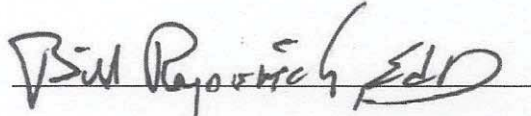



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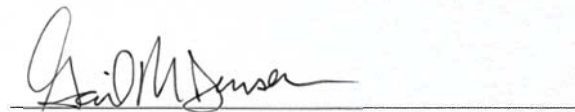
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PARENTAL MOTIVATIONS FOR ENROLLING CHILDREN IN PRIVATE
LANGUAGE SCHOOL CLASSES: A GROUNDED THEORY EXPLORATION

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
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Abstract

In this qualitative grounded theory dissertation-in-practice study, the researcher explored both parental motivations for enrolling their children in private language programs as an extracurricular activity and how those parents perceived the value of their investment. Considering the commonly understood benefits to learning one or more additional languages in youth, the researcher aimed to generate data-informed recommendations that would improve language interest, engagement, curricula, and delivery, thereby broadening parental motivations for access to languages and their advantages for children. The study yielded five practical recommendations to achieve this goal: (1) align outreach and engagement strategies with the long-term parental goal of providing a child with differential skills, (2) align marketing strategies with the parental goal of supporting a child's well-roundedness, (3) focus teaching practices on making language classes enjoyable for students, (4) schedule and locate classes according to parental convenience, and (5) engage parents with the language classes. The researcher also identified several specific procedures for implementing these solutions and implications for research to include future quantitative studies.

Keywords: grounded theory, qualitative, language instruction, extracurricular activity

Dedication

This Dissertation in Practice is dedicated to my wife, Audrey Crane. Her steadfast support, advice, and assistance throughout this challenging and often frustrating process is surpassed only by her enduring patience, love and friendship as my partner in life.

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This dissertation was only possible with assistance and encouragement of many others. Dr. William Raynovich and Dr. Judith Pete were patient and supportive throughout the process and I am grateful for their wise counsel. I am thankful as well for my advisor, Dr. James Martin and the rest of the Creighton University Interdisciplinary Leadership Faculty and staff for their assistance, guidance, and leadership and for cultivating a truly remarkable program that I am proud to be a part of. I am thankful for my family both near and far, on earth and in heaven who have inspired, guided, mentored and loved me unconditionally for the past 50 years or so. Specifically, I am indebted to my sister Dr. Jessica Allen, and my uncle (de facto brother) Colonel David Buckman, USAF (Ret.). There are no words to express my gratitude for all the ways you have been there for me over the years. I have been blessed with a wonderful family and am grateful for my wife, Audrey, my children, Forest and his wife Victoria, Rain, Christian, Samantha, Shiloh, Clementine, Calliope and Autumn, and my grand-daughter Averie. I love you all dearly.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Study Purpose	2
Research Questions	3
Study Aim	3
Methodology Overview	4
Definitions of Relevant Terms	4
Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations, and Personal Biases	6
Assumptions.....	6
Limitations	6
Delimitations.....	8
Personal Bias.....	9
The Roles of Leadership in Language Education.....	13
The Language School	14
Significance of the Study	15
Summary.....	15

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
World Language Education in the United States	17
Cognitive Abilities and Benefits	18
Aging and Health	20
Employability.....	20
Academic Achievement and Benefits	20
Communicative and Intercultural Competence	21
Enhanced Creativity.....	21
Language Learning in Youth.....	22
Online, Mobile, and Other Language Learning Media.....	23
Parental Motivations for ECAs.....	24
Grounded Theory (GT).....	24
Classic Grounded Theory	25
Evolved Grounded Theory.....	26
Constructivist Grounded Theory.....	26
Saturation	27
Summary.....	30
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	31
Research Questions.....	31
Method	31
Participants.....	32
Demographics.	32
Recruitment.....	33

Data Collection Procedures.....	34
Data Collection Tools.....	34
Data Analysis	35
Saturation	356
Methodological Integrity	36
Ethical Considerations	37
Reflective Practices.....	38
Summary.....	39
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS	40
Results.....	40
Focused Code 1: Anticipated Benefits of Language Classes for Children	44
Focused Code 2: Barriers to Language Classes.....	47
Focused Code 3: Effectiveness of Extracurricular Activities in Contributing to Children’s Well-Roundedness.....	52
Focused Code 4: Immediate Advantages of Language Classes for Parents	56
Findings.....	59
Theoretical Code 1: The Expectation of Long-Term Benefits for Their Children Motivates Parents to Seek Language Classes	60
Theoretical Code 2: Parents Value Language Classes According to Their Children’s Enjoyment	61
Theoretical Code 3: Parents Value Language Classes According to Transportation Requirements	62
Theoretical Code 4: Parents Value Language Classes According to Effectiveness in Engaging Them as Parents.....	62
Theoretical Code 5: Parents Value Language Classes According to Effectiveness in Contributing to Children’s Well-Roundedness	63

Discussion.....	64
Summary.....	666
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	68
Proposed Solutions	68
Recommendation for Practice 1: Align Outreach and Engagement Strategies with the Long-Term Parental Goal of Providing the Child with Differential Skills.....	69
Recommendation for Practice 2: Align Engagement and Outreach Strategies with Parents’ Goal of Supporting Their Children’s “Well-Roundedness”	70
Recommendation for Practice 3: Focus Outreach, Curricula Design, and Teaching Practices on Making Language Instruction Enjoyable for Students.....	71
Recommendation for Practice 4: Schedule and Locate Classes According to Parental Convenience.....	73
Recommendation for Practice 5: Engage Parents with the Language Classes	74
Implementation of the Proposed Solutions	75
Evaluating the Outcome of Implementing the Solution	78
Practical Implications.....	78
Implications for Future Research.....	80
Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice	82
Personal Reflection on the Dissertation Process.....	83
Summary of the Dissertation-In-Practice.....	84
References.....	87
Appendix A: Study Introduction and Participant Bill of Rights.....	93
Appendix B: Grounded Theory Interview Protocol.....	96
Appendix C: Creighton Univeristy IRB Approval.....	969

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1. Selected demographic indicators comparing and contrasting the target pool location population with the United States population	33
Table 2. Focused Codes, Initial Codes, and Frequencies by Participant	42
Table 3. Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 1	44
Table 4. Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 2	48
Table 5. Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 3	52
Table 6. Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 4	57

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Despite well-documented cognitive, academic, and cultural benefits to children learning a language beyond their native language, world language course offerings in K-12 schools in the United States have been declining for more than 20 years (Fox et al., 2019a, 2019b). For example, middle schools offering world languages declined from 75% in 1997 to 58% in 2008 and from 31% to 25% across elementary schools over the same period (Commission on Language Learning, 2017). The picture is even starker in the subset of public schools, where only 15% of K-12 public schools offered languages other than English, compared to 50% of private schools (Commission on Language Learning, 2017).

Due to the decline in language course offerings in schools, parents who desired world language exposure and learning for their children have had to consider investing in language instruction outside of public school systems. While computer-based, online, and private brick-and-mortar (i.e., in-person, face-to-face, and onsite) resources may meet parental desire for world language instruction, the researcher focused on exploring the motivations of parents who had invested their time and money in brick-and-mortar language instruction for their children, as well as how those parents' perceived their needs were—or were not—met. The researcher intended for the findings of this study to be useful for language educators to align their curricula, outreach, and engagement with parental motivations. The end goal of this alignment being to facilitate a strategic and operational approach to reaching a broader population of parents and their children with learning additional languages.

Statement of the Problem

In general, parental motivations for enrolling their children in extracurricular activities (ECAs) include the transfer of family and cultural values, life enrichment, and a desire for children to advance in their careers (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015; Dunn et al., 2003; Irwin & Elley, 2011). Research has established several known benefits of language learning that align with these motivations such as improved cognitive abilities, employability, academic achievement, and others (Fox et al., 2019a, 2019b). However, while research has established parental motivations to seek ECAs in general for their children, the specific reasons parents enrolled their children in language instruction rather than sports, arts, or other activities was not known. Without understanding why parents seek language instruction, language education stakeholders may not be well-informed with regard to the motivations for and return on investment (ROI) that language instruction for children can provide. As a result, classes themselves may lack characteristics, attributes, or features that parents find valuable, thus leading parents to discontinue investment in them thereby depriving some children the opportunity and benefits of language learning in youth.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations of parents who invested in language classes for their children and the value that these parents perceived from their investment. By understanding these motivations and value characteristics, the researcher aimed to inform policy makers, language educators, business leaders, and other stakeholders to align language education engagement, outreach, curricula, and delivery with parental preferences.

Research Questions

The researcher identified participants from a population of parents who enrolled their children in a specific, brick-and-mortar language education program. The researcher interviewed participants in order to understand parental motivations for the classes and how they perceived the value of them. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: Why do parents seek language classes for their children?

RQ2: How have parents valued classes and determined the worth of their investment?

Study Aim

Through this study, the researcher explored the reasons parents invested in language classes for their children and how parents evaluated the return on their investments. This knowledge can help align policy, outreach, engagement, and curricula of language classes to increase parental investment in them. Additionally, it is hoped that the findings contribute to the body of knowledge regarding parental motivation and investment in their children's ECAs (i.e., specifically language classes) and provide insight into why some parents invest in ECAs other than language. For example, it is anticipated the findings will provide information for organizations interested in language instruction, such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the Center for Applied Linguistics, the American Association of Applied Linguistics, and others. Specifically, the researcher aimed to provide these organizations and other language learning stakeholders (e.g., teachers, business owners, educational administrators, and policymakers) with concise and valid information that would guide

their efforts in motivating, enhancing, and increasing parental interest and investment in language education, thereby broadening access to world language instruction.

Methodology Overview

The researcher desired to understand motivations underlying parental investment in language instruction as one of several possible ECAs. Creswell (2014) states that grounded theory (GT) applies in situations where there is a dearth of previous research and developed theories. Although the researcher identified scholarly articles regarding ECAs in general, no scholarly articles that specifically examined languages as an ECA were encountered. Additionally, GT is specifically designed to develop a theory inducted from participants' perspectives, attitudes, and experiences (Creswell, 2014). As the sole proprietor of a school that offered Spanish language instruction to children in kindergarten through fifth grade, the researcher had access to parents of enrolled students. These parents served as a target population from which a convenience sample was drawn for this study. Data were obtained from subjects using a structured interview questionnaire. Interviews were conducted until interview data became repetitive, and no new informative data were obtained with each additional interview (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The data collected were analyzed for themes and a subsequent theory was developed from which proposed meanings and ultimate solutions were formed as a GT. Chapter 3 presents a detailed account of the study methodology.

Definitions of Relevant Terms

- Extracurricular activity (ECA): an activity, typically voluntary, performed by students outside of the standard school curricula.

- The Language School: the fictitious name of the language school under study which offered Spanish world language classes.
- Parental investment: time and money that parents invest for their children to participate in ECAs.
- Private school: a school or school system independently operated on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.
- Public school: a school operated with public (tax) funds with a local school board and oversight from state and local government education entities.
- Resources: for this study, time and money were the invested resources.
- Return on Investment (ROI): a ratio between the profit an investment brings and its associated costs.
- Brick-and-mortar language classes: classes delivered in a face-to-face, in-person, group setting or classroom environment, rather than language instruction delivered via online or computer-based methods.
- World languages: languages spoken internationally and learned and spoken by numerous people as a second language.
- Well-roundedness: Merriam-Webster defines the term “well-rounded” as “fully or broadly developed: such as having a broad educational background” (2020). Parents in this study routinely evaluated their children’s ECAs, at least in part, according to the contribution each activity made to a holistic set of developmental opportunities and experiences.

- Curriculum: A specific set of planned lessons, learning experiences and other academic content used by a teacher to achieve educational objectives.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations, and Personal Biases

The following subsections discuss the study's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, as well as the researcher's personal biases and mitigations.

Assumptions

The researcher made five explicit assumptions.

1. There are common reasons certain parents invest time and money for their children to participate in language classes. In contrast, other parents—possibly with a different set of values, motivations, or economic status—may choose different ways to invest in their children, such as arts or athletics.
2. Time and money resources are limited in most families; thus, most parents must select a limited number of ECAs from among multiple options.
3. When asked, parents would be able to identify their motivations and be willing to communicate them to the researcher during interviews.
4. Participants would offer open and honest responses during interviews.
5. Parents use standard criteria to evaluate whether their investment is worthwhile, can identify these criteria, and would be open to communicating the criteria to the researcher.

Limitations

There were five explicit limitations in this study. The researcher employed mitigating strategies, where applicable, to minimize the effects of these limitations.

1. Population: The target population for this study consists of 48 families enrolled in the language school owned by the researcher. All enrolled students were in grades kindergarten through fifth grade.
2. Curriculum: The Language School curriculum may differ from other language schools or language-learning platforms. Consequently, the information, theory and recommendations derived must be evaluated to determine their applicability in other situations or contexts.
3. Researcher bias: The researcher was the proprietor of the school where the target population enrolled its children and likely had biases that may have influenced the research design and potentially influenced the interviews and the analysis of data. The researcher strove to mitigate this bias by bracketing self-identified biases, patently drawing awareness to them, and acknowledging and neutralizing them to the extent possible through reflection in all phases of the research process.
4. Population bias: As the target population had their students enrolled in the researcher's school, the target subjects' inclination or disinclination to participate in the study and express their opinions openly and honestly may have been influenced and biased the data. These potential influences were presumed to be minor, as the researcher did not teach any of the school's classes; no classes were being taught or planned to be taught when the interviews were conducted; and there were no offers of payments, rewards, or favorable or unfavorable standings resulting from either participation or nonparticipation.
5. Recency: The school under study has not offered classes since March 2019, and some of the population may not have had their children enrolled since sometime

before that. Because interviews were conducted at least 12 months after the classes were delivered, participants' recollection may have affected their answers to interview questions.

