

**Empowering Bilingual Arabic Learners: A Qualitative Study of the Impact of Educational Leadership on Arabic Language Proficiency in US Immersion Programs**

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### **Abstract**

The academic success and language proficiency in Arabic of bilingual Arabic learners (BAL) in immersion programs have been limited by a lack of effective policies and practices that address the Arabic population's inclusive and equitable educational environment. This qualitative case study aims to provide insight into how academic leaders can develop policies and practices that better support BALs and teachers in the immersion program and whether these policies and practices could create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity. Research in the immersion program field is crucial to ensuring the program's effectiveness. Transformational leadership (TL) theory is related to school leaders' roles in supporting bilingual Arabic learners (BALs). Research questions addressed the best practices and policies educational leaders can implement to support the language development of BALs in their bilingual/immersion programs and what is the perception of bilingual Arabic educators and learners toward the bilingual programs. The study's population comprises bilingual Arabic learners, educators, and academic leaders in multicultural education. The sample, selected using purposive sampling, includes 20 bilingual Arabic learners, two educators, and three academic leaders from an Illinois urban school district, all with at least 3 years in bilingual programs, and with parental consent for learners. Qualitative methods in the form of questionnaires and interviews were employed. Findings revealed significant patterns, highlighting several challenges within the bilingual program that need attention from educational leaders and policymakers.

*Keywords:* bilingual Arabic Learners (BALs), heritage languages (HL), immersion programs (IP), inclusive and equitable education, professional development (PD), transformational leadership (TL) theory

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents, whose prayers have guided my academic journey. Your prayers, uttered from afar, have been a source of strength and motivation during challenging times and a guiding light illuminating my path to success. I am grateful to God, Alhamdulillah, for enabling me to fulfill my dream in the presence of my parents.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The growing population of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs in the U.S. requires effective educational leadership to address their linguistic and cultural needs. Around 3.7 million Americans have roots in Arabic regions (Arab American Institute, 2019). The Arabic American population will continue to increase with the rising number of immigrants joining the country for education or employment (Aborehab & Azaz, 2020). This study aimed to examine educational leadership's impact on the development of Arabic language proficiency in immersion programs for bilingual Arabic learners in the U.S. Alfataftah and Jarrar (2018) conducted a study to understand the challenges and clashes of cultures in the modern learning environment.

The research provided an understanding of the experiences bilingual Arabic learners face in immersion programs and how effective educational leadership can support their academic success and create inclusive and equitable educational environments that value linguistic and cultural diversity in an urban school district in Illinois. Dorner and Lee (2020) provided insight into how leaders can employ courageous and social justice-minded leadership strategies to improve outcomes for marginalized student populations in bilingual education programs. Educational leadership should be understood as fostering, encouraging, and enabling the collective efforts and capabilities of all students, teachers, and communities to shape our shared future and create relevant knowledge that addresses the complexities of our world (Dei & Adhami, 2022). Chapter 1 presents the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the theoretical framework that will guide the study, essential terms and their definition, the limitations of the study, and more about the research assumptions, scope, delimitation, and chapter summary.

### **Background of the Problem**

Despite the growing number of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs in the United States, their academic success and language proficiency in Arabic are still hindered by many challenges. Arabic was the fastest-growing foreign language studied at colleges and universities in the United States in 2014 (Gracia, 2022). Bilingual educators and learners have many challenges, and influential educational leaders' needs are much more critical than before. Chin (2015) discovered that providing education in a student's native language may enhance their proficiency.

The background of this research problem is that the academic success and language proficiency in Arabic of bilingual Arabic learners (BAL) in immersion programs are limited by a lack of effective policies and practices that address the inclusive and equitable educational environment of the Arabic population (Ferry, 2020). The extent of the problem being addressed in this research is the need for more academic success and language proficiency among bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs in the United States. When Ritonga et al. (2021) evaluated Arabic as a secondary language, they explained that several difficulties frequently impede learning Arabic. Effective bilingual language policies can improve instructional content and foster intercultural and multilingual interactions (Ruhl et al., 2020). The gap in the literature is that more is needed to know how educational leadership influences how proficient bilingual Arabic learners in the United States develop their Arabic in immersion programs. Furthermore, the understanding of the experiences faced by bilingual Arabic learners in these programs and how effective educational leadership can support their academic success and create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity still needs to be better understood.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem is that the academic success and language proficiency in Arabic of bilingual Arabic learners (BAL) in immersion programs have been limited by a lack of effective policies and practices that address the Arabic population's inclusive and equitable educational environment. The research's central topic has several sides: Arabic learners who are bilingual and enrolled in the immersion program, bilingual teachers who work in the bilingual classroom setting, and educational leaders who serve both bilingual learners and teachers in the immersion program.

There is a growing amount of research on bilingual education and language immersion. Still, there is a glaring gap in our knowledge of how the specific requirements of Arabic-bilingual students are met in the school system. Given the rising number of immigrants who speak Arabic and their varied educational needs, this study topic is especially relevant today. The obstacles these demographics face might not be adequately covered by the currently available research, particularly in academic and linguistic development (Marian, 2013).

By examining the role of educational leadership in empowering the immersion program, the study intends to fill a gap in the literature. It aimed to offer insight into the techniques, practices, and required support for the student population who speaks Arabic. By casting light on a less-examined component of bilingual education, this research sought to add to the body of knowledge and, in doing so, supported the improvement of language competency and academic performance among bilingual learners in the United States.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide insight into how academic leaders can develop policies and practices that better support BALs and teachers in the



immersion program, and whether these policies and practices could create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity in an urban school district in Illinois. School leaders must know how to organize various inclusive support services integrated into the core curriculum and support equitable access to all educational opportunities (DeMatthews, 2018). Bilingual Arabic learners are a growing demographic in educational systems, and it is imperative to examine how academic leaders can develop effective policies and practices to support their educational journey. This study acknowledged the unique challenges and opportunities presented in bilingual classroom settings by focusing on immersion programs.

With a focus on the role of educational leadership and inclusive and equitable educational policies and practices, this research is intended to investigate the factors that may affect the academic achievement and language competency of Arabic language learners (ALLs). This study aimed to better understand how to help bilingual Arabic learners in the immersion program enhance their academic performance and language proficiency. The research focused on the current gap in knowledge about this subject. The tactics and approaches for teaching English language learners (ELLs) have received significant attention from previous research over the years, but little research has been conducted on how schools have succeeded or failed with these students (William et al., 2023).

The study looked at the success of an Arabic immersion program in which teachers deliver basic skills in Arabic, such as speaking, reading, and writing Arabic. According to Hussien (2014), bilingual Arabic students' assessments demonstrate better scores in English languages than in Arabic, and the influence between languages exists and becomes a developmental phenomenon. In other words, bilingual Arabic learners acquire the English language in the short term, but Arabic education could be acquired in the long term.

The study investigated the central requirement of the immersion program, which is the bilingual delivery of academic instructions and equitable resources, through in-depth interviews with educational leaders and teachers. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the field of bilingualism and offer recommendations for educational leaders who work with bilingual Arabic students in immersion programs.

### **Significance of the Study**

The program's success depends on various factors, including its structure (Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022). The study examined several factors that may contribute to disparities in bilingual classrooms, such as program design and policy, curriculum and instruction for bilingual literacy, educational apps, tutoring and intervention, standardized tests, teachers' coaching, and professional development opportunities. Education programs have a responsibility to train prospective bilingual teachers to meet the program challenges and understand the principles of the program, as well as the best practices for supporting bilingual students' needs (Miguel et al., 2021).

Researchers, decision-makers, and educational leaders who serve in the bilingual education field will find the study's outcomes valuable and insightful. Any efforts to increase equitable access to new or expanding opportunities will be a great addition to bilingualism research (William, 2023).

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: What best practices and policies can educational leaders in a large urban public school district in Illinois implement to support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of the bilingual Arabic educators and learners toward the immersion programs in a large urban public school district in Illinois?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research is transformational leadership theory (Burns (1978). According to the philosophy of transformational leadership, successful leadership strongly emphasizes inspiring individuals, helping them to realize their vision, and motivating them to continue doing so. Transformational leaders must have fundamental skills to inspire, motivate, and mobilize their employees (Brazill & Ruff, 2022). The core of the transformational leadership theory in this study relates to school leaders' decisions, plans, interventions, or other behaviors founded on ethical standards to manage academic performance.

Transformational leaders can inspire and motivate teachers and school administrators to create and implement effective policies and programs that support student learning. Evans et al. (2019) found that leaders' actions inspired teachers to critically approach other aspects of their practice. Some may argue that transformational leadership may be one of many solutions to support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners. Other leadership styles can also be effective, such as transactional leadership, which focuses on achieving specific goals and objectives by rewarding superior performance and correcting mistakes. Meng (2022) noted in his research that transformational and transactional leadership theories have been widely studied in management and school management research fields, and there are many studies on the theoretical overview and dimensional structure.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*A Bilingual Arabic Learner (BAL)* is defined as a student utilizing their first language (L1) at home or in the community and learning through a second language (L2), such as English

at school, they are referred to as *bilingual learners*. There are many different educational situations in which their learning could occur. Bilingual learners can study every subject using the L2 or if they are in bilingual education and bilingual learners. There are other interpretations and definitions of the term *bilingual*, such as a level of proficiency in two languages (Developing et al.: Glossary, 2020).

*Heritage Language (HL)* is defined as the language spoken by the family or community of an individual in addition to the dominant language of society. "Heritage language is the language spoken by immigrant families that carries cultural and familial significance" (Peyton et al., 2003, pp. 44–46).

*An immersion program (IP)* is defined as an educational approach where students are immersed in an environment where the target language is the medium of instruction. Immersion programs promote language acquisition through content-based instruction conducted exclusively in the target language (García et al., 2017).

*Inclusive and equitable education* is defined as equal opportunities, services, and access to a high-quality education. Inclusive education promotes the participation and achievement of all students, including those with diverse learning needs, ensuring that educational opportunities are equitable (UNESCO, 2020).

*Professional Development (PD)* is defined as the current instruction that strengthens teachers to continuously improve their techniques for teaching and stay up-to-date with educational advancements (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Effective PD programs are vital for fostering teachers' professional growth and contributing in students' learning outcomes.

*Transformational Leadership (TL) Theory* is defined as a management philosophy that encourages and inspires staff to innovate and create new strategies for an organization's growth

and success. By employing this technique, transformational leaders empower staff members to take the initiative and promote creative approaches to problem-solving (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

*Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)* is defined as an instructional approach where students with limited proficiency in the language of instruction receive academic content instruction in both their native language and the target language. Implementation of TBE program models is common in the U.S., especially in states that have large numbers of English learners who share the same language and background (Collier & Thomas, 2009). TBE involves teaching academic content in the student's native language while building proficiency in the target language (Thomas & Collier, 2012).

### **Assumptions**

Identifying and clarifying the underlying assumptions that fundamentally influence the study's framework when doing qualitative research is crucial (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (1994) defined assumptions as an investigative technique for comprehending a social or human problem based on developing a complex, comprehensive image, produced with words, reporting in-depth perspectives of informants, and carried out in a natural setting. First, it is assumed that educational leadership significantly affects the outcomes of language immersion programs. That assumption highlighted how important it is for leaders to have a say in how programs are designed, how resources are allocated, and how the support systems are set up to ensure they have a direct impact on students' language skills. Second, the effectiveness of language immersion programs in boosting bilingual learners' language competency is also assumed. The study also based its findings on the principle that equal access to education is a fundamental value and emphasized how crucial it is for educational leaders to work toward giving bilingual students access to the same opportunities and resources as their monolingual

peers, hence establishing an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Immersion programs can significantly impact the quality and effectiveness of bilingual education. Lastly, it is assumed that it is worthwhile and desirable to preserve the Arabic language (AL) and culture among Arabic-speaking students throughout the research. This idea emphasizes how crucial it is to preserve linguistic and cultural links within the context of bilingual education. The emphasis and goals of the examination were determined by these assumptions taken together.

### **Scope and Delimitation**

In qualitative research, the term Scope and Delimitations brings a clear guideline that frames the study's focus (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative study explores the impact of instructive educational leaders on empowering bilingual education within an immersion/bilingual program in the United States. The investigation endeavored to offer an in-depth understanding of the practices and strategies leaders can implement to back bilingual instruction within the setting of bilingual classrooms. The study focused on the bilingual Arabic program in an urban Illinois school district, as leaders in offering these programs, and focused on the detailed examination of the unique experiences of bilingual Arabic learners as they go through the immersion program.

Delimitations demand publicly identifying flaws that could have been better addressed and criticizing the research's assumptions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). It is vital to confirm that the study did not offer a deep examination of all bilingual education initiatives, educational leadership strategies, or levels of Arabic language competency in the United States. Instead, the study provided insight into one specific bilingual Arabic program in Illinois, looking at its particular experiences and external circumstances. The research was conducted with specific delimitations in mind. Although the findings of this study may have implications for more academic institutions that offer bilingual education services, they were based on the specific

experiences of Arabic learners in this particular district, recognizing the existence of varied language, cultural, and demographic elements in various places. Delimitations define the scope of a study, helping researchers avoid overgeneralizing their findings by acknowledging that the results may not apply universally to all populations, contexts, or time periods. (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019).

### **Limitations**

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) suggested that study limitations may be due to the need for more resources, a small sample size, or a poor methodology. No study is entirely flawless or comprehensive of all possible factors. As a result, outlining the limitations of any study demonstrates honesty and integrity while also showing a thorough knowledge of the topic. Leung (2015) discussed that acknowledging some design-related constraints might affect the study's robustness when performing qualitative research. Particular focus is placed on potential difficulties relating to transferability and dependability in the context of this study. Although this qualitative study aimed to record participants' varied experiences, the particular characteristics of each school setting may restrict how much can be generalized from the results.

The consistency and stability of the research process, which can be influenced by elements like altering program dynamics and the constantly shifting landscape of education, are also crucial for the reliability of outcomes. Employing triangulation by gathering data from multiple sources, such as interviews, and questionnaires, enhances the robustness of the findings. Biases that can affect the results were avoided by taking appropriate action to eliminate them. Using open-ended questions, maintaining a nonjudgmental attitude, and highlighting the value of honest responses will lessen the prejudice. Ensuring confidentiality during data collection and promising participants that their responses will not impact their relationship with their teachers will help to

reduce this bias.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 1 highlighted the importance of bilingual education in the United States and the need for influential educational leaders who can support this population, both teachers and students, to ensure an inclusive and equitable educational environment. The qualitative case study was used to explore the impact of educational leadership on the development of Arabic language proficiency in immersion programs for bilingual Arabic learners in the United States and to what extent educational policies and practices can support bilingual educators in classroom management. The study aimed to provide insight into the policies and practices that academic leaders can implement to support bilingual education in the United States. The study focused on the bilingual Arabic program in an urban school district in Illinois and investigated the root causes of language acquisition disparities in bilingual classrooms. The upcoming chapter delves into existing research surrounding bilingual education and educational leadership to better understand the research topic.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The number of bilingual Arabic students enrolled in immersion programs in the United States has significantly increased in recent years (NCES, 2018). Arabic is the second most popular language after Spanish (US Census Bureau, 2022). Abourehab and Azaz (2020) found that translanguaging is the deliberate employment of several languages in the classroom; it can help students who speak Arabic in the United States learn and retain their native tongues. Students' language growth and involvement improved due to a community-based Arabic language program that used translanguaging techniques (Fang et al., 2022). A practical pedagogical approach to language teaching and learning is translanguaging, which entails using many languages for communication and learning (Fang et al., 2022, p. 308). Therefore, strong leadership is essential to fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments that emphasize language and cultural variety as well as the academic success of these learners.

Alfataftah and Jarrar (2018) emphasized the difficulties and misunderstandings that bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs face. The study focused on the importance of good leadership to assist bilingual students' academic progress and foster inclusive, equitable learning settings that embrace language and cultural diversity. Leaders can utilize brave and social justice-minded leadership practices to improve outcomes for marginalized student groups in bilingual education programs (Dorner & Lee, 2020). Collaborative efforts and capacities of all students, teachers, and communities are supported, encouraged, and made possible by educational leadership, making the knowledge relevant and addressing the obstacles of this world (Dei & Adhami, 2022). Baldwin (2021) underlined the significance of principals having in-depth knowledge of immersion programs, actively promoting the program, supporting educators, and fostering a happy work environment. This qualitative case study shed light on

how academic leaders may build policies and practices that better support students' linguistic growth and foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment that respects linguistic and cultural diversity. Bilingual Arabic learners in the United States enroll in immersion programs to develop their Arabic language skills. A bilingual Arabic program at a large urban public school district in Illinois was examined in this study, and the causes of discrepancies in language acquisition in Arabic bilingual classes were examined.

The qualitative study aimed to provide a comprehensive review of the policies and practices that academic leaders can better implement to support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners and improve the overall educational experience for this population through in-depth interviews with educational leaders and teachers. District-level leadership is essential to developing effective bilingual programs that cater to the requirements of emerging bilingual kids (Morita-Mullaney, 2019). School districts' traditional practices and regulations frequently place restrictions on bilingual education leaders, which can result in the continuation of ineffective language programs (Morita-Mullaney, 2019, p. 47).

This qualitative study aimed to further the field of educational leadership and offer guidance to leaders on how to assist multilingual students. Therefore, the study considered the leaders' perspectives and looked into any limitations in the school system where they work. In conclusion, the findings of this literature review have established a connection between leadership and knowledge of emergent bilingualism, which formed the foundation for the following study. The study closed a gap in the literature by examining the influence of educational leadership on the development of Arabic language proficiency in immersion programs for bilingual Arabic learners in the US. The chapter's following sections included background on the nature and significance of the Arabic language and the obstacles that bilingual

learners (B Ls) in Arabic immersion programs encounter, like resource scarcity, staff shortages, and lack of standardized assessments for the bilingual Arabic model. It also highlighted how leadership could advance bilingual education and implement inclusive and equitable educational practices. There is an investigation into many factors that affect the implementation of the bilingual program model, including staffing requirements, issues like effective principal and bilingual educators' preparation programs, and the importance of well-designed professional development for bilingual teachers.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To initiate the research, relevant library databases like ACE Library, SAGE Premier Journals, ERIC, Education Source (EBSCO), and Journals on Multicultural and Bilingual Education identified pertinent publications for this topic. The critical search terms included: *bilingual Arabic learners, educational leadership, transformational leadership, Arabic language proficiency, US immersion programs, qualitative study, Bilingual Teachers, and professional development*. The initial search phrase resembled this: (educational leadership OR school leadership) AND (Arabic language proficiency OR language development) AND (bilingual Arabic learners-BALs OR Arabic language learners-ALLs) Immersion programs in the US OR immersion programs Qualitative research OR (qualitative research).

Synonyms or related terms for some of these keywords were used to increase the search results. For instance, *the heritage language* could be used instead of *language development*, and *Arabic immersion programs* could be used instead of *US immersion programs*. The reference lists of relevant articles were reviewed and searched for related studies using Google Scholar or other search engines. In general, the search strategy focused on identifying a range of relevant articles, studies, and other resources that could help inform the research question and

provide valuable insights into the impact of educational leadership on Arabic language proficiency in US immersion programs.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The transformational leadership theory, which forms the basis of this study, was first introduced by Burns (1978). In his seminal work, Burns defines *transformational leadership* as a process that elevates both leaders and followers to higher moral and motivating standards. Transformational leadership theory has garnered numerous citations and has had a profound and enduring impact on the landscape of leadership theory and practice.

Transformational leadership is the basis for this study's theoretical framework. Transformational leadership theory has recently attracted much attention because it emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to reach their maximum potential and cooperate to achieve a common goal. It has recently attracted much attention (Brazill & Ruff, 2022). Transformational leadership theory focuses on a leader's capacity to inspire and encourage followers to realize their full potential and collaborate on a common objective. Mlinarevic et al. (2022) investigated the connection between transformational leadership and the organizational culture of academic institutions in a different study. A transformational leadership style can help create a quality institution for early and preschool education (Mlinarevic et al., 2022).

Leaders who use the transformational leadership style more frequently will be more outgoing, amiable, and intelligent, crucial personality attributes for educational practices. Transformational leaders in immersion programs can build inclusive and equitable learning environments that support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners and boost their academic achievement in bilingual education (Mlinarevic et al., 2022). Teachers and administrators can be inspired and motivated to develop and put into practice efficient policies

and programs that enhance student learning by transformational leaders.

According to Evan et al. (2019), teachers were motivated to tackle other aspects of their work with a critical eye by the behaviors of leaders. Transformational leadership is one of several options for helping bilingual Arabic learners strengthen their language skills. Other leadership philosophies can also be beneficial, including transactional leadership, which emphasizes accomplishing specific goals and objectives by rewarding reliable performance and rectifying errors. Meng (2022) highlighted that the management and school management research disciplines have extensively researched transformational and transactional leadership theories. In conclusion, transformational leadership is a style of leadership that emphasizes enhancing motivation and morale with the ultimate goal of assisting staff members in acquiring leadership qualities. The concept of a *learning organization*, which emphasizes the value of individual growth, team learning, and knowledge as a crucial source of competitive advantage for organizations, is closely related to this method (Mlinarevic et al., 2022). Al Ishaqi et al. (2021) defined the transformational leadership model theory as a leader's style that causes changes in individuals and social systems. Transformational leadership increases employees' motivation, morale, and characteristics and supports developing employees to be leaders.

Al Ishaqi et al. (2021) also suggested that transformational leadership considers the quality of collaboration between teachers and leaders in creating a quality work environment so that education and work in school can be carried out effectively and efficiently, impacting teacher performance development. Such an approach underscores the role of transformational leaders in creating a positive work environment, making educators feel valued and appreciated for their contributions to the educational institution. Jiatong et al. (2022) examined the impact of transformational leadership on affective organizational commitment and job performance,

with employee engagement as a mediating factor. 840 Chinese employees participated in the cross-sectional qualitative study. The participants completed tests on emotional and organizational commitment, employee engagement, transformational leadership, and job performance. According to the study, transformational leadership significantly improves work performance, employee engagement, and affective organizational commitment. Additionally, the relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment and job performance is mediated by employee engagement. The study suggests that transformational leadership can raise employee satisfaction, emotional and organizational commitment, and work output.

Solsona-Puig (2019) found that student's academic performance must be maintained in schools with effective leadership. Using the transformational leadership theory as a theoretical framework, Solsona-Puig examined the best leadership practices used by Secondary Dual Language Immersion (SDLI) school leaders. Due to the increased diversity and linguistic challenges of Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs, the study identified five themes in leading SDLI programs. It emphasized the significance of unique leadership positions. Seven conclusions emerged from the study, including the necessity of building stakeholder trust and unity, putting into practice the five transformational leadership roles, addressing the complexity of SDLI programs, ensuring academic and linguistic equity, enhancing program coherence, monitoring progress, and gaining stakeholder commitment. According to the study, special SDLI programs can be examples of fair policies and procedures in K–12 settings (Solsona-Puig).

Baldwin (2021) investigated the relationship between the transformational leader as the best style and the immersion program in the public school. Findings indicated that successful immersion program leaders must establish a positive culture by building trust and community with parents

and teachers and showing commitment to the program. Moreover, leaders should provide program and teacher support, including professional development and differentiated opportunities for international teachers (Baldwin, 2021). Influential immersion leaders should possess specific knowledge and skills, such as program knowledge, advocacy skills, and the ability to apply a shared leadership model. The study showed the importance of leadership in the success of immersion programs and provided insights for school and district leaders to inform their immersion leadership practices (Baldwin, 2021).

The central part of this study discussed the need for an effective transformational leader who can ensure the bilingual learner's success. In brief, the transformational leader's role in the context of bilingual education is vital in promoting inclusive and equitable education, implementing strategies and educational actions, creating a positive work environment, and enhancing teachers' performance. The conceptual framework in this study provided a logical structure of connected concepts that help display how ideas in a study related to each other within the theoretical framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

### **Research Literature Review**

Many areas of existing literature were reviewed to examine the bilingual education programs and the leadership actions in the bilingual education setting. These areas include identifying the nature and importance of the Arabic bilingual immersion program and similar programs for Arabic Language Learners (ALLs) in the US; a critical examination of experiences and challenges that bilingual society encounters; and exploring the role of transformational leadership in empowering bilingual education programs in the US.

## **Arabic Language (AL)**

Language is vital to human communication and plays a crucial role in forming identities, cultures, and societies. Arabic language (AL) is of exceptional importance because of its distinctive traits and historical and cultural value (Asadi, 2022). The following section delved into the nature of the Arabic language, its significance, and the proficiency of heritage speakers.

### ***Nature of the Language***

Abu-Chacra (2018) summarized some of the AL characteristics. The majority of languages in the world are written from left to right, except for Arabic, and remarkably, a language with 12.3 million words can make this many words with just three vowels out of 28 letters (Abu-Chacra, 2018). The primary form of each of the 28 letters may vary if the letter is located at the beginning, middle, or end of the word (Karin et al., 2014). The Arabic language presents linguistic characteristics that differ at the lexico-semantic, syntactic, morphological, and phonological levels (Asadi, 2022). AL has unique traits that increase the difficulty of mastering it, which requires qualified teachers, an effective curriculum, audio and visual resources, and specific programs (Retnawati et al., 2020). The effectiveness of teaching the AL was examined by Retnawati et al. (2020). In their research, the survey results demonstrated the need for improved teacher preparation programs and better instructional resources for bilingual Arabic teachers.

### ***Importance of Arabic Language***

Arabic was an essential means of communication between traveling groups of scholars in Yemen and Hijaz; it connected not only South Asia but also the entire Indian Ocean region (Esther-Miriam, 2021). On the other hand, Arabic has contributed to research related to broader Islamic norms in the areas of Quranic exegesis (tafsīr) and Islamic law (fiqh) (HO, 2006). Arabic



serves a variety of other social and cultural purposes. El-Rouayheb's (2015) study of Islamic intellectual currents in the Ottoman Empire implicitly revealed the centrality of the Ottoman Empire; according to the Census Bureau (2020), over one million Arabic speakers were in the US in 2019. In Illinois, there are over 200,000 identified English learners (ELs); over 70% of ELs are born in the United States; 30% are immigrants from Arabic nations (*Federal of English Language Learning-Illinois State Board of Education*, n.d.).

Abourehab and Azaz (2020) discussed the significance of pedagogical translanguaging in community/heritage AL learning. Translanguaging practices could facilitate language learning and promote identity development and cultural awareness among Arabic learners (Abourehab & Azaz, 2020). The study highlighted the need for a pedagogical approach that values the learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and incorporates them into the language learning process. Researchers suggested that translanguaging practices can help bridge the gap between the languages used at home and in the classroom, promoting greater student engagement and motivation.

Alfataftah and Jarrar (2018) discussed the importance of the AL in facing the challenges of globalization and the clash of civilizations. It is argued that promoting AL is necessary to enhance cultural diversity, understanding, and tolerance among different societies. Kolancali and Melhuish (2023) highlighted how socioeconomic constraints faced by first-generation immigrant parents, especially when they are new to a country, can contribute to decreased stimulation in the home environment, therefore, these constraints can significantly impact the educational outcomes and language development of children in immigrant families. The Arab American and American Muslim communities attended weekend programs and private schools to ensure their children learned their heritage language (Attaallah, 2020). Those findings showed that parents

attach great significance to preserving their children's heritage language, and their children are actively involved in discussions about language maintenance (Attaallah, 2020).

### ***Heritage Language (HL) Proficiency***

The language development of heritage speakers has become a significant topic in linguistics research. Visonà and Plonsky (2020) examined the language proficiency of heritage speakers of Arabic in the United States. According to Williams et al. (2019), heritage speakers are individuals exposed to a language other than the majority spoken in their community, usually at home or in their community. However, they are educated in a different language in school.

Williams et al. (2019) investigated the relationships between cognitive control skills and EL and HL performance in dual language (DL) learners. The study involved 84 DL learners engaged in *Head Start* programs. Standardized examinations were used to gauge linguistic proficiency, while behavioral activities were used to evaluate cognitive control (Williams et al., 2019). Using the student's HL will increase the student's interaction and engagement in the classwork (Alsulaitah et al., (2022). The authors reviewed the literature on Arabic HL maintenance and development and discussed factors that affect the language development of heritage speakers, such as language attitudes, motivation, and identity. Visonà and Plonsky (2020) suggested that heritage speakers with a positive attitude towards their HL and a powerful sense of identity are more likely to maintain and develop their Arabic proficiency. Alsulaitah et al. (2022) suggested that students feel more comfortable listening to someone who speaks their home language, especially the newcomers. HL learners with higher proficiency in their HL are more likely to develop their vocabulary than those with lower proficiency (Williams et al., 2019). Dhahir (2015) found that the group of students as a whole followed a familiar pattern of sociocultural interaction strategies of questioning, cooperating, and communicating and that the

presence of learners in the home group was associated with opportunities for sociocultural interaction within the group, which was only partially reinforced and promoted a learning environment. Promoting the development of both the HL and the EL among DL learners in early childhood can be a helpful strategy to improve educational outcomes and bridge the achievement gap (Williams et al., 2019). Williams et al. (2019) reviewed the literature on vocabulary development in HL learners.

Alsahafi (2018) analyzed the language proficiency of heritage speakers of Arabic and compared it to that of monolingual speakers of Arabic. Heritage speakers of Arabic have lower proficiency than monolingual speakers, particularly in grammar and writing (Alsahafi, 2018). In terms of reading skills, Retnawati et al. (2020) found that students' ability to read Arabic fluently hinders their progress in learning the AL. Therefore, this chapter examined educational leaders' roles and suggested programs like immersion programs for bilingual students.

### **Arabic Immersion Program**

Language immersion programs have grown in popularity as a type of bilingual education that allows students to study subjects and literacy in two languages. These programs provide a unique learning environment where children receive education in their local language while still participating in math, science, and social studies (Watson, 2022; Vidal et al., 2018). Language immersion can occur in both bilingual and multilingual environments, and classrooms are frequently referred to as integrated content and language (ICL) frameworks (Marian et al., 2013).

### ***Nature of the Program***

Watson (2022) defined these programs as a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages as one source of cultural and linguistic transmission. Depending on the grade level, the immersion program offers students education in

their native tongue for a portion of the school day while still teaching math, science, and social studies (Vidal et al., 2018). The scholar's definition focuses on bilingual learning environments, but language immersion can also be implemented in multilingual environments. Vidal et al. (2018) outlined that immersion classrooms are also called integrated content and language (ICL) structures. Garcia et al. (2022) suggested that students have their reasons for enrolling in immersion classes or to be a part of a comfortable environment. Newcomers to the US described feeling isolated, alienated, and misunderstood at their high school, encouraging their intention to be in an immersion program (Garcia et al., 2022).

Bilingual Two-Way Immersion programs benefited both minority-language and majority-language students. Minority-language students in Two-Way Immersion outperformed their peers in Transitional Programs of Instruction, while majority-language students in Two-Way Immersion outperformed their peers in Mainstream monolingual classrooms (Marian et al., 2013). Language immersion programs have become popular at the primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

### ***Benefits of the Program***

Muttalib and Jawad (2021) asserted that expanding DL programs can benefit all students, not just English language learners (ELLs), and help make education more egalitarian and culturally relevant. The concept and benefits of bilingual education are thoroughly examined in this article, highlighting its inclusive nature. The research investigated how instructors, parents, and students involved in bilingual education might promote language learning and cross-cultural awareness, emphasizing the integral role of each stakeholder. Similarly, the learning outcomes in the English curriculum emphasize the development of linguistic awareness across languages and the use of the language students speak to discover similarities at various linguistic levels, ranging

from vocabulary and expressions for primary school students to more complex linguistic similarities and differences for secondary school students (Lorenz et al., 2021). Students of majority and minority languages may benefit from balanced language instruction in the classroom (Marian et al., 2013).

Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) offers immersion programs as a significant component of the state's initiatives to encourage bilingualism and biliteracy among its students (Illinois Board of Education [ISBE], 2019). The research setting for this study is one of Illinois immersion Spanish and Arabic school programs. Based on Bilingual and Multicultural Services in this school district (2023), the district immersion program is committed to providing a high-quality education that celebrates and incorporates students' cultural backgrounds and native languages. Both English and Spanish share a phenomenon caused by traditional language teaching practices and the increasing input range that users and learners receive (Callies & Hehner, 2022). To administer immersion programs, educational leaders and teachers provide a setting where children can spend a significant amount of their school day learning a second language, such as Arabic, Spanish, or Chinese (Illinois Board of Education, n.d.). To assist students in becoming literate in their home language and English, the district provides a variety of bilingual programs, including Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) and Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) as developmental bilingual programs (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). Legislation passed in 1973 requires Illinois school districts to offer a TBE program when 20 or more ELs of the same language classification are enrolled in the same attendance center. TBE programs must provide instruction in both students' home language and English in the core subject areas (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) and instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL).

TBE services must also include instruction on the history of the student's or the parent's native land and the United States (*English Learners in Illinois SY 2019-20 Statistical Report*, 2020). program is one of the immersion programs in a school district in Illinois. The curriculum seeks to empower students with bilingualism and biliteracy to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). The program serves students from diverse cultures and language backgrounds; Arabic is one of these languages. All students, regardless of their linguistic background, have equal chances to flourish academically and socially (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). Bilingual education can positively affect students' academic performance, especially regarding cognitive and linguistic development (Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022).

The current state of inclusive and equitable education in bilingualism was examined in this chapter by highlighting the experiences of bilingual teachers and learners in this program and the importance of having transformational leaders who promote inclusive and equitable learning environments. Therefore, further research was needed to understand better the specific needs and challenges facing bilingual students and to identify influential leaders' roles in supporting BLs' academic and social success.

### **Challenges in Bilingual Education**

According to Hill (2022), the leadership of bilingual programs is complex and challenging. Pedagogically, it is hard since they require relevant education in two languages across the curriculum. Furthermore, because programs are generally housed within schools alongside several other programs, leaders have a wide range of tasks that necessitate a high degree of talent and traits (Hill, 2022). Teachers at a successful bilingual school stressed the need to demand content-level books in both languages and the need for increased administrative

support for technology improvements and professional development (PD) for bilingual educators (Hones et al. (2021). Garza et al. (2019) classified challenges into four primary groups based on the bilingual teachers' responses in their research survey: a lack of resources, a lack of time, difficulties interacting with parents and teachers as a bilingual team, and teaching-specific concerns. Figure 1 depicts a thorough list of these challenges. Permission to use the figure was obtained from Tammy De La Garza, the author of Dual Language Instruction and Achievement Study (see Appendix A).

### Figure 1

*Perceptions of School Leaders on the Top Challenges Facing DL Teachers*



*Note.* The top challenges as perceived by school leaders regarding DL teachers are shown. Data adapted from "Perceptions of Dual Language Teachers: Understanding the Roles of Leaders, Teachers, and Parents in a Changing Educational Landscape," by Garza, E., Oberg, C., & English, C., 2015, *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 27(4), pp. 287–306. Copyright 2015 by Mid-Western Educational Research Association. Adapted with permission.

***Resources, Resources, Resources***

Hill (2022) argued that in bilingual schools, there is the possibility of conflict in policy, staffing, and resource allocation decisions. Muniroh et al. (2022) investigated the challenges in managing bilingual schools and barriers facing bilingual schools, such as the complexity of administering a curriculum that combines national and international standards. Inadequacies of instructional materials and lack of Arabic apps can be an issue (Muniroh et al., 2022). Alfataftah and Jarrar (2018) highlighted the challenges facing teaching the Arabic language and proposed strategies for enhancing its learning and usage, such as improving language curricula and teaching methods, promoting language exchanges and immersion programs, and enhancing the use of technology in language learning. Retnawati et al. (2020) discussed the lack of AL resources, which should be tailored to meet bilingual Arabic learners' needs. Sixty AL teachers from different educational levels in Indonesia participated in the study; teachers filled out a survey and took part in focus groups. Despite efforts to enhance AL instruction, the result revealed that difficulties and constraints exist, such as a shortage of trained teachers, a lack of instructional materials, and students' poor language proficiency (Retnawati et al., 2020). The need for school-wide leadership is crucial to promote bilingual teachers training and improving classroom instruction (Brochin, 2019).

Baldwin (2021) highlighted the role of transformational leaders in the success of immersion programs and how they can change their practices to empower immersion programs. The examined literature focused on several factors that may contribute to disparities in bilingual classrooms and the role of transformational leaders in handling the program disparities, such as program design and policy, curriculum and instruction for bilingual literacy, educational apps,



tutoring, and intervention. While immersion programs can highly be beneficial for bilingual learners, achieving positive results requires deliberate efforts (Baldwin, 2021).

### ***Staff Shortage***

The demand for bilingual teachers is increasing, while the number of qualified and certified bilingual teachers remains the same (Kennedy, 2020). Educator License with Stipulations-Transitional Bilingual Educator (ELS-TBE) is a license for professionals with a bachelor's degree from the U.S. or an equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree from another country. Individuals must be fluent in English and the target language (*PreK-12 BILINGUAL and ESL MATRIX*, 2023). The license expires 5 years from its issuance date and is non-renewable. Several studies have highlighted the need for qualified bilingual teachers in the U.S. Garza et al. (2015) studied the difficulties bilingual Arabic teachers face in Illinois; a significant issue is the need for more skilled bilingual educators. Gross (2018) examined the challenges of teacher shortages in U.S. public schools and the role that internationally educated and trained immigrant and refugee professionals can play in addressing this shortage. Gross' (2018) discussion focused on the replacement teacher certification initiative, which aims to attract diverse outside entrants and subject matter experts to education, including professionals from immigrant backgrounds.

In 2023, Governor J.B. Pritzker proposed a \$70 million program to hire and retain teachers amid the Illinois teacher shortage (Smylie, 2023). In the state's 2024 budget, Governor J.B. Pritzker suggested a three-year, \$70 million pilot program to aid school districts in hiring and keeping teachers despite the state's persistent teacher shortage. According to Pritzker's projection, the program would improve the teacher-to-student ratio for 870,000 students in public schools (Smylie, 2023).

Beilstein and Withee (2021) surveyed teacher shortages in Illinois. The shortage has focused on specific content areas and geographic regions, with some positions needing to be filled by substitutes. The survey's data implied that districts and schools may be more ready to hire underqualified candidates and substitute teachers in some content areas, such as elementary education and library/media specialist positions. Kennedy (2020) suggested that further research into the multifaceted issues contributing to the shortage of bilingual teachers in Texas and the country would be enriched by future studies investigating the relationships between education policies, bilingual teacher training, and bilingual teacher shortages.

### ***Assessments Design for Bilingual Model***

Rodriguez-Mojica (2018) has investigated what emergent bilinguals can perform in English while engaging in classroom interactions during English Language Art (ELA) assessments. The author discovered that emergent bilinguals could produce a wide range of language functions in English that were aligned with state academic expectations and that even emergent bilinguals considered struggling by conventional standards used in schools demonstrated evidence of using English to accomplish academic tasks in ways aligned with state academic expectations.