, where there is a list of nine resource options, and interpreters and translators are the second to last one. Once you click on that, there are multiple paragraphs of text describing cultural liaison services and a small box on the side of the screen that tells you to 'click here for information about contacting the district's cultural liaisons.' This process is confusing for proficient English speakers who are employed in the district; I cannot imagine how it would be for someone who is unfamiliar with our educational system or may have language barriers.

Provide visual and auditory support for components of the online enrollment process. There are a few primary language supports that could be put in place to make this process a bit smoother (Gonzalez, 2022). I think about language supports I might use as an EL teacher and how I would modify some lessons using visuals and videos to make the content more accessible. Adding videos with verbal directions recorded by the cultural liaisons could make the enrollment process more straightforward.

Utilize cultural liaisons in the enrollment process. In those videos, the cultural liaisons could also explain the purpose of documents such as the Home Language Survey, which may avoid frustration and confusion in the future if or when their child is screened and qualifies for EL services. The liaisons could also point out the family's right to waive services if their child does qualify. Many families are not aware of this right, as was

reported by 44.4% of survey participants in this study. Similarly, Chue shared that in his conversations with other Hmong families, they did not know waiving services was an option. Explicitly sharing this upfront during enrollment would ensure that families know all their options.

Along with videos, links to visuals for examples of items needed for enrollment would also be helpful. For example, on the kindergarten enrollment page, there is a list of five items that need to be completed to enroll a kindergartener. Of the five items, sixteen different forms are mentioned, a few being a driver's license, utility bill, lease/purchase agreement, passport, hospital birth record, immunization records, immigration records, early childhood screening records, and more. It would be helpful to provide a visual example of each of these. These are simple changes that could make the process less overwhelming and confusing.

Engage multilingual families in feedback on the enrollment process. The last specific recommendation to increase the accessibility of the enrollment process is to get feedback from the ML families who have experienced it. It is one thing for a proficient English speaker who is incredibly familiar with the education system to try and make recommendations to support this process. However, asking the families for their voices and perspectives will provide more reliable recommendations to this stakeholder.

Recommendation for State Departments of Education

The last group of stakeholders identified for recommendations is the MN Department of Education. The main recommendation that developed from this study's findings is that there may be a need to revise the Home Language Survey (see Figure 10).

Figure 10.

MN Home Language Survey

Minnesota Language Survey

Minnesota is home to speakers of more than 100 different languages. The ability to speak and understand multiple languages is valued. The information you provide will be used by the school district to see if your student is multilingual. In Minnesota, students who are multilingual may qualify for a Multilingual Seal upon further assessment. Additionally, the information you provide will determine if your student should take an English proficiency test. Based upon the results of the test, your student may be entitled to English language development instruction. **Access to instruction is required by federal and state law. As a parent or guardian, you have the right to decline English learner instruction at any time. Every enrolling student must be provided with the Minnesota Language Survey during enrollment.** Information requested on this form is important to us to be able to serve your student. Your assistance in completing the Minnesota Language Survey is greatly appreciated.

Student Information	
Student's Name: (Last, First, Middle)	Birthdate or Student ID:

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	**Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:**
1. My student first learned:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	

Language use alone does not identify your student as an English learner. If a language other than English is indicated, your student will be screened for English language proficiency.

Parent/Guardian Information	
Parent/Guardian Name (Printed):	
Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date:

* All data on this form is private. It will only be shared with district staff who need the information to best serve your student and forlegally required reporting about home language and service eligibility to the Minnesota Department of Education. At the district and at the Minnesota Department of Education, this information will not be shared with other individuals or entities, except if they are authorized by state or federal law to access the information. Compliance with this request for information is voluntary.

Valuable information regarding the purpose of the form, the legal right to have access to education, and the family's right to waive services could be missed if one does not read through it very carefully.

Recommendation #3: Revise Home Language Survey for Clarity in Purpose and Family Rights Home language surveys are used in all states as an initial step to being screened for EL services (Salerno & Andrei, 2021). The main recommendation for

the State Departments of Education is to revise the Home Language Survey to ensure that all critical information is accessible and that families understand the purpose of the form. This recommendation emerged from the confusion and frustration of some participants who waived services. For example, Terry and Yareli were unaware that indicating that Spanish was spoken in the home would lead to their children being screened for services, even though it is stated in bold print on the form. Placing this information in the middle of the form may cause the reader to miss it. My recommendation would be to place this information at the top of the form, in larger print if possible.

Another essential detail on the Home Language Survey that participants overlooked was the right to decline services. This detail is the third to last sentence of the paragraph, and even though it is also in bold print, it gets lost in the text. As mentioned earlier, almost half of the survey participants were unaware of the option to waive services. Ensuring this information stands out and does not get lost in the text will hopefully lead to more families understanding their rights. My recommendation is to rewrite the introductory paragraph, reduce the amount of text, and make a bulleted list of the critical information for families to read before indicating languages spoken. Lastly, as Salerno and Andrei (2021) suggest in their research on the inconsistencies in EL identification across the U.S., State Departments of Education should work closely with multilingual families to reevaluate the Home Language Surveys from their perspective and experiences.

Summary of Recommendations

In summary, three recommendations developed from the findings of this study. Each recommendation was specific to one of the following stakeholders: the district

English language department, the district enrollment center, and the MN Department of Education. First, the district's English language department should increase its communication with multilingual families regarding the specifics of English language services. This can be accomplished by reducing the caseload numbers for EL teachers and by purposefully planning events and opportunities to share information about language acquisition and language programming with ML families. Second, the district enrollment center should increase the accessibility of the enrollment process. To do this, they should provide visual and auditory support for certain components of the online enrollment process, utilize the cultural liaisons, and reach out to ML families for feedback on their experiences with enrollment. Lastly, the MN Department of Education should revise the Home Language Survey for clarity in its purpose and the rights of the families. The following section will address the limitations of this study.

Limitations

All research has limitations that are important to acknowledge. This study had three main limitations: asking participants to recall experiences from the past, the automatic ending of the survey after one of the questions, and interviewing participants who did not know about their child's EL services.

Asking Participants to Recall Experiences From the Past

The first limitation relates to enrollment and filling out the Home Language Survey. In the survey, participants were asked if they were the ones who filled out the form. If they answered yes, the following question asked if they knew that indicating another language other than English would lead to their child being screened for EL services. For some of the participants, this may have been many years ago. For example,

one mother who filled out the survey had a daughter in sixth grade, which means she filled out the enrollment paperwork more than six years ago. This may have been difficult to recall and could have potentially impacted the results of the survey.

Automatic Ending of the Survey

The second limitation was the automatic ending of the survey after question six, which asked participants if their child qualified for EL services. Three participants out of twenty-one responded no, even though all participants had children identified for EL. This meant they could not answer the following questions regarding their knowledge of their right to waive services, how they knew about the option to waive services, and their understanding of the purpose of EL services. Therefore, valuable data from the three participants was not collected and impacted the findings for research question 2 regarding the Decision-Making Factor of knowledge. If I were to do this survey again, I would not add the function of ending the survey after that question.

Interviewing and Surveying Participants Who Did Not Know About their Child's English Language Service

The last limitation was surveying and interviewing participants who were not the family members responsible for enrolling their children in the district and were not aware of the language services their children were receiving. Specifically, one participant fell ill right before the interview, so her husband sat next to her and attempted to answer the questions with her help. However, this was a challenge because he was not the parent responsible for enrolling the children or communicating with the school about their children's academics. Though this was still data I could learn from, several questions were hard to answer for the participant, and the interview was brief. As for the survey

participants, it would have been helpful to identify ahead of time the family member who enrolled the child and filled out the Home Language Survey. For example, one student's older sister attended the conference night and participated in the survey. It is unlikely they were the family members responsible for enrollment. Ensuring the survey participants were also the family members responsible for enrollment would have provided more accurate data on the knowledge that influenced their decisions regarding their children's language services.

Future Research

Two recommendations for future research have been identified as a result of this study. This study aimed to examine factors that influenced multilingual families' decisions regarding English language services. It would be valuable to examine their perceptions regarding other services and programs within the educational system, such as programs for advanced academics/gifted and talented students and special education services. Second, it is recommended that future research explores trends for accepting and waiving services within specific cultural groups. This would provide for a deeper understanding of the values, knowledge, and experiences influencing multilingual families' decisions as they navigate the educational system.

Concluding Thoughts

At the beginning of this study, I had a hard time understanding why multilingual families would want to waive English language services for their children. In all honesty, I was biased in my beliefs surrounding the value of these services, and I wanted to understand what was behind the families' decisions. At the end of this research I had expected to have one list of findings for the families who waived services and another list

for those who accepted. What surprised me is that the findings are not as clear cut as I thought, but instead, they are so much more complex and richer in meaning. Not only am I walking away with a change in my own beliefs regarding English language services, but I also have a deeper understanding that our multilingual families are navigating a system that is full of barriers or may be unfamiliar to them and that they want the best education for their children and are doing everything they can to ensure their success.

Lastly, throughout this research process, it has become even more evident that conversations on who receives EL services and why typically happen within the professional community of educators, researchers, and policymakers. There is a gap in research from ML family perspectives regarding these services, and my hope is that this research will elevate these families' voices, begin to close that research gap and lead to the improvement of EL programming and policies.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

1. What is/are the languages spoken at home?
2. What best describes your gender:
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Non-binary
    d. Prefer not to say
3. What is your relationship to the child/children who attend this school?
4. Were you the adult who filled out the Home Language Survey when your child was enrolled in our district?
    a. Yes, go to question 5
    b. No, go to question 6
5. Did you understand that if you wrote down a language other than English meant your child would be assessed for English Language services?
6. Did your child meet the requirements to receive English Language services?
    a. Yes, go to question 7
    b. No, end survey
7. Did you say yes to English language services for your child?
    a. Yes
    b. No, I chose to waive
    c. I'm not sure

8. Did you know that you could refuse English Language services for your child?
    a. Yes, go to question 9
    b. No, go to question 10
9. How did you know this?
    a. I was told by school staff
    b. I read it in the letter from the district
    c. I was told about it by someone I know
    d. Other
10. Based on your understanding, can you share what you believe the purpose of EL services is?
11. Would you be interested in participating in an interview with Mrs. Mattson to discuss the topic of EL services further?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Maybe

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. How did you find out that your child could participate in EL services?
2. What feelings come up when you think about your child getting EL services?
    a. Where do you think those feelings come from?
3. Why did you accept or waive your child's EL services?
4. How could EL services be good for your child?
5. How could EL services be bad for your child?
6. Have you had experience with EL services?
    a. If so, please describe your experience.
7. Have you spoken with other families about EL services?
    a. How have these conversations gone?

Questions Sorted by Decision-Making Factor

Values	**Experiences**
● What feelings come up when you think about your child getting EL services? ○ Where do you think those feelings come from? ● Why did you accept or waive your child's EL services?	● How did you find out your child could participate in EL services? ● Have you had experiences with EL services? ○ If so, please describe your experience. ● Have you spoken with other

● How could EL services be good for your child? ● How could EL services be bad for your child?	families about EL services? ○ How have these conversations gone?