Delimitations

There were three delimitations to this study.

1. The literature underpinning the study was limited to indexed publications, which are broadly available through the Creighton University library system. Print publications that had not been indexed and made available in current online library sources were not included.
2. The study was limited to the population of parents who had enrolled their children in language classes offered by a specific proprietary language school in the Midwestern United States. Bounding the study in this way eliminated from consideration language classes offered by other schools or delivered via other methodologies (e.g., online).
3. The researcher recruited parents who had enrolled their students in language classes at this particular school and whose children had attended the language classes for some period of time. This delimitation bound the study to the specific Spanish language classes taught by this school and eliminated from consideration possible motivations of parents to seek out other languages for their children. Moreover, the researcher neither considered the motivations (or lack of motivation) of parents who had not invested in classes nor the possible differences between motivational factors when they enrolled their children in classes as opposed to after children had been attending for some period of time.

Personal Bias

The researcher is a retired military officer who has traveled to many regions of world and experienced diverse cultures where languages other than English were predominantly spoken. Through these experiences, the researcher developed an appreciation for other cultures and an idea that learning languages other than English (i.e., the researcher's native language) could provide increased access to other cultures. In 2011, while residing on the East Coast of the United States, the researcher enrolled his three-year-old daughter in Spanish language classes in a brick-and-mortar school which operated as a member of The Language School cooperative. The researcher desired this language instruction not only due to his experiences mentioned previously, but also because the researcher understood it to be easier to learn a language during youth rather than during adulthood.

In the fall of 2012, the researcher relocated to a Midwestern city with a metropolitan population of approximately one million. While searching for a similar language school, the researcher found that language classes for children were either largely unavailable or inaccessible. Simultaneously, a casual market survey showed that dance and music lessons and sports participation were widespread and flourishing.

In 2017, the researcher purchased a membership in The Language School cooperative and began operating an independent language school using the materials and methodology provided. Although the curriculum was designed to facilitate teaching Spanish, French, or Mandarin, Spanish was the only language taught due to low demand for French and Mandarin and because it was difficult to find teachers for the other classes. The school discontinued offering classes and left The Language School

cooperative after the 2019 school year both because the school was not financially viable and finding, training, and keeping quality and qualified teachers was overly burdensome.. At approximately the same time, the researcher was engaged in the initial research design to culminate his curriculum in the doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Leadership at Creighton University. The researcher's research interest was shaped by his experiences in the U.S. Navy, with languages, and in operating The Language School. While initially focused on possible associations between language learning and emotional intelligence, the researcher ultimately chose the research questions within the current study.

The researcher is aware that there are likely several reasons that The Language School was not profitable, including demographic factors in the area the school operated and increased popularity of online and computer based language learning platforms. For example, The Language School cooperative locations in cities like Chicago, Atlanta and the Washington D.C. area remained open and successful because these cities had both larger populations and more diversity that made language classes more appealing for a broader range of parents. As well, accompanying the trend in reduced language offerings in public schools there is a simultaneous trend in increased availability of language learning via computer-based, online synchronous and asynchronous platforms as well as applications available on smartphones and mobile devices. The researcher suggests there are advantages, especially for youth, in the social aspect of learning a language in a brick-and-mortar facility with peers through activity and play. Stated explicitly, the researcher is biased toward in-person, brick-and-mortar learning experiences.

The researcher's bias toward in-person, brick-and-mortar learning environments derives from two sources. First, the researcher recalls his most rewarding educational

experiences across 45 years of numerous and varied educational environments as being in brick-and-mortar environments. Not only the face-to-face interaction with the instructors, and the group interactions and discussions with peers, but also the look, feel and even smell of the classroom, campus and other sensory inputs all converge to bias the researcher toward a perceived value of a whole-body educational experiences.

As well, the researcher undoubtedly has an implicit bias away from technology-based learning media. Having experienced both in-person and remote learning, the researcher found in-person learning to be, predominantly, the most engaging and rewarding. This bias toward a brick-and-mortar learning environment likely affected the design of the study and the researcher's hesitation to broaden the population to other language learning media and modalities and may have primed the researcher to look for in-person and brick-and-mortar motivations for parents when looking for ECAs and language classes for their children.

The researcher is also aware that his experience trying to operate a traditional brick-and-mortar language school and the challenges of that experience likely influenced the focus and design of this study. Specifically, starting, operating and trying to sustain The Language School, while not a significant or primary source of income, was an often-exasperating experience. Establishing school locations, trying to attract enough students to make a location viable, and then trying to find teachers who could convey the curriculum as it was designed were all challenges that, in the end, proved too burdensome to overcome.

These biases, some only discerned retrospectively, likely influenced the study and its findings. This having been said, the findings of this study align with previous research

regarding why parents choose ECAs for their children and, given the mitigations enacted by the researcher, the findings and recommendations are broadly applicable across language learning curricula, location and media (i.e. brick-and-mortar, online, and mobile app).

The researcher's experiences with other cultures, languages, seeking language classes for children, and owning a business that offered such classes provide the context seminal this study. Specifically, the researcher wanted to understand parentally anticipated and perceived motivations to invest in language classes—especially given how much more readily available other ECAs were—and how language classes might meet parental expectations. To guard against bias influencing the study outcome, the researcher regularly consulted with disinterested peers and the dissertation committee regarding study design, data collection, and analytical methodology. The researcher disclosed this possible conflict of interest and was transparent about how the research could benefit private businesses (and the researcher's business) when applying for ethics approval and receiving feedback on the dissertation. The researcher further guarded against this bias by following the specific design and methodological plan developed in consultation with the dissertation committee. The researcher disclosed additional biases or any possible effects of this bias throughout the dissertation process to the dissertation committee. Additionally, the researcher completed the Creighton University conflict of interest review, which determined that there was no significant financial conflict of interest inherent in this study.

The Roles of Leadership in Language Education

Leadership in language education had two main influences in this study: the role leaders play as they design and operationalize empirically-based educational programs, and the role that servant leaders played in the conception and design of the study. First, leaders—particularly educational leaders—must have the necessary information to make decisions as part of the needs-analysis process (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Designing effective learning programs requires that educational leaders know the ultimate or desired outcome and understand how best to achieve that outcome (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The researcher aimed for the results, findings, and recommendations of this study to broaden the body of knowledge available to educational, business, and policy leaders to inform curricula, marketing, and policy decisions to improve availability and quality of youth language instruction.

Second, this study is influenced by the researcher's application of Servant Leadership. The Servant Leadership model is founded on the philosophy that a leader's purpose is to serve and develop others (Greenleaf, 1991). While the researcher's future business ventures may benefit from the outcomes of this study, the researcher suggests that there are many benefits of early language exposure and acquisition and desires to expand access to these benefits; promote growth for others; and help language educators, parents, and policymakers in advancing this goal. The researcher's language learning paradigm is derived from personal experience, research into benefits of early language learning when the researcher was looking for ECAs for his children, and experience in delivering language classes to children.

The Language School

The Language School was an independently owned and operated school where Spanish was taught to children in kindergarten through 5th grade. The school was located in a medium-sized Midwestern city in the United States with an urban area population of approximately one million. It was the only school of its kind in the area, with an average school-year enrollment of approximately 50 students. The school began offering Spanish language classes in the fall of 2017 and discontinued offering classes in the spring of 2019 because it was not profitable and it was challenging to recruit and retain quality teachers. Classes were taught onsite in a full-immersion environment through interactive stories, music, movement, playacting, and game playing in a dynamic and engaging format. Curriculum was designed to be fun, provide little stationary time for the students, and engage them with colorful, cartoon characters. Classes were taught by native speakers or teachers fully fluent in Spanish. Teachers were not required to be certified by the state, although in certain instances they were (i.e., when the Language School contracted a certified teacher to deliver classes). Classes were limited to a maximum of 10 to 12 students and were taught by a single teacher in 45-minute either once or twice per week. Classes were primarily delivered in a local parochial school and took place immediately after school.

The school proprietor was a member of a cooperative and paid annual membership fees for access to trademarked language curriculum and online tools, as well as a national website, common branding, curriculum development, and minimal advertising support. The cooperative offered, through the national website, e-books where the text was read aloud by a speaker fluent in the language the text was written in.

Membership in the cooperative had declined from 45 business owners in 2012 to fewer than 12 in 2019, primarily due to changing family and personal dynamics of owner-operators (e.g., having children or starting a new job) or an inability of business owners to sustain businesses financially due to low profit margins. While each business operated differently, a typical business owner charged \$40 to \$65 per month for four one-hour classes, with a maximum class size of approximately 10 students.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to a limited body of knowledge on world language instruction for youth in the United States and provides information to improve language outreach, engagement, curricula, and delivery to children. While researchers have described parental motivations for investment in ECAs, these studies were general and did not focus specifically on language instruction (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015; Dunn et al., 2003; Census Bureau, 2018). Additionally, while private language schools and educators have utilized a professional pedagogy for teaching languages, there had been scant examination of how parents determined whether these classes met their needs or how those needs were identified. If language classes are not perceived to meet parents' expectations, they are unlikely to continue to invest in those classes, regardless of how well or how much their children may be learning.

Summary

In this first chapter, the researcher outlined the problem of declining language class offerings in U.S. public schools, despite the benefits of early language learning. The researcher discussed selecting a qualitative, GT study design to understand parental motivations for enrolling their children in extracurricular language school classes and

how parents judge ROI. The chapter introduced the study's purpose, aim, relevant definitions, limitations, and delimitations and provided information on the researcher's bias and the influence of leadership in the study, as well as an overview of The Language School, and the study's significance. In Chapter 2, the researcher presents a review of the relevant literature on this topic.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher synthesized literature findings that applied to the problem under study. First, the researcher established the study's context and the current status of language instruction for youth in the United States. Second, the researcher examined benefits of language exposure and instruction as a subset of ECAs in general and language instruction for youth specifically. Third, the researcher presents the literature regarding possible parental motivations to seek out language classes. Finally, the researcher explains the theoretical framework used to examine the problem.

World Language Education in the United States

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Commission on Language Learning, 2017) reported that only 10% of the U.S. population aged five years and older spoke a language other than English “well” and another 10% spoke a language other than English “not well” (p. 3). In contrast, in the European Union approximately 66% of adults reported having some knowledge of more than one language (Commission on Language Learning, 2017). World language class offerings in public schools in the United States have declined from 75% of schools offering world languages in 1997 to only 58% in 2008—the latest date for which data are available (Commission on Language Learning, 2017). In the 2014–2015 school year, 21.5% of K-12 students were enrolled in a language course other than English, in contrast to nearly half of all students in European primary schools (American Academy of Sciences, 2016). One explanation for this reduction in language-learning access may be a decreased incentive for English-language speakers to learn other languages as English has become increasingly global (Amorati, 2018). Another possible explanation is that a focus on math, English and other

Science, Technology, English and Math (STEM) courses has redirected funds away from language, art, and music classes (Amorati, 2018). There are a number of reasons that the decline in language offerings in the U.S. is problematic, including possible economic and security factors. This study, however, focuses on the cognitive, academic, cultural, and other benefits to children learning a language beyond their native language (Commission on Language Learning, 2017)

Fox, Corretjer, and Webb (2019b) conducted a comprehensive analysis of empirical research published between 2012 and 2019 on benefits of language learning. The results of their meta-analysis indicated that early and sustained language learning resulted in several benefits across the lifespan. Benefits were categorized into six major themes: cognitive abilities and benefits (with several sub-themes), aging and health, employability, academic achievement and benefits, communicative and intercultural competence, and enhanced creativity (Fox et al., 2019a, 2019b). Many of the below enumerated benefits are specifically pronounced for young language learners and those learning a language over a prolonged period of time.

Cognitive Abilities and Benefits

The breadth of cognitive abilities and benefits from language learning are among the most abundantly researched and available. This overarching category includes “executive functioning/cognitive control, metalinguistic awareness, cognitive development, linguistic processing and reasoning, and spatial reasoning” (Fox et al., 2019b, p. 703). The following subsections discuss each of these categories of benefits.

Executive Function/Cognitive Control. These benefits include improved executive functioning and cognitive control, which includes skills such as inhibitory

control (Park et al., 2018); improved working memory (Marini et al., 2019); attentional control (Bialystok, 2017); and cognitive flexibility (Kuiper & Thierry, 2013). While all of these abilities and skills were heightened with language learning, all but the last were specifically heightened by early language exposure and learning, while cognitive flexibility was also improved for adults learning a language (Fox et al., 2019b).

Metalinguistic Awareness. An additional category of cognitive abilities and benefits of language learning was improved metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness refers to increased phonological, morphological, and syntactic awareness that arises with learning additional languages and increases the potential ability to learn additional languages (Fox et al., 2019b). Metalinguistic awareness was found to be more pronounced among young language learners (Diaz & Farrar, 2018; Bien-Miller et al., 2017).

Cognitive Development. This subtheme encompassed dimensions of child development including information processing, conceptual resources, perceptual skills, and other aspects of the developing brain (Fox et al., 2019b). Arredondo et al. (2017) suggested that early language learning resulted in significant developmental changes to children's prefrontal cortex for attentional control. Other studies demonstrated how an individual's experience with multiple languages may impact the cortical structure and information processing (Bartolotti et al., 2017).

Linguistic Processing and Reasoning. The linguistic processing and reasoning sub-category is a grouping that encompassed research that examined the boundaries and relationships between language and thought (Fox et al., 2019b). While researched was mixed, there was support for the idea that individuals with language learning experience

performed better in statistical learning and language processing and had access to improved strategies for decision making and context evaluation (Scaltritti et al., 2017)

Spatial Reasoning. While not applicable to youth gaining a cursory or initial exposure to languages, research suggested that bilingual or multilingual children possessed a special advantage over their monolingual peers with regard to spatial reasoning (Greenburg et al., 2013). Furthermore, Stephens and Moxham (2019) presented findings that multilingual adults had higher spatial and verbal scores than their monolingual peers.

Aging and Health

Research predominantly reported that world language learners enjoyed benefits in aging and health, such as higher cognitive reserve in advanced age (Bak et al., 2014) and delays in the onset of dementia (Del Maschio et al., 2018).

Employability

Employability refers to the broad theme that language learning provided additional opportunities in employment and career enhancement (Fox et al., 2019b). Several studies supported this theme in noting additional employment possibilities that would not be open to individuals without additional language capabilities (Beadle et al., 2016; Damari et al., 2017). Moreover, people with additional language skills were considered more valuable within their organizations (e.g., healthcare, social services; Claassen et al., 2017).

Academic Achievement and Benefits

Fox et al. (2019b) summarized the findings of four studies conducted between 2012 and 2019 that cited benefits to language learners' academic achievement in their

first language, such as reading, writing literacy, and improved comprehension skills in language arts, mathematics, writing, and science. For example, Aldosari and Alsutan (2017) showed that early language learning (i.e., up to age eight) positively affected the literacy skills of learners' first language, and Padilla et al. (2013) demonstrated that language learners (i.e., in kindergarten through fifth grade) academically outperformed their monolingual peers. Furthermore, citing data from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), Sandoval (2019) stated that

Language learning correlates with higher academic achievement on standardized tests, the development of students' reading abilities, ability to hypothesize in science, higher academic performance and greater self-efficacy, and higher SAT and ACT scores (para. 9).

Communicative and Intercultural Competence

Four studies focused on language learners' improved emotional, social, and behavioral competence and "interculturality," or cultural awareness (Fox et al., 2019b, p. 715). While the studies focused predominantly on pre- and post-intervention assessments of cultural empathy in university students, one study assessed pre- and post-intervention attitudes toward cultural diversity in preschool aged children (Coelho et al., 2018).

Enhanced Creativity

Fox et al. (2019b) presented three studies that found relationships between language learning and creativity, divergent thinking ability, and verbal and nonverbal creative thinking. For example, Fürst and Grin (2018) reported a positive correlation between language learning and seven creativity variables, while Ghonsooly and Showqui (2012) found that language learners significantly outperformed monolinguals in four

measures of divergent thinking. These studies and others supported the finding that “learning two languages simultaneously at an early age can positively impact children’s nonverbal development and can lead to enhanced creativity” (Fox et al., 2019b, p. 716).

The studies in the previous sections as well as other research all contributed to a significant and growing body of empirical research reported benefits of language learning (Baker & Wright, 2017). Fox et al. (2019a) summarized their meta-analysis and implored an increased need for “policy documents that contain focused, clear and compelling arguments that speak to stakeholders, parents, advocacy groups, policy, and decision makers and to the broader public” regarding the importance of language learning (p. 720). The current research aims to provide support for this effort.

Language Learning in Youth

The Language School did not advertise that students would become bilingual, nor was it designed to create fluent and bilingual Spanish speakers. Developing fluency and eventual bilingualism would require significant exposure and immersion in daily life for a period of time. There are, however, advantages to learning a language in youth and these advantages are diminished over time (Hartshorne et al., 2018; Hakuta et al., 2003). These two advantages of beginning language learning and exposure early are related to ultimate proficiency and relative ease of acquisition or learning ability. First, Hartshorne et al. (2018) report that “people who learn a second language in childhood are difficult to distinguish from native speakers, whereas those who began in adulthood are often saddles with an accent and conspicuous grammatical errors” (p. 263). Additionally, there is a body of research that children learn a language more easily, either because of neural plasticity, or a multitude of other factors (Hartshorn et al., 2018). Regardless, it is clear

that there is some “critical period” where children learn a language with greater speed and ease than adults (Hartshorn et al., 2018).

Online, Mobile, and Other Language Learning Media

The researcher identified no clear research identifying a difference in language learning benefits between instruction and learning delivered in brick-and-mortar, group classroom environments as opposed to online, mobile or other electronic learning media conveyances. This is important as there has been an increasingly pervasive utilization of online, mobile and other electronic media used to convey curricula of all kinds to include language curricula. Cho et al. (2018) analyzed trends and outcomes of mobile learning tools being incorporated specifically into language learning and found medium to strong effects of using mobile devices to assist with language learning. Although the contributions of mobile technology were not significant when using standardized testing results as the assessment tool, rather than researcher-developed tools.

Having examined the state of language learning in the United States, some of the benefits of language learning, and recent trends toward technology-focused language learning, the researcher turns now to an examination of the literature regarding why parents select ECAs more generally. Language classes, and the classes were offered by The Language School specifically, are a subset of many ECAs that include other arts classes such as drama, music, dance, and sports. The subsequent section will review relevant literature regarding parental motivations for enrolling their children in ECAs more broadly.

Parental Motivations for ECAs

Research regarding parental motivations for placing their children in language classes is sparse and nonspecific; however, several scholars have examined parental motivation for seeking ECAs in general. For example, parents typically selected an ECA for their children based on the parents' own experiences (e.g., a parent who was in band would be more likely to seek out music lessons for their children) and values (e.g., a parent seeks an activity for their child because the parent believes the activity provides the child something of value; Ashbourne & Andres, 2015; Dunn et al., 2003). Dunn et al. reported that when seeking activities, parental goals are that: their children find the activity fun; the activity keeps them physically active; it helps them discover or enhance skills, develop self-esteem and social skills; or it involves teamwork. Ashbourne and Andres (2015) categorized these motivators into three parenting styles based on parental orientation. They postulated that parents are either future-oriented (e.g., "this activity will help my child in some way in the future"); present-oriented (e.g., "my child likes this activity or it helps them in some way today"); or a mixture of both (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015). With this awareness of potential parental motivators to place their children in language classes, the researcher examined the methodology used to investigate the problem.

Grounded Theory (GT)

The GT methodology was utilized for this study because the researcher sought to explore and understand the problem from a holistic viewpoint based on participants' experiences and to derive a general theory from study participants' views and experiences (Creswell, 2014). Charmaz (2014) stated that GT methods "consist of systematic, yet

flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves” (p. 2). After reflection and reviewing various qualitative approaches, the researcher determined that a GT design was best suited to answering the research questions. The GT method was chosen because there appeared to be no existing theory related explicitly to parental investment in language instruction and no better methodology to gain deep insight into how parents’ experiences determined continued investment in language classes. The researcher aimed to determine why parents invested in language education and how parents estimated the value of language classes by examining their statements and experiences.

Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced GT as a method of inquiry over 50 years ago, there is no single coherent GT methodology, which has implications for researchers attempting to use the framework to guide their research (Kenny & Fourie, 2014, 2018; Howard-Payne, 2016; Chun Tie et al., 2018). The three overarching genres of GT have variation primarily in five areas: methodological paradigm, degree and timing of literature review, coding approach, analysis, and theory development (Chun Tie et al., 2018; Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The following subsections present the significant contrasts in these three GT approaches.

Classic Grounded Theory

Classic, traditional, or Glaserian, GT refers to Glaser and Strauss’s original methodology (1967). Classic GT is rooted in a paradigm, or assumption, that there is some absolute and explicit reality that is not only knowable and understandable through scientific analysis, but also independent of both participant and observer (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Howard-Payne, 2016, Charmaz, 2014). Further, classic GT espouses

approaching data collection unbiased by both review of literature and preconceived structured interview questions when interviews are used as the data collection tool (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Chun Tie et al., 2018). Rather, classic GT advocates the researcher suspend themselves from preexisting knowledge and experience to remove the researcher from the research, permitting the data to guide the direction of the inquiry and allow the theory to emerge (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Howard-Payne, 2016).

Evolved Grounded Theory

Evolved, or Straussian, GT was developed and refined predominantly by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1998; Chun Tie et al., 2018). In contrast to classic GT based on a paradigm of objective reality, evolved GT is based upon a more post-positivist worldview and “contextualist” epistemology espousing that the “researcher be personally engaged with the research in an attempt to better describe and understand the world as the participants perceive it to be” (Howard-Payne, 2016, p. 53). This paradigmatic difference from classic GT guides researchers to review literature prior to field research in order to develop an informed, initial direction in the research (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Howard-Payne, 2016). Additionally, evolved GT differs from classic GT in that the coding structure is more robust and coding methodology more strictly prescribed. For example, classic GT uses a two-step, three-stage coding process, while evolved GT uses a five-step, 15-stage process to “create” rather than “discover” theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1280).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

As a student of both Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz (2006) developed a third concept in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative*

analysis. While classic GT advocated the researcher remain open to theory that might emerge from the data and evolved GT promoted a more cultivated creation of theory, Charmaz, finding a balance between the two previous underpinnings, advocated a more constructed methodology. To this end, Charmaz outlined a more robust literature review than Strauss (1987) designed to inform pre-developed research and interview questions.

Given the enumerated comparisons and contrasts between the three GT types, the researcher chose a constructivist GT approach to guide the research for three primary reasons. First, the researcher maintains a social constructivist worldview, or that truth, or knowledge, is constructed through social interactions and paradigms. Second, institutional doctoral program requirements necessitate a preliminary literature review and pre-developed research questions. Third, the researcher found the constructivist coding and theory development processes more straightforward and practical. The researcher then needed to consider how saturation was to be determined.

Saturation

A key concept in GT research is that of saturation, or the idea that enough information has been collected to fully develop the concept or idea under study. There is a wide range of guidance regarding ways to determine that saturation has been obtained in qualitative research in general, and in GT research in particular. In fact, there is no universally agreed upon definition of saturation within qualitative research broadly or within the GT methodology literature specifically.

Guest et al. (2006) suggested that data saturation can occur in as few as six interviews. Supporting this idea, in an analysis of 100 GT studies conducted between 2002 and 2008, Thompson (2011) found that 12% used a sample size of fewer than 10

and another 32% utilized a sample size between 11 and 19 interviews. Further, a meta-analysis from Galvin (2015) found, in an analysis of 54 qualitative studies, that “the probability of identifying a concept (theme) among a sample of six individuals is greater than 99% if that concept is shared among 55% of the larger study population” (p. 17).

Guest, Namey, and Chen (2020) offer a more objective methodology for determining saturation (i.e., information power) that can be used during and after data collection and analysis. They examined several studies, determined most of the information was obtained in the first five to six interviews and stated that “most novel information in a qualitative dataset is generated early in the process and generally follows an asymptotic curve, with a relatively sharp decline occurring after just a small number of data collection/analysis events” (Guest et al., 2020, p. 6).

While the literature indicated that between six and 12 interviews should suffice to provide data, concept, theme, or information saturation, Charmaz (2014) noted that in constructivist GT methodology, which is used as the basis for this study, *theory* development and saturation is the goal (emphasis added). Charmaz (2014), stated that “...12 interviews suffice for most researchers when they aim to discern themes concerning common views and experiences among relatively homogenous people” (p. 107). Charmaz further stated that identifying a number has many problematic presuppositions, and alternatively provided more broad guidelines for determining the appropriate number of interviews:

- How controversial is the topic?
- Does the researcher anticipate discovering surprising or provocative findings?
- Do the interviews form the basis of a complex conceptual analysis?

- Are interviews the only source of data?
- Does the researcher desire professional credibility?

For example, the more controversial the topic, the more interviews should be conducted. If the interviews form the basis of a complex conceptual analysis, conducting more interviews would also be appropriate.

An additional consideration when determining how many interviews to conduct were maximum limits based on participant fatigue as well as study resource constraints such as financial and time limitations. Participant burden or fatigue is the concern that a given population is inundated with survey research requests and that each participant is only willing to complete a certain number of surveys (Young & Casey, 2018). Therefore, investigators should not only consider the direct risk of the survey, such as the possibility of emotional distress, but also the indirect burdens such as duration, intensity, and fatigue within the broader community of inquiry (Lingler et al., 2014). Additionally, each interview conducted over and above that required for saturation would require additional financial resources to transcribe as well as time resources in both conducting the interview and then analyzing the transcription and integrating it into the coding structure as well as the findings and results.

The researcher considered the literature regarding both the minimum number of interviews reasonably expected to achieve saturation, and the maximum number to limit research fatigue on the population, and minimize expenditure of both financial resources and time, and determined it appropriate to conduct at least 12 interviews. To elaborate, the topic under study was not controversial, no provocative findings were anticipated, the interviews would not, in and of themselves, form the basis of a complex conceptual

analysis and the relative homogeneity of the population all indicated that fewer interviews would be necessary. On the other hand, interviews would be the only source of data and the researcher desired to ensure professional credibility of the study, the researcher proposed to conduct at least 12 interviews, which was approved by the dissertation committee. A full discussion on how the researcher determined that saturation was achieved is contained in Chapter 3.

Summary

Despite the benefits of learning a second language early in life, world language exposure and instruction in U.S. public schools have declined over the past several years. This reduced world language class availability may leave parents to seek other avenues—including private schools, online schools, or other methods—to expose their children to world languages. However, with low-profit margins on language classes, sustaining some of these schools is problematic, further exacerbating declining access and exposure to world languages for youth in the United States. In this study, the researcher aimed to align curricula and marketing to parent needs with a goal to improve parent investment in world language classes and improve early language exposure in the United States. The researcher employed a constructivist GT framework to achieve these goals. The following chapter presents details on how the study design and methodology were operationalized.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The researcher explored parental motivations for enrolling and keeping their children in language classes through this grounded theory dissertation-in-practice study. The purpose was to determine how the elements of these classes influenced parental perceptions of ROI that contributed to their decisions to continue or discontinue their investments. The researcher designed structured interviews to obtain requisite data and purposefully identified a population of participants. Willing participants were interviewed, the interviews recorded and transcribed, and the data analyzed simultaneously and repetitively until theoretical saturation was reached. Data were coded in three phases to achieve categories, an overall theory, findings, and recommendations which are included in following chapters. This chapter provides details on the research design, ethical considerations, recruitment process, reflective practices, and data collection procedures, tools, and data analysis.

Research Questions

RQ1: Why do parents seek language classes for their children?

RQ2: How have parents valued classes and, hence, determined worth of their investment?

Method

The researcher utilized a qualitative, constructivist GT methodology to explore the problem and answer the research questions. The researcher selected this methodology for three primary reasons. First, the researcher maintains a social constructivist worldview, or a paradigm that “truth” exists in the context of both participant and researcher. Second, the researcher found the open and flexible coding construct offered

by Charmaz (2014) best suited to the study. Third, the researcher found the robust literature review and preconstructed interview questions to be appropriate for the research. This method was deemed most appropriate given the dearth of information on the topic and the exploratory nature of the study.

Participants

The population ($n = 48$) of student families who attended the Language School was determined from roster data for the school. This population consisted of one or more of the parents of one or more students who attended classes between approximately August 2017 and March 2019. The researcher had access to this population because these parents had enrolled their children in the school owned and operated by the researcher at the time. All of the families of the prior enrolled students were sent recruitment letters via email for the study. The researcher planned to include at least the first 12 participants who agreed to participate in the study.

Demographics. The population from which the sample was obtained all resided in a suburb of a mid-sized Midwestern city. The researcher collected only minimal demographic information from the participants both because additional demographic data was not deemed necessary for the study and to not overburden the participants. Table 1 shows U.S. Census Bureau data (2018) with select demographic indicator comparisons between the suburb in which the school was located and the United States population in general.

It can be generalized from Table 1 that the subject population is relatively homogenous from a socioeconomic and ethnic perspective as compared to the U.S. population writ large. Additionally, of the 13 participants, 11 were female and two male.

One participant spoke Spanish fluently (P1), two participants reported Spanish was a familial or heritage language (P3 and P13), and all participant families spoke exclusively English in the home.

Table 1

Selected demographic indicators comparing and contrasting the target pool population's location with the United States population

Indicator	United States	School Location
Median Household Income	\$65,712	\$81,000
Education Level (Bachelor's degree or higher)	33.1%	37.2%
Foreign Born Population	13.7% (predominantly from Latin America)	4.4% (primarily from Asia and Africa)
Speaks only English in the home	78%	95%
Identifies as "White"	72%	85%
Median Age	38.5	37.6
Marital Status (married 15 years or more)	48%	55%

Recruitment

As noted previously, the Creighton University Conflict of Interest Review Committee reviewed the researcher's plan for this study and determined that the financial interest would not create a potential or actual significant financial interest. Additionally, the researcher completed initial and refresher social/behavioral responsible conduct of research training during study design and prior to recruiting participants to the study. Finally, the Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on August 12, 2020. After IRB approval, the researcher initiated participant recruitment by

sending an email (Appendix A) to the 48 contacts. Of the initial email query, two email addresses were returned as undeliverable. From this initial recruitment call, six participants responded and were interviewed. Two subsequent email queries were sent. Ultimately, 13 participants ($n = 13$) agreed to be interviewed.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were scheduling using Calendly.com. The interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, either with or without video depending on internet connection quality or via telephone when a Zoom connection was not practical or possible. When interviews were conducted via telephone, they were recorded using Zoom. The researcher asked all interviewees the same questions (see Appendix B) and interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes each. The shortest interview was approximately 15 minutes and the longest interview was over 30 minutes. The researcher utilized Rev.com to have the recordings transcribed and the researcher utilized NVivo software to code and analyze the transcript data.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tool was a structured interview (Appendix B). Babbie (2017) outlined several advantages of interview surveys, as opposed to mailed or emailed surveys, which include a higher response rate, a decrease in “do not know” and “no” answers, and a guard against questions that may be confusing. Interviews are the most predominantly used data collection tool in GT research (Thomson, 2011). An interview tool was chosen to obtain data for this research as the researcher deemed interview data would provide an avenue to obtain deeper insight into the experiences of participants

from which to discern a theory regarding participant motivations for seeking language learning for their children.

The researcher designed interview questions to obtain appropriate data to answer the research questions. The researcher conducted a pilot test of interviews with four peers. This pilot test allowed the researcher to detect and correct several errors in the process, enhance the interview questions (e.g., their wording, order, flow and construct), determine the approximate length of time for each interview, and verify the questions would elicit responses that would inform answering the research questions.

Data Analysis

The researcher followed a process of initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding to determine how the codes could be synthesized into a GT (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, as cited in Babbie, 2017). NVivo software was used during the coding and analysis process. During initial coding, the researcher labeled data segments to organize the data into discrete parts to compare similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher used both in vivo coding (i.e., using the participants' actual words in the coding process) and simultaneous coding (i.e., allowing more than one code to be applied to any single piece of data; Saldaña, 2015). After initial coding, the researcher conducted focused coding by “using the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Finally, the researcher used theoretical coding to identify possible relationships between the categories developed during focused coding to analyze and identify any theories that became evident from the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Saturation

The researcher anticipated at least 12 interviews would be necessary to reach saturation. The researcher utilized the process outlined by Guest et al. (2006) and discussed in Chapter Two to validate that saturation had been reached. Specifically, beginning with a base run size of four interviews, 17 initial themes were generated with zero additional themes generated in the following two interviews (interviews five and six). This meant that no new themes were generated in the additional two interviews. Thirteen interviews were ultimately conducted, and, after achieving evidence of saturation, the theory, findings, and recommendations were developed.

Methodological Integrity

Validation of the findings was conducted by triangulation and inter-rater coding. Triangulation ensured the validity of qualitative research findings and facilitated the identification of bias where the researcher compared the findings with those from other sources. While there were no extant articles that asked identical research questions, the general findings identified in this study are comparable to those of Dunn et al. (2003) and Ashbourne and Andres (2015) in identifying why parents enroll their children in ECAs in general. The findings of this study being similarly aligned with previous research adds validity to the thematic and theoretical coding of the present study. Additionally, the researcher utilized peer review, examination, and coding to validate the initial and focused coding. Through this process, the researcher elicited the help of an unbiased peer to review the codebook. The peer identified no significant abnormalities in the codebook. Moreover, the researcher elicited a peer practiced in qualitative analysis to conduct initial

and focused coding. No significant differences were found in the comparison of the two codebooks.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher maintained the participants' confidentiality by storing all audio recordings on a single, password-protected computer in a locked folder to which only the researcher had access. Participants' names and other personally identifying information were deleted from transcriptions. Each transcript was identified by the order the interview was conducted (i.e., Participant 1 [P1], Participant 2 [P2], and so on). The researcher informed participants of these measures as a prelude to the interview. Interview questions were not expected to be sensitive or engender any emotional distress. Each participant was provided with a study overview and the purpose of the study, and their verbal consent to participate was obtained.

Because the participant pool came from within the researcher's organization, there may have been power and influence considerations. These concerns were mitigated by the researcher, who clearly stated that neither retribution nor favoritism could be expected, as teachers did not know which participants did or did not participate. Lastly, although study results are expected to influence improvements in language curriculum and delivery—and, therefore, may draw improved revenue for the researcher's business should future classes be offered—this potential financial influence is negligible, as the net revenue for the business was minimal, and the researcher's primary sources of income are not derived from that business.

Reflective Practices

The researcher maintained a journal dedicated to the research process from initial dissertation proposal to final dissertation defense which proved a valuable resource for reflection on the dissertation research, analysis, and writing process. The researcher had initially hoped to engage a much broader population of parents by eliciting the help of a broader number of Language School cooperative owners. However, concurrent with the researcher initiating contact with those business owners, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a shutdown of the language schools in the cooperative, including the brick-and-mortar language schools that provided the subject pool for this study. Subsequently, several of the language schools became permanently defunct or business owners otherwise redirected their business focus and model and, ultimately elected to not participate in the study. Consequently, the researcher refined this study, to include a sharper focus and a narrowed target convenience sample subject pool.

Toward the end of the writing process, the researcher discerned fully the effects that his biases had on the conception and design of the study. Specifically, as the project neared completion he recognized his bias toward in person learning. This bias blinded the researcher to recommendations from the dissertation committee that he broaden the target pool to parents of children enrolled in technology-based language learning, for example. While there may have been good reasons not to alter the research design and population, bias prevented the researcher from fully considering the recommendation. Once the researcher recognized this bias, the researcher more clearly understood both how hard it can be to identify some deeply held biases, and how powerful implicit bias can be.

Summary

The researcher employed a qualitative constructivist GT approach to explore the research questions. The researcher utilized a convenience sample of the population of parents who had their children enrolled in The Language School. The researcher recruited participants via email, willing participants were interviewed, and their responses were coded and analyzed to determine common themes and develop an underlying theory. The following chapter presents the results and findings of the data analysis process.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this GT dissertation-in-practice study was to explore the motivations of parents who invested in language classes for their children (kindergarten through fifth grade) and the value these parents perceived from their investments. Understanding these motivations and value characteristics will inform language educators and other stakeholders seeking to improve their programs' outreach, engagement, and curricula to align with parental preferences. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: Why do parents seek language classes for their children?

RQ2: How have parents valued classes and, hence, determined worth of their investment?

The following section of this chapter presents the results of the initial and focused coding phases of the data analysis procedure. The researcher then presents the findings from the theoretical coding phase, indicating how the results of the first two coding processes relate to the research questions and one another. The final section includes a discussion of how the findings relate to those of previous researchers.

Results

This section includes a description of results from the initial and focused coding processes. During initial coding, data segments were labeled and organized into discrete parts for comparison (Saldaña, 2015). When appropriate, the researcher used in vivo coding, in which transcript excerpts were labeled using participants' words, and simultaneous coding, in which multiple codes were assigned to a given transcript excerpt (Saldaña, 2015). After the initial coding, the researcher used focused coding to organize

the data around the most significant or frequent initial codes. The results of the theoretical coding process are reported in the findings section of this chapter. The researcher organized the data around four focused codes: (a) anticipated benefits of language classes for children, (b) barriers to language classes, (c) effectiveness of activities in contributing to children's well-roundedness, and (d) immediate advantages of language classes to parents.

There were a total of 169 transcript excerpts coded and utilized to develop and saturate the focused code themes. The mean number of transcript excerpts contributed by each participant was 13.0 ($M = 13.0$) excerpts. Participant 5 contributed the most excerpts (23) and Participant 12 contributed the fewest (6). The interview with Participant 5 was one of the longest in duration (over 30 minutes) and the participant freely expounded upon their question answers with frequent and thorough examples, providing significantly more data, which likely explains the higher transcript contribution from this participant. On the other hand, the researcher noted that Participant 12 and, similarly, Participant 9, tended to provide short, succinct, often single-word answers to interview questions, which provided much less data than other participants and likely explains reduced transcript excerpt contribution from these participants (contributing 6 and 7 excerpts respectively). The researcher perceived no cultural, language, or other barriers that might explain reduced contribution from these participants. Table 2 indicates the focused codes, associated initial codes, and which participants contributed to each. The remainder of this results section is organized by focused code.

Focused Code 1: Anticipated Benefits of Language Classes for Children

The researcher used the first focused code to organize four related initial codes, which included a total of 21 transcript excerpts. The focal idea in the four initial in vivo codes was participants' belief that their children would gain advantages from learning a second language in early childhood. While all 13 participants contributed data to this focused code, two of these four initial in vivo codes are represented by only one or two participant comments. The in vivo code, "It has been very useful to me" is only represented once and that was by Participant 1. While this concept was not repeated by any other participant, this contribution is valuable as it came from the only self-identified bilingual (Spanish) participant. The in vivo code "They could speak their father's first language" is represented twice, once by Participant 3 and once by Participant 13. The researcher posits that both of these themes would be represented more frequently in a more ethnically diverse population, consequently, these initial in vivo codes were maintained as separate elements in the analysis rather than discarded or combined with another theme to ensure their contribution would neither be lost nor diluted. Table 3 presents a list of the initial in vivo codes, their descriptions, and a sample quotation as evidence for each.

Table 3

Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 1

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	
Code description	Example quote(s)
<p>"I want my kids to have skills above and beyond what other kids have" (P5)</p> <p>Seven participants believed that early language acquisition would give their</p>	<p>"I think it's a differentiator in kids. I want my kids to have skills above and beyond what other kids have, you know, because we want our kids to have one more differentiator so when they're going for</p>

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	Example quote(s)
Code description	Example quote(s)
children a small but potentially decisive long-term advantage over monolingual age peers with whom they might later compete for scholarships, admission to schools, or employment.	<p>whatever scholarships or whatnot, and just for in a career, they come in handy” (P5).</p> <p>“...if you have two candidates with all equal qualifications and there’s a need for the second language in the position, and they don’t have that, that’ll automatically make them less qualified than other candidates that are bilingual” (P7).</p> <p>“[Language education is] just for longer term bilingual opportunities” (P9).</p> <p>“[I wanted language classes for my children] primarily because I don’t have the ability to speak another language and I wanted them to have that opportunity” (P10).</p> <p>“I’m in human resources for a large corporation and [am] seeing that [language skills are] a huge need in the world that we live in currently (P12).</p>
“It’s been very useful to me” (P1)	<p>“[Language education is] just a gift that I can share with them [my children] because it’s been very useful to me. Number one, it’s been something that I’ve just enjoyed doing and that I’ve enjoyed learning about and a skill I’ve enjoyed learning and using” (P1).</p>
“It’s the best time to pick up language” (P5)	<p>“Little kids pick it up like this. My two daughters both picked up French, and even the teacher said they sound like native speakers because if you pick it up before fifth grade, then you’re more likely</p>
Seven participants believed that language education had value in early childhood because young children	

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	
Code description	Example quote(s)
learned new languages more easily than older children or adults.	to have that native-speaker ability . . . it's a good skill to have" (P5). "I've always heard that it's easier [learning a language] and so wanted to start him early" (P6) "...we felt like starting at that level [in high school] was just a little bit too late to really be able to pick up on. It would have been much easier for both of us had we started learning languages as a child" (P11). "They say kids learn a second language a lot better at a younger age than they do at high school age and stuff like that. That's why we were looking at starting at her while she was young, and young enough to hopefully absorb it a lot better" (P13).
"They could speak their father's first language" (P3) Two participants invested in language education so their children would know their father's native language (Spanish).	"They [my children] could speak their father's first language, which is Spanish" (P3). "I've got a very, very large family and half of them ... almost 50%, if not more, are Spanish-speaking. So, it would be nice to be able to speak with them. If I could do this for my children, then maybe they can help me out" (P13)

The initial in vivo codes associated with this focused code expressed participants' perceptions of the benefits of language classes for their children. The most frequently cited value of early language education was a perceived ease of language acquisition in early childhood. Participants perceived benefits of dual language proficiency as offering a

“differentiator” or competitive advantage over age peers, a connection to cultural-linguistic heritage, and the enjoyment of learning and using a second language. The focal idea in these four initial in vivo codes was participants’ belief that their children would gain relative and absolute advantages from learning a second language in early childhood. The first focused code aligned with the first research question regarding why participants sought language classes for their children.

Focused Code 2: Barriers to Language Classes

The researcher used the second focused code to organize five related initial in vivo codes, which included a total of 28 transcript excerpts. The focal idea in the five initial in vivo codes was that the ways in which the language education program conducted classes for children resulted in practical disadvantages or barriers to children’s participation. Ten out of 13 participants contributed data to this focused code. Within this focused code, two themes are represented by only two in vivo code contributions. The in vivo code, “I wasn’t ever sure what they were going to be doing on any specific day” is represented by two exemplars, once from Participant 2 and once from Participant 8. While not represented more frequently, the researcher maintained this initial code as it is a unique barrier to continued parental investment in language classes, albeit not the predominant one mentioned by parents. Additionally, the in vivo code, “We had a lot of turnover with teachers” was mentioned twice by a single participant, Participant 3. The interview with participant 3 occurred early in the coding process and also stood out as a unique barrier to parents’ continued investment in language classes, although perhaps not a significant one in comparison to others. The researcher is also aware that teacher turnover was a challenge for the researcher in operating the language school and so when

the theme likely resonated with the researcher during coding and analysis. Nonetheless, the researcher maintains that the contribution is unique, more completely develops the focused code theme, and informs theory and recommendation development. Table 4 lists the initial in vivo codes, their descriptions, and a sample quotation as evidence for each.

Table 4

Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 2

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical) code description	Example quote(s)
<p>“I wasn’t ever sure what they were going to be doing on any specific day” (P2)</p> <p>Two participants experienced a lack of teacher-to-parent updates on in-class activities as a practical disadvantage that prevented them from reinforcing the class content effectively at home.</p>	<p>“I would have liked to be a little more updated about what they were doing and during any given time and whether there was something specific that would have been good to do as a parent with them in between classes. Because then it was almost a little bit more like a club than a class in some ways . . . I wasn’t ever sure what they were going to be doing on any specific day. So I didn’t really have a way to continue the studies with them outside of class” (P2).</p>
<p>“I would have liked to feel like I was invited to sit in on a class” (P2)</p> <p>Ten participants described the closed nature of language classes as a practical disadvantage. The participants expressed disappointment that they were not invited to visit language classes. This factor was not decisive in their decision to enroll or disenroll their children, but they expressed that they would have enjoyed visiting classes and would have found it helpful to do so.</p>	<p>“...if the teacher said, "Oh, stop by whenever you like and stuff," and I think my initial response would be great. That’s awesome. I want to be involved” (P1).</p> <p>“Yeah, that would’ve been really cool actually. I would have liked to feel like I was invited to sit in on a class, which I may have been, but you know, I’d never really kind of felt like that was an option so much” (P2).</p> <p>“If there would have been [an opportunity to observe classes], I probably would have gladly gone for it. I love going to those</p>

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical) code description	Example quote(s)
	<p>things and seeing the kids perform or whatever that form would be, whether they get up and do some poems or reciting things in Spanish, or whatnot, but I would have definitely done that” (P5).</p> <p>“I think it might’ve been nice to see the kids in action with other children and, because, like I said, when they didn’t just come home and speak to each other. So to see them practicing the language...” (P8).</p> <p>“I think that would have been beneficial [to watch them in class]” (P10).</p>
<p>“She was getting a little bit bored with it” (P2)</p> <p>Four participants indicated that one of the practical disadvantages of language classes was that the content or instructional methods did not engage their children. These participants described their children as bored, apathetic, and disengaged by classes, and resistant to attending.</p>	<p>“She [my child] didn’t seem very engaged or interested.” (P3)</p> <p>“The teachers were good, but for whatever reason, they [my children] were kind of like, ‘Oh, I don’t want to do it anymore.’ We should have pressured them, but maybe at that point, we knew we were moving” (P5).</p>
<p>“They’re no longer affiliated with our school” (P4)</p> <p>The decisive practical disadvantage of language classes cited by three participants was that language classes no longer met at their children’s schools, either for unknown reasons or due to shutdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. When these</p>	<p>“I think [he] was at an age where he didn’t really want to participate” (P10).</p> <p>“Neither one of my children is enrolled at this point. It was really convenient to have the class offered after school, and without that being there, we haven’t actually looked into other options. We were hoping the program would continue, and when it didn’t, we’ve just kind of have taken this year to do other things instead” (P2).</p>

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	Example quote(s)
code description three participants lost the convenience of having their children transition directly from school to language classes, they chose not to search for other options.	“We had a lot of turnover with teachers the year my daughter was in. I don’t know if that was the source of the issue or why the teacher left mid-session. We had a change of teacher, and it was pretty abrupt. So, I think consistency is probably the main thing” (P3).
“We had a lot of turnover with teachers” (P3) One participant reported that a practical disadvantage of language classes was a high turnover rate among instructors. The participant perceived the high turnover as resulting in inconsistent instruction and discipline.	

Data associated with the first focused code indicated that participants expected their children to attain significant long-term advantages from language classes. In relation to the second focused code, the data indicated that expected long-term advantages were offset by five practical barriers resulting from the way classes were conducted. The most frequently cited practical disadvantage was that teachers did not invite parents to visit classes, either on a regular basis or to watch rehearsed performances or recitations. Although participants did not describe this disadvantage as influencing their decision making, they described themselves as disappointed in the limited engagement they were able to have with classes, particularly given their children’s limited ability to report on them. Participants’ responses suggested that they felt disengaged from their children’s learning, such as when P2 stated, “I would have liked to feel like I was invited to sit in on a class, which I may have been, but you know, I’d never really kind of felt like that was an option.” Participant 4 described an invitation to attend a performance during class as a

potentially useful way to maintain parental engagement, stating, “Maybe an end of year display of ‘Here’s what we learned,’ I don’t know necessarily at a recital or program, but that would be something I would be interested in. Maybe that would be some more of an incentive.” Participant 8 acknowledged receiving email communications but indicated that those were not sufficient to maintain parental engagement: “It would’ve been nice to know a little bit more of what they were learning or what was going on. I know emails are sent, but sometimes it’s just hard to keep on top of everything you get.”

Participants’ other responses associated with this focused code also indicated that practical disadvantages were barriers to continuing investments in language classes. Participants who described the language program’s disaffiliation from their children’s schools as resulting in their children’s ongoing disenrollment from language instruction focused on the loss of convenience of their children’s easy transition from regular classwork to afterschool classes. Participants who cited their children’s disengagement as a practical disadvantage regarded boredom as a barrier to their children receiving expected advantages from the classes. The participant who reported the practical disadvantage of few teacher-to-parent updates regarded this condition as a barrier to the child receiving the full benefits of the course because it limited the effectiveness of at-home reinforcement of content. The focal idea in the five initial in vivo codes that barriers for parents offset expected long-term advantages for children was relevant to the second research question regarding how participants valued classes.

Focused Code 3: Effectiveness of Extracurricular Activities in Contributing to Children's Well-Roundedness

The researcher used the third focused code to organize four related initial in vivo codes, which included a total of 83 transcript excerpts. The focal idea in the four initial in vivo codes was that participants evaluated the language class and all other ECAs in terms of influence on their children's acquisition of a robust and varied set of activity-specific and general life skills. All 13 participants contributed data to this focused code. Table 5 is a list of initial codes, their descriptions, and a sample quotation as evidence for each.

Table 5

Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 3

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical) code description	Example quote(s)
<p>“As long as he’s still enjoying them” (P6)</p> <p>Eleven participants stated that one of the ways they assessed activities as contributing to their children’s well-roundedness was through their children’s reports of how enjoyable the activities were. Aversion or disengagement was perceived as a barrier to learning.</p>	<p>“The kids. If they get excited about going, they ask to go. It’s all them” (P1)</p> <p>“Letting him continue to participate, if he enjoys them, to me that’s, like I said, he loves playing sports and staying active, so to me that’s worth my time, money, and as long as he’s still enjoying them” (P6).</p> <p>“They still express interest actually in studying languages so I can tell they enjoyed it” (P7).</p> <p>“Probably just qualitative observational type of [evaluation] if she’s excelling in them, if they’re happy doing and [participating in] those activities” (P9)</p> <p>“So, I think that was one of the things that just held their attention, and they really looked forward to being in the classes” (P11).</p>

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical) code description	Example quote(s)
	<p>“I have conversations with my son, seeing what he likes” (P12).</p> <p>“Really, the biggest thing is as long as I can see that my kids are excited about something, it’s worth it” (P13).</p>
<p>“I want to hear them talking about it” (P3)</p> <p>Nine participants indicated that they assessed whether activities contributed to their children’s well-roundedness through the indications of growth they observed in their children’s reports and demonstrations.</p>	<p>“It was neat to hear that they were learning things and bringing you some of that stuff home with them” (P2)</p> <p>“Sports aren’t high ranking. It’s just an extracurricular, which it could be language or art or dance, or we don’t care. It can be academic. It can be physical. It’s just, I want to hear them talking about it, excited to go to it, excited to tell grandparents about it. I want to see their growth” (P3).</p> <p>“[He] would come home and tell me about what he learned” (P6)</p> <p>“Some open-ended discussions and dialogue about what she was learning” (P9)</p> <p>“I knew that the kids were learning, because every time they came home, they had new things to share that they had learned” (P11).</p> <p>“She would come home and be telling me the different words she learned, or stuff like that, and just seeing how it excited her to learn something new” (P13).</p>
<p>“I’m trying to raise well-rounded kids” (P2)</p> <p>Ten participants stated that one way they assessed activities as valuable was</p>	<p>“I’m trying to raise well-rounded kids. So you know, the Spanish classes were kind of part of that, too. The physical activity for the swim and kind of more of the</p>

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	Example quote(s)
<p>code description</p> <p>through the contributions the athletic, academic, or social pursuits made to giving their children a robust and varied set of skills and competencies.</p>	<p>social aspects of the Scouts and then Spanish was just a good, almost academic, but also social outlet for them” (P2).</p> <p>“To make them more well-rounded, get a taste of what’s out there so they can continue to do those activities in junior high and in high school culture, and hopefully go on to college and do something where those activities might have influenced them to go into those areas” (P5).</p> <p>“...just working all sides of the brain” (P7).</p> <p>“Just to get them exposed to different things. I think that’s always beneficial... just being well-rounded” (P10).</p> <p>“I have him in a variety of sports so he can, I guess, just absorb all of the different opportunities that are out there” (P12).</p>
<p>“More just life skills and learning” (P4)</p> <p>Eleven participants stated that one of the ways they assessed activities as contributing to their children’s well-roundedness was through teaching general life skills.</p>	<p>“Essentially, teaching kids to overcome. If you have a difference of opinion with someone, a constructive way to communicate, and developing leadership skills, public speaking skills, and then also just remaining athletically or remaining active, as a lifestyle” (P4).</p> <p>“And I think it’s good for kids to learn how to win, to lose, [and] to work as a team” (P8).</p> <p>“I mean, just for exposure, learning opportunities, other, I guess, skill sets that aren’t learned in traditional classrooms” (P9).</p>

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	Example quote(s)
code description	“Yeah, I believe [various activities are] a necessity for their growth. Just basic knowledge, I guess” (P12).

Participants indicated that they valued ECAs, including language classes, according to the efficacy of those activities in teaching their children a robust and varied set of activity-specific and general life skills. In order for participants to consider an activity a valid investment, it first needed to be delivered by an effective teaching format for conveying skills instructors were attempting to impart. Participants assessed the effectiveness of instruction itself in two ways. Eleven participants evaluated instructional efficacy according to their children’s reported enjoyment of the activity, given that aversion or disengagement on the part of the child was perceived as a barrier to learning, as discussed in relation to the second focused code. Second, nine participants evaluated instructional efficacy according to their observations of the growth and improvement their children exhibited during skill demonstrations or discussions of skills learned.

The second broad way participants evaluated all extracurricular programs was according to the nature of the skills taught. Eleven participants reported that they evaluated skills their children were learning in a given activity as part of a holistic understanding of overall skill gains expected from all of the child’s activities. These participants evaluated activities as contributing to their children’s well-roundedness when skills being taught supplemented skills taught in other programs to yield a robust and varied set of competencies in domains such as STEM, art, and athletics.

Ten participants reported that they evaluated how ECAs contributed to their children’s well-roundedness according to the nature of the general life skills being taught.

General life skills on which participants reported that they placed value included teamwork; P6 spoke favorably of athletics coaches' ability to teach: "Just becoming a better player, again, I think the teamwork aspect is a big part of it that I like." Participant 4 described resiliency as a valuable general life skill, as indicated in the response that activities had positive effects on the child because "in how he is handling obstacles and difficult people in his life or a difficult teacher, there's not a sense of frustration or shutdown." Participant 4 also referenced leadership and conflict resolution in describing observed life-skills gains: "If you have a difference of opinion with someone, a constructive way to communicate, and developing leadership skills." Participant 5 spoke of confidence, broad experience, and curiosity in stating that a particular activity was valuable because "it builds confidence in the kids, lets them experience new things, helps them build interest in other areas." Participants described other general life skills as valuable, including "that growth, that independence, the maturity" (P10); "just basic knowledge" (P12); and "to get him to open up and make friends in a different environment than just school" (P13). The focal idea in these initial codes, that participants evaluated activities according to perceived contributions to their children's well-roundedness, was relevant to the second research question regarding how participants valued classes.

Focused Code 4: Immediate Advantages of Language Classes for Parents

The researcher used the fourth focused code to organize four related initial in vivo codes, which included a total of 36 transcript excerpts. The focal idea in the four initial in vivo codes was that participants evaluated the language class by assessing the advantages to themselves. Eleven out of 13 participants contributed data to this focused code. The

initial code “we did get feedback” is represented by a single code transcript from Participant 4. The researcher deemed this initial in vivo code unique and significant enough to contribute to theory development and maintained the theme in the final analysis even though the code, by itself, was not the most significant immediate advantage of language classes for parents. Additionally, the theme is the inverse of the initial code mentioned in the focused code of barriers to language classes where some parents did not perceive enough feedback from the school or teacher. Table 6 lists the initial codes, their descriptions, and a sample quotation as evidence for each.

Table 6

Initial Codes Associated with Focused Code 4

Initial in vivo code (alphabetical)	Example quote
Code description	Example quote
<p data-bbox="298 1016 760 1050">“I like that they made it fun” (P5)</p> <p data-bbox="321 1092 821 1335">Three participants reported that an advantage of the language classes was that their children enjoyed them. These parents’ empathetic interest in their children’s enjoyment made this enjoyment an advantage to them.</p>	<p data-bbox="873 1016 1373 1092">“I liked that they were centered around play” (P3)</p> <p data-bbox="873 1142 1419 1302">“I liked the fact that . . . the instructor kept the class fun. It wasn’t regimented, it was more just incorporating language into their everyday play or experiences” (P4).</p>
<p data-bbox="298 1373 805 1449">“It was just right there at the school” (P3)</p> <p data-bbox="321 1491 846 1776">Nine participants stated that having the language classes in their children’s schools shortly after regular school hours was advantageous to them because they did not have to pick their children up from school and drop them off at a different location.</p>	<p data-bbox="873 1373 1406 1659">“I did appreciate that they [the classes] were, in this case, held at the school right after school hours . . . I didn’t have to be there at the normal pickup times. So I could kind of come in a little bit later and not have to spend so much time waiting for them” (P2).</p> <p data-bbox="873 1709 1419 1869">“[It was] 45 minutes after school had been released, so it was the same location I would have picked him up from, if I were picking him up from school” (P4).</p>

“...they were just doing it right at school, after school. So, that’s a huge factor with having four little kids at the time” (P8).

“I think it was convenient at [that] time” (P10).

“...and the scheduling after school, just the timing of it worked really well for us. So, the convenience of being able to get to the classes, it just worked for us” (P11).

“The fee that we paid was affordable” (P1)

Eleven participants stated that the affordability of the language classes was an advantage to them.

“I thought they [the language classes] seem very reasonable, especially considering if I had had them [my children] do anything else after school, I go to the afterschool care there would have been a cost associated with that as well. And this way they were learning something, too” (P2).

“The price was pretty reasonable” (P5).

“I thought it was reasonable” (P10).

“It was reasonably priced” (P13)

“We did get feedback” (P4)

Two participants stated that getting feedback on planned class activities was an advantage to them.

“Once every couple of months, the program director would send an email out, let us know what they were doing in the class for the next month or two or what they were working on” (P4).

Participants indicated that one way in which they evaluated language classes was by assessing the advantages to themselves. The most frequently cited advantages were affordability ($n = 11$) and convenience ($n = 9$); the majority of participants referred to both as significant. Participants evaluated classes not only as reasonably priced in relation

to benefits they perceived their children were receiving, but also as affordable. The location of language classes in children's regular schools was convenient for participants because the alternative would have been for them to pick up their children at the end of the school day, drive them to a different location, wait through the duration of the activity, and then drive them home. Participants noted that the ability of their children to transition from regular classes to extracurricular language classes without their assistance provided them with additional time to complete other responsibilities.

Three participants described their children's enjoyment of language classes as an advantage. These responses were consistent with participants' perception of their children's enjoyment as a facilitator of learning, as discussed under Focused Code 3, and their perception of their children's boredom with the class as a barrier to learning, as discussed under Focused Code 2. Thus, under these focused codes, the data indicated that parents perceived their children's enjoyment as instrumental to learning. Data associated with Focused Code 4 indicated that participants also regarded their children's enjoyment as an end in itself and that they derived satisfaction and pleasure from their children's enthusiasm. Two participants indicated that communications from the language instructor about planned class activities were a benefit, which is consistent with participants' responses associated with Focused Code 2, in which participants described their own disengagement from their children's learning as a barrier. The following section presents the findings from theoretical coding of the results described in this section.

Findings

After initial and focused coding, the researcher used theoretical coding to identify potential relationships between the categories developed during focused coding to

analyze and identify any theories that became evident from the data. The researcher also used theoretical coding to relate the data to the research questions. Thus, the theoretical codes addressed the research questions and indicated the GT concepts that are presented in Chapter 5.

Theoretical Code 1: The Expectation of Long-Term Benefits for Their Children Motivates Parents to Seek Language Classes

The first theoretical code aligned with the first research question (i.e., the motivation component of the study's purpose). Theoretical coding of Focused Code 1 indicated that participants sought language classes for their children because they expected their children to derive long-term relative and absolute benefits from learning a second language. This theoretical code included two subcategories: expected relative benefits and expected absolute benefits. Expected relative benefits were the competitive advantages parents expect dual-language proficiency to give their children over monolingual peers in long-term academic and career pursuits. Participants cited an expectation of relative benefits for their children as among their reasons for seeking language classes. Absolute benefits were advantages of early language education that parents expect their children to receive, regardless of corresponding peer attainments. The most frequently cited absolute benefit was the ease with which young children learn languages, making early childhood an optimal time for effective language instruction. Two participants cited children's connection to their paternal heritage via proficiency in their father's first language as an expected absolute advantage.

That parents expected long-term benefits of language learning is supported by research regarding both parental motivations to seek ECAs in general and parents'

expectation as to benefits of early language learning specifically. For example, parents who expected their children to derive long-term benefits of language instruction can be characterized as being “future-oriented,” (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015) in seeking future advantages as a motivation for seeking language classes. Further, parents accurately characterized the research in early language learning and the relative ease of learning as opposed to beginning later in life (Hakuta et al., 2003).

Theoretical Code 2: Parents Value Language Classes According to Their Children’s Enjoyment

The second theoretical code addressed the second research question (i.e., the evaluation component of the study purpose). Parents assessed language classes from which children were disengaged as poor investments. When participants perceived their children as enjoying classes, as assessed according to children’s verbal reports and observed enthusiasm, they evaluated classes as a worthwhile investment. Participants perceived their investment as facilitating skill acquisition, and their children’s enjoyment as an end in itself gave them satisfaction. When participants perceived their children as averse to or disengaged from classes, they evaluated them as a poor investment. Participants perceived their children’s disengagement as primarily indicative of faults in the language classes rather than child-specific factors. Participants described children’s disengagement as a barrier to learning and a source of resistance on the child’s part to attending classes. That parents were “present-oriented” when evaluating the value of language classes is supported in the broader ECA research (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015)

Theoretical Code 3: Parents Value Language Classes According to Transportation Requirements

The third theoretical code addressed the second research question and the evaluation component of the study purpose. Parents assessed language classes to which they did not have to transport their children as better investments. Participants evaluated classes as a high-quality investment when classes took place in their children's schools because not needing to transport their child to a different site saved them significant time. In contrast, parents assessed language classes to which they had to transport their children as poor investments. Participants tended to evaluate language classes as not worth the investment, especially when cessation of language classes in children's schools coincided with their disengagement from classes.

This theoretical code is supported by research into the economic decision-making of parents when selecting ECAs. Specifically, Foster (2002) and Irwin and Elley (2011) found that parents have limited resources when determining which ECAs to enroll their children in. Among these constrained resources not only the costs of tuition, but also any additional monetary expenses (e.g., uniforms, instruments et al.), and time and monetary expenditures for transportation (Foster, 2002; Irwin & Elley, 2011).

Theoretical Code 4: Parents Value Language Classes According to Effectiveness in Engaging Them as Parents

The fourth theoretical code addressed the second research question and the evaluation component of the study purpose. Parents described language classes as effective at engaging them when they could assist with their children's learning and when instructors informed parents about planned class activities. Participants considered

language classes to be ineffective at engaging them when teachers did not inform them of planned class activities or invite them to observe classes or attend performances.

Theoretical Code 5: Parents Value Language Classes According to Effectiveness in Contributing to Children's Well-Roundedness

The fifth theoretical code also addressed the second research question.

Participants cited observed contributions of ECAs to their children's well-roundedness as one of the standards they used to evaluate those activities. The phrase "well-rounded" occurred in responses from P2, P5, and P10. Participant 2 described activities as suitable investments when they contributed to children's well-roundedness in domains that included "physical activity" (i.e., "keeps them physically the fit and active kind of gives them a place to burn off some of their energy"); "social aspects" (i.e., "meet[ing] other girls their age, and they have some good role models or people that they have things in common with"); and activity-specific and general life skills (i.e., "basic life skills and science and all the different badges that they work with [in Scouts]").

Other participants reported that they assessed the value of their investments in other ECAs in the same manner. Participants perceived the set of their children's activities as contributing to a holistic set of developmental opportunities, and they evaluated individual activities according to how they supplemented others with additional variety in skills and experiences. Across all participants, activities were evaluated as providing their children with social, academic, and athletic skills and experiences. Participants reported that they enrolled their children in extracurricular athletic and social activities, including sports and Scouts. Participants also enrolled their children in subject-specific ECAs (e.g., a STEM class [P1]).

Most participants perceived language classes as contributing to their children's well-roundedness through exposure to a second language, which is a benefit that participants did not associate with any other activity. Thus, while children could gain the same benefits from a variety of athletic activities, and while different academic activities benefited children within a few broad subject domains (e.g., STEM), participants perceived language classes as providing a benefit their children would not receive elsewhere until compulsory second-language education began, typically in high school. Therefore, participants perceived language classes as exceptionally effective in providing their children with relative benefits and as singularly effective in providing absolute benefits. That parents expected language learning to contribute to their children's well-roundedness is supported by research as both a future-oriented and present-oriented parenting strategy (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015; Irwin & Elley, 2011; Snellman et al., 2015).

Discussion

Designing effective learning programs requires that educational leaders know the ultimate or desired outcome and understand how best to achieve it (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). This study aimed to broaden the body of knowledge available to educational and business leaders to inform marketing and curricula decisions in order to further language instruction for youth. The reported needs that caused participants in this study to seek language classes for their children were consistent with those cited in previous literature as motivating parents' investment in ECAs of any kind, in that they included a desire for children to gain a competitive edge in their long-term endeavors, family and cultural values, and life enrichment (Dunn et al., 2003; Irwin & Elley, 2011). In this study,

participants specifically mentioned their expectation that dual-language proficiency would give their children an advantage in competitive academic and career pursuits, strengthen their connection to cultural heritage, or contribute to a well-rounded set of skills and experiences (i.e., life enrichment). However, themes arose that were not contained in previous literature. Specifically, participants in this study clearly indicated that the convenience of having classes located at their child's school, immediately after school contributed to parents' perception of value for the language classes. Parental convenience was not mentioned as a motivating factor for parents to seek ECAs in any previously identified research.

This study was informed by servant leadership theory, the underpinning of which is the philosophy that a leader's goal is to serve by subordinating self-interest to the interests of individual followers and the group as a whole (Greenleaf, 1991). From a servant leadership standpoint, the findings in this study may be interpreted as indicating deficiencies in how language classes served the participants and their children. For example, participants' responses indicated that they evaluated the language classes in which they enrolled their children as a fair or poor investment. Participants cited the disadvantages to themselves and their children resulting from the way classes were designed and presented as nearly or entirely nullifying the value of classes' benefits. The cessation of classes at their children's schools canceled out the ancillary convenience that might otherwise have made language classes compare more favorably with alternative activities. The anticipated benefits of language instruction itself were nullified for most participants to a certain degree by the perception that their children disliked or were disengaged from classes, a condition that participants described as inhibiting learning and

causing parental misgivings about forcing children to participate in activities they did not enjoy. Participants also felt disengaged from classes as parents due to the scarcity of teacher-to-parent communications about planned activities and the omission of opportunities for parents to visit classes or attend performances. In light of servant leadership theory, it may be noted that participants perceived language instruction itself as likely to serve their children's interests. However, they did not perceive the language classes as consistently or effectively serving their or their children's interests in regard to effective instruction, convenience, or engagement of parental reinforcement and support.

Summary

The results and findings of this GT study emerged through three coding processes. Initial coding resulted in identifying a total of 17 in vivo codes representative of patterns in the 13 participants' responses. The researcher then clustered the initial codes around their most significant similarities, yielding the following four focused codes: (a) anticipated benefits of language classes for children, (b) barriers to language classes, (c) effectiveness of activities in contributing to children's well-roundedness, and (d) advantages of language classes to parents. The researcher conducted theoretical coding to address the research questions and indicate the concepts in the GT presented in Chapter 5. The theoretical code that addressed the first research question and indicates the first GT concept was: the expectation of long-term benefits for their children motivates parents to seek the language classes. The four theoretical codes indicated four GT concepts and addressed the second research question (i.e., parents value language classes according to their children's enjoyment, transportation requirements, effectiveness in engaging them as

parents, and effectiveness in contributing to children's well-roundedness). Chapter 5 discusses the GT developed based on these results and findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scholars have established that language learning has many potential benefits, including transmission of family and cultural heritage, life enrichment, and future academic and career advantages (Fox et al., 2019a, 2019b). However, this study sought to fill a gap in the literature with regard to why parents enroll their children in language classes, given the broad range of ECAs (e.g., athletics and arts) from which to choose. Additionally, there was a gap in the literature regarding how parents evaluate the ROI of language classes for their children. Without an understanding of why parents seek language instruction for their children, language educators may lack the essential knowledge required to design and deliver language classes in alignment with parental preferences, perhaps depriving a segment of the population of the advantages of language learning. The purpose of this GT dissertation-in-practice study was to explore the motivations of parents who invest in language classes for their children and the value that those parents perceive as a return on their investments. The results of this study contribute to the body of knowledge regarding parental motivations for enrolling their children in language instruction as an ECA and provide strategies to enhance parental interest in, and parent and student engagement with, language instruction. In this chapter, the researcher provides a discussion of practical research and leadership-related implications of this study's findings, followed by a final professional reflection on the research process and a final summary.

Proposed Solutions

Based on the study's findings, these proposed solutions are recommendations for language education stakeholders (e.g., teachers, funders, business owners, policy and

decision makers, and advocacy groups) to implement in order to optimize their outreach, engagement, marketing, and educational practices in alignment with parental goals and preferences. Five recommendations for practice are made based on the study findings.

Recommendation for Practice 1: Align Outreach and Engagement Strategies with the Long-Term Parental Goal of Providing the Child with Differential Skills

This study's findings indicate two main goals that motivate parents to enroll their children in language classes. First, parents recognize the long-term cognitive, academic, cultural, employment, and creative benefits associated with second language proficiency and understand that they are more readily attained through language instruction in childhood than through an equivalent language instruction investment in adulthood. Consequently, language education stakeholders should design marketing, outreach, and support for language classes focused on the long-term cognitive, academic, cultural, employment, and creative benefits of second language proficiency and the comparative ease of second language acquisition in childhood. This focus aligns with the preferences of parents who select and evaluate ECAs as investments expected to yield returns throughout the child's life.

Second, most parents in this study chose to enroll their children in language classes at least partly because they anticipated the benefits of dual-language proficiency to give their children a differential advantage. Consequently, engagement and outreach focus should include a specific emphasis on language classes' potential to give children a long-term competitive advantage over monolingual peers. As the Commission on Language Learning (2017) reported that only 10% of the U.S. population aged five years and older have functional language skills other than English, outreach and engagement

strategies should emphasize the comparative rarity of second language proficiency in the U.S. population and the related potential for early language acquisition to give children significant, long-term cognitive, academic, cultural, employment, and creative advantages over their monolingual peers.

Recommendation for Practice 2: Align Engagement and Outreach Strategies with Parents' Goal of Supporting Their Children's "Well-Roundedness"

Merriam-Webster defines the term “well-rounded” as “fully or broadly developed; such as having a broad educational background” (2021). While well-roundedness was neither specifically defined for participants nor mentioned by the interviewer, parents in this study routinely evaluated their children’s ECAs, at least in part, according to the contribution each activity made to a holistic set of developmental opportunities and experiences. Extracurricular activities were perceived as mutually complementary, with each activity being evaluated according to the differential benefits it contributed to the child’s development. In this study, parents noted that many activities were interchangeable in terms of the social, physical, academic, and cultural benefits children were expected to derive from them. For example, participation in any team sport was expected to confer roughly equivalent physical benefits (e.g., fitness and coordination) and social benefits (e.g., teamwork and leadership). The choice of which team sport to enroll their child in was essentially arbitrary. In this study, parents perceived language classes as providing a benefit their children would not receive elsewhere until compulsory second-language education began in high school. The participants in this study also perceived language classes as contributing to their children’s well-roundedness through exposure to an additional language—a benefit that participants did not associate

with any other activity. While children could gain exposure to a different language in other ways (e.g., sports taught in, or utilizing, a different language), parents evaluated language instruction individually for this perceived benefit. Consequently, the researcher recommends that engagement and outreach strategies emphasize language classes' unique and valuable contribution to children's well-roundedness.

Recommendation for Practice 3: Focus Outreach, Curricula Design, and Teaching Practices on Making Language Instruction Enjoyable for Students

This study's findings indicated that future-oriented considerations related to long-term advantages could motivate parents to enroll their children in language classes. However, a parent's decision to keep their child in language classes is more closely associated with considerations of the child's everyday enjoyment. Parents may perceive evidence of child disengagement or aversion to language classes as a sufficient reason to withdraw the child, regardless of the considerations of long-term advantages that motivated initial enrollment. Child disengagement or aversion may influence parents through their empathy for the child and through parental perceptions that language acquisition is unlikely to occur if the instruction does not engage the child.

Child disengagement and aversion may be assessed through the child's reports to the parents and the child's behaviors and attitudes in relation to attending the class. For example, children's complaints or resistance may register with parents as evidence that the child is bored. Parents may also be more likely to attribute the child's aversion to deficiencies in the language class than to factors specific to the child, creating a risk that word of mouth or negative reviews from the parents of a disengaged child will deter other parents from enrolling their children. Overall, parents may regard the child's enjoyment

as a necessary condition of continued enrollment in ECAs, based on the conscious or unconscious belief that such activities are at least partly recreational. To improve children's retention in language classes, it may be critical for teaching practices to be focused on making the instruction enjoyable and engaging for children. The researcher recommends that this be accomplished in two ways.

First, participants reported that when their child had a friend in the class, the child was more eager to attend, enjoyed the class more, and the parent perceived that the student gained additional opportunities to practice the language outside the normal language instruction timeframe. This idea captures—at least in part—a social aspect that some parents expected their children to gain from the language classes, but more specifically, students were more interested in language instruction when they had a friend in the class. Since student enjoyment of instruction could lead to friends or relatives enrolling in classes resulting from word-of-mouth, business and educational leaders should consider enrollment incentives for families who invite and enroll friends or family members into classes.

Second, in the school under study, teachers endeavored to make the instruction enjoyable for the students by incorporating music, games, dance, and other movement. Their goal was to accommodate the shorter attention spans of the subject age group and engage them across multiple senses. Certain parents mentioned that when their children repeated or sang songs in the target language they had learned in class, parents believed their children were both learning and enjoying the class. Consequently, the researcher recommends that language stakeholders focus outreach and engagement activities on

attracting not only students but also their friends into classes and focus curricula design and delivery on making the class fun and engaging for students.

Recommendation for Practice 4: Schedule and Locate Classes According to Parental Convenience

An advantage of language classes over some competing ECAs that many participants in this study cited was the convenience of the language classes being held at the child's school. This partnership with schools contributed to parents' convenience because parents did not need to pick their child up at school at the end of the school day, transport them to a different location for an ECA, and then wait during or return after the ECA. Instead, parents could pick up their child at school at the end of the language class.

Convenience may be sufficiently important for parents to allow their child's enrollment in language classes to lapse if classes are no longer held at the school, as during school closures associated with COVID-19. Parents in this study whose children stopped attending language classes did not express a firm intention to re-enroll their children if language classes returned to the school, suggesting that convenience-based interruptions of attendance may become permanent withdrawals when the language class ceases to be a part of the family's routine. One option to ensure parental convenience may be to provide transportation for the children from school to language classes held at other sites. It is also recommended that continuity of instruction be provided during shutdowns through a platform such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, or Zoom as a provisional measure to sustain student and family involvement.

Recommendation for Practice 5: Engage Parents with the Language Classes

This study's findings indicated that parents evaluated language classes as a better investment when efforts were made to engage them. Participants in this study wanted to know how to supplement and support their children's learning from home on a daily basis. Many participants interpreted failure to engage their at-home support for their child's language learning as a form of dereliction on the part of language class instructors and language school leadership. Parents also appeared to feel that they were personally remiss and not getting the maximum ROI from the language class if they could not support language learning effectively at home.

This study's findings indicated that parents wanted to be engaged with the language classes in two ways. First, they desired regular communications from the teacher about short-term learning plans. Based on participants' responses in this study, the researcher recommends that regular updates take the form of a flyer sent home at the end of each week detailing the planned curriculum and activities for the following week. Flyers can be distributed as hard copies at the end of the last class of the week or by email for parents who subscribe to an electronic mailing list. However, some parents mentioned that email might not be the best option as the announcement could get lost in the flurry of communication in that format. Flyers may be optimally effective in meeting parental preferences if they include recommendations for class-aligned activities that parents can do with the child at home to support language learning.

Second, the parents participating in this study indicated that they wanted opportunities to observe their child's progress. Although activities such as rehearsed or end-of-year pageants were described as desirable, parents in this study indicated that

engaging them exclusively through invitations to such performances would not completely satisfy them. They also expressed a desire to be able to observe the language class. It is recommended that, to the greatest extent compatible with site visitor rules and child engagement with instruction, parents be permitted to observe language classes.

For example, allowing parents to observe classes either directly (i.e. in the same room), from another room, or via video may provide information that helps parents determine the value of their investment and improves their ability to engage with and support the child outside of language instruction. Additionally, parents could observe classes in the classroom, even if only for the last few minutes of class when they are picking their child up. Including parents in a culminating activity or game may also provide this additional information from which parents can better evaluate the value of language instruction and support the student outside of class.

Implementation of the Proposed Solutions

Implementing the proposed solutions would occur via outreach (i.e., garnering interest in language instruction) and curriculum design and delivery. The implementation of the proposed recommendations for outreach would occur through the development of advertisements focused on the following four factors: (a) the long-term cognitive, academic, cultural, employment, and creative benefits children derive from secondary language proficiency; (b) the greater long-term benefits to be expected from investment in childhood language acquisition, as opposed to relying on compulsory language classes in high school; (c) the rarity of second language proficiency among U.S. children and adults and its resulting differential value; and (d) the unique contribution of language

classes to children's well-roundedness. These outreach recommendations are intended to increase the number of parents who choose to enroll their children in language classes.

The second area of practice for implementing the recommended solutions is in curriculum design and delivery (i.e., instructional practice). Recommendations for instructional practice are intended to increase retention of students in language classes after initial enrollment. Implementation of the recommendations would occur in the following ways: (a) focusing classroom activities on maximizing student enjoyment and engagement, based on parents' conscious or unconscious tendency to evaluate ECAs at least in part according to standards for recreation that may not apply to regular school (e.g., children's enthusiasm about attending) and parents' tendency to attribute child disengagement to instructional deficiencies rather than child-specific factors; (b) scheduling and locating classes according to parental convenience, either by holding them at the child's school immediately after regular instruction ends or by providing transportation from the school to a different site; (c) engaging parents by encouraging classroom visits; and (d) engaging parents by sending home a weekly newsletter or schedule detailing planned curriculum and activities for the following week and, optimally, recommendations for ways that parents can reinforce each day's activities at home.

Scheduling and locating classes at elementary schools will require partnerships with schools at both the school and district levels. Implementation should involve approaching the principal with a detailed proposal outlining the class's exact needs in terms of space, access to facilities, and scheduling. Public school district facilities are likely to be available through a facility use procedure at the district or school level, and

these procedures may require a fee to be paid to the school district to defray costs associated with custodial services, use of supplies such as hand soap and toilet paper by class attendees, and general wear and tear. Any such costs should be ascertained and incorporated into the program's budget. School districts may also require organizations holding functions in schools to present proof of insurance listing the school district as the certificate holder or additional insured to prevent liability for any damages from accidents during language classes from devolving to the district.

If language classes are not held at school sites, the researcher recommends chartering a bus to transport children to the class site, either by agreement with the school district or a private company. The chartering contract should include the bus as well as a licensed and experienced driver. Parental waivers will need to be signed for children to be lawfully transported from the school premises by persons other than legal guardians. The language program's insurer will need to be consulted regarding liability and any needed coverage in the event that an accident occurs during transportation.

To implement recommendations related to parental engagement, the researcher recommends that arrangements be made to allow parents to observe classes. Parental observations should be scheduled in advance through the teacher to ensure that the number of parents attending is compatible with effective instruction. Parents should not be recruited as volunteers to assist with class activities without background checks. Any policies for visitors to the facility where the class is held, such as an elementary school, will need to be followed by all parents observing language classes after school (e.g., checking in at the front office and obtaining an authorized visitor sticker or badge). Parent observation schedules should be shared with the principal or facility manager, and

criteria such as the maximum allowable number of parent visitors per class should be approved in advance by that party.

Weekly flyers or newsletters should be developed based on a clear curriculum plan and activity schedule. Standardization of course design across multiple classes may increase efficiency, but instructor input should be solicited and considered in the standardization process to ensure feasibility and buy-in. The standardization of curriculum may also be beneficial for planning activities to maximize student enjoyment. Instructor input and advice from current pedagogical literature about effective, age-appropriate best practices for maximizing student engagement should be incorporated. Instructors should attempt to determine whether engagement strategies are effective by observing or directly asking students or parents.

Evaluating the Outcome of Implementing the Solution

There are three ways through which solution outcomes might be assessed. The effectiveness of recommendations for outreach should be assessed according to rises or declines in enrollment. The effectiveness of strategies to ensure parental convenience and engagement should be assessed through student retention figures and informal or formal parent surveys. The effectiveness of strategies to maximize student engagement should be assessed through retention figures, the instructor's observations, and formal or informal parent surveys.

Implications

Practical Implications

The adoption of English as a global language and the defunding of secondary language instruction in U.S. public schools have reduced the availability of and access to

world language instruction (Commission on Language Learning, 2017). While the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Commission on Language Learning (2017) provided recommendations to improve access to language at the national and state level, the current study focuses on providing research-based solutions for local language stakeholders to improve world language access.

The findings of this study may contribute to improving language exposure for children in two ways. First, the findings indicated that there are incentives for parents to enroll their children in language classes other than a projected capability for them to eventually participate in a predominantly English-language-dominated global economy. These incentives include cognitive, academic, cultural, and creative benefits for the child, as well as the differential advantage to be gained by joining the small minority of multilingual U.S. citizens. Second, with many parents perceiving early secondary language instruction as a luxury rather than a necessity for their children's eventual participation in a globalized society, the repositioning of secondary language proficiency as a differential advantage in relation to general aptitudes such as cognitive ability may increase parents' interest in enrolling their children in language classes.

When funding constraints make language instruction increasingly infeasible for public schools, incentivizing parental opt-in for extracurricular world language education may be the most expedient way to compensate for public education's declining capabilities. Scholarships for extracurricular world language instruction for economically disadvantaged children could partly offset the exacerbation of socioeconomic inequalities associated with privatizing components of education. The researcher recommends that further consideration be given to ensuring equitable access to language classes.

Finally, language education is not immune to the trend away from brick-and-mortar, learning to remote, online, and mobile learning. Brick-and-mortar language classes across all ages and generations must be exceptional; educationally sound, fun, immersive, diverse and affordable. Operationalizing such an exceptional language program in a rich multi-national language and cultural environment may be possible. In a relatively homogenous language and cultural mid-level population center, such a school may not be practical. This trend makes the recommendations and findings of this study even more imperative.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research indicated that participants perceived several influences in their choice to enroll and keep their children in language classes. Parents' causal influences included perceptions of long-term differential advantages and contributions to well-roundedness as motivating initial enrollment, and they saw parental engagement with language classes; children's enjoyment of language classes; and parental convenience, particularly in relation to transportation, as motivating retention. It is a limitation of the qualitative methodology, however, that the grounding of the data and findings in specific contexts and perspectives prevents the results from being objective or generalizable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The extent to which this study's findings can be transferred to other populations and settings would thus need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

To overcome this limitation of qualitative research, the researcher recommends that quantitative research be undertaken to test the objectivity and generalizability of this study's causal relationships. The researcher suggests that a questionnaire instrument be

developed, validated, and administered to a sufficiently large, random sample to determine those causal relationships' existence and strengths. Independent variables could include parental perceptions of children's enjoyment, their own (parent) engagement, the convenience of their child's attendance in the class, and their goals and expectations concerning the language class. Dependent variables could include parent satisfaction surveys, enrollment figures, and retention figures. Interventions in experimental research may include viewing advertisements developed according to recommendations in this study by an experimental group (but not by a control group) or the child's participation in the language class for a specified period.

This study was limited to the age group of children enrolled in the language school in the study (kindergarten through fifth grade). The researcher recommends that future research explore parental and student motivations for studying languages outside of this range, including parental motivations for enrolling their children in languages at both younger and older ages than those in the present study.

Additionally, because this study was bound to a single brick-and-mortar school and understanding the current context of both declining language offerings in schools generally and increasing availability of language learning via online or computer based programs and applications, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, future research might explore if these latter modalities are making up for the decline in brick-and-mortar language offerings. Additionally, future research might examine to what degree language learning classes delivered via online and computer-based programs and applications meet parents' expectations.

Finally, as this study was bound to a single, Midwestern city, future research might examine possible differences in motivations of parents to seek language learning across different population, demographic and socioeconomic regions. As was highlighted in this study, the population from which participants were recruited was relatively homogenous.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

This dissertation-in-practice study was informed by servant leadership theory, the underpinning of which is the philosophy that a leader's goal is to serve by subordinating self-interest to the interests of individual followers and of the group as a whole (Greenleaf, 1991). From a servant leadership standpoint, the findings in this study may be interpreted as indicating deficiencies in how language classes served the participants and their children. Designing effective learning programs requires that educational leaders know the ultimate or desired outcome and understand how best to achieve that outcome (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The reported needs that caused participants in this study to seek language classes for their children were consistent with those cited in previous literature as motivating parents' investment in ECAs of any kind, in that they included a desire for children to gain a competitive edge in their long-term endeavors, to convey family and cultural values, and for overall life enrichment (Dunn et al., 2003; Irwin & Elley, 2011). In this study, participants specifically stated their expectation that dual-language proficiency would give their children an advantage in competitive academic and career pursuits, strengthen their connection to cultural heritage, or contribute to a well-rounded set of skills and experiences (i.e., life enrichment).

However, many participants' responses indicated that they evaluated the language classes in which they enrolled their children as only a fair or poor investment. Participants spoke of disadvantages to themselves and their children resulting from how classes were designed and presented as nearly or entirely nullifying the value of the classes' benefits. The cessation of classes at their children's schools canceled out the ancillary convenience that might otherwise have made language classes compare more favorably with alternative activities. The anticipated benefits of the language instruction were canceled out for most participants to a certain degree by the perception that their children disliked or were disengaged from classes, a condition that participants described as inhibiting learning and causing parental misgivings about forcing children to participate in activities that they did not enjoy. Participants also felt disengaged from classes as parents by the scarcity of teacher-to-parent communications about planned activities and by the omission of opportunities for parents to visit classes or attend performances. In light of servant leadership theory, it may be noted that participants perceived language instruction as likely to serve their children's interests; however, they did not perceive the language classes as consistently or effectively serving their children's interests in effective instruction or engagement of parental reinforcement and support.

Personal Reflection on the Dissertation Process

Undertaking this research study has been an invaluable learning experience, both personally and professionally. The researcher gained an improved understanding and appreciation for the cyclical and occasionally frustrating nature of research, analysis, reflection, and writing. The dissertation process also underpinned the idea that many things are easier said than done. For example, while mentors and advisors often

illuminated how challenging the process would be and the pitfalls to avoid or practices to adopt, the researcher learned many of these lessons only by doing some of the “wrong” things or not doing some of the “right” ones.

From a professional perspective, the researcher has leveraged these lessons to advance analytic rigor in the workplace by providing the researcher’s team with qualitative methodologies and tools to advance the depth and quality of analysis the team undertakes. Personally, the researcher has integrated reflective practices into daily living and gained an increased appreciation for the complexity of social phenomena.

As a result of the tightly defined and refined research questions in this study, the inequality in access to some ECAs (e.g., language, music, and the arts) that exists in lower socioeconomic populations and the effect this may have on maintaining or increasing socioeconomic barriers are principally unstated. With this in mind, the researcher looks to the future and how this work may be used to improve access to languages for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups so that all children might achieve the same opportunities that more economically advantaged parents can obtain for their children.

Summary of the Dissertation-In-Practice

Language learning has many potential benefits, including the transmission of family and cultural heritage, life enrichment, and future academic and career advantages (Fox et al., 2019a, 2019b). There was a gap in the literature, however, regarding parents’ specific reasons for enrolling their children in language classes rather than other ECAs such as sports or arts. Additionally, there was a gap in the literature regarding how parents evaluate the ROI of language classes for their children. Without specific

knowledge about why parents seek language instruction for their children, language education stakeholders may not have adequate information to market language classes according to parental preferences. This study aimed to examine why parents invest in language classes for their children and explore how parents evaluate the ROI. The corresponding purpose of this GT dissertation-in-practice study was to explore the motivations of parents who invest in language classes for their children (kindergarten through fourth grade) and the value these parents perceive from their investments.

Five significant findings emerged through the data analysis procedure: (1) the expectation of long-term benefits for their children motivates parents to seek the language classes, (2) parents value language classes according to their children's enjoyment, (3) parents value language classes according to transportation requirements, (4) parents value language classes according to effectiveness in engaging them as parents, and (5) parents value language classes according to effectiveness in contributing to children's well-roundedness. Based on these findings, the following five recommendations for language instructors' and business owners' practice were developed: (a) align marketing strategies with the long-term parental goal of providing the child with differential skills, (b) align marketing strategies with parents' goal of supporting their children's well-roundedness, (c) focus teaching practices on making language classes enjoyable for students, (d) schedule and locate classes according to parental convenience, and (e) engage parents with the language classes. Specific procedures were recommended for implementing these solutions.

The expanding use of English as a global language and defunding of world language courses in public education have resulted in lowered rates of secondary

language acquisition among U.S. children and deprived children of the benefits of learning world languages early in life (Commission on Language Learning, 2017). Incentivizing parental opt-in for extracurricular world language education may be the most expedient way to compensate for public education's declining capabilities. With many parents perceiving early secondary language instruction as a luxury rather than a necessity, the repositioning of secondary language proficiency as a differential advantage in relation to general aptitudes such as cognitive and creative ability may increase parents' interest in enrolling their children in language classes. The results of this study indicated solutions for incentivizing parents' initial enrollment of their children in language classes and retaining students already enrolled in language classes.

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Appendix A: Study Introduction and Participant Bill of Rights

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study entitled

PARENTAL MOTIVATIONS FOR ENROLLING CHILDREN IN PRIVATE
LANGUAGE SCHOOL CLASSES

To be successful, I need your help! Your participation is crucial to improving our understanding and delivery of language classes to children.

Documentation of consent has been waived for this exempt research study (you don't have to sign anything). I (the researcher) am inviting you to participate in this research study because you have, or have recently had, children enrolled in language classes.

This study involves research, the purpose of which is to understand parental motivations for investing time and money in language classes for their children. Your participation will consist of an interview approximately 30 minutes in length.

The study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. There are no foreseeable risks to you for participation in this study. There are no immediate or direct benefits to you for being in this study. However, I am hopeful the knowledge gained will be useful to better understand parental motivation for seeking language classes for their children.

Your participation in this research study will remain confidential to the extent permitted by law. Each participant will be assigned an alias and will be referred to in the written study only by that alias. However, although highly unlikely, it is possible that federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments at Creighton University, or

the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may become aware of your participation in this study and may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research, and some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

There will be no cost and no monetary compensation for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact the researcher, Terry Buckman, at [REDACTED] or if you have questions about the research subjects' rights, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at [REDACTED].

Please click here [URL: <https://calendly.com/terry-l-buckman/research-interview>] to arrange an interview time.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Buckman

Doctoral Candidate, Creighton University

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research participant.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
 - a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
 - b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix B: Grounded Theory Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this portion of the research study. The aim of this study is to understand parental motivations for investing time and money in enrolling their children in language classes. As a reminder, any responses you provide will be treated confidentially. Any publication resulting from this work will report only aggregated findings or fully anonymized examples that will not identify you. Your anonymous responses may be used by the research team, shared with other researchers, or made available in an online data repository.

Remember that participation in this research study is completely voluntary. If at any point you don't feel comfortable answering any question, that's no problem. Just let me know, and we'll move on to the next question. Even after you agree to participate and begin the study, you are still free to withdraw at any time and for any reason. Please note that if you have fully completed the study but wish to have any collected information excluded, the research team cannot guarantee the removal of your data because there will be no identifiable information to locate your record. Please note that once your data have been included in published analysis or data repositories, they cannot be withdrawn.

I'm going to record our conversation so that I can concentrate on our chat. I will then have the recording transcribed and upload the transcription into a coding software program so that I can see if there are any patterns across all participants. Neither the recording nor the transcription will be shared with anyone else. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions

These first couple of questions are simply for background information:

1. What city and state are you located in?
2. What do you consider to be your native language?
3. Do you speak any other languages? If so, which ones?

These next questions are about the language classes specifically:

4. What made you want language classes for your child?
5. Is your child still enrolled in language classes?

If not, why not?

6. Are/were the classes expensive?
7. Do/did you have to travel a great distance for the classes?
8. What do/did you like best about the classes?
9. What do/did you like least about the classes?
10. How do/did you know the classes are/were worth your time and money?
11. Does/did your child come home with examples of their work from class?

If not, would you like to have/have had examples of their work?

12. Do/did you ever have the opportunity to observe them in the class or watch them demonstrate what they learned?

If not, would you like to see them perform or demonstrate what they learned?

13. How are/were the classes for your child? Do/did they enjoy them?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your family's experience with the language classes?

These next questions relate to other activities your child is enrolled in, not language classes:

15. What other extracurricular activities are your children engaged in?
16. Why did you enroll your child in these activities?
17. Are these activities more or less expensive than language classes?
18. What do you like most about these other activities?
19. What do you like least about these other activities?
20. How do you know these activities are worth your time and money?
21. Does your child bring home examples of their work from this activity?
22. Do you have the opportunity to observe your child demonstrate what they are learning in the activity? If yes, how?
23. Is there anything else you would like to share about this activity?

That concludes my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add, or do you have any questions?

Appendix C: Creighton University IRB Approval

Office of the Provost
Research Compliance

DATE:	12-Aug-2020
TO:	Buckman, Terry
FROM:	Social / Behavioral IRB Board
PROJECT TITLE:	PARENT MOTIVATIONS FOR ENROLLING CHILDREN IN PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOL CLASSES: A GROUNDED THEORY EXPLORATION
REFERENCE #:	2000666-03
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Modifications
REVIEW TYPE	Exempt
ACTION:	APPROVED
EFFECTIVE DATE:	12-Aug-2020

Thank you for your Modifications submission materials for this project. The following items were reviewed with this submission:

- Request for Modification~
 - Updated Proposal
 - Tracked Changes Document
- Creighton University HS eForm~

This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects as per 45CFR46.101 (b) 2 and the revision(s) you have made does not change that determination. Therefore, the amendment/modification is approved.

All protocol amendments and changes are to be submitted to the IRB and may not be implemented until approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 402-280-2126 or irb@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and number in all correspondence with this committee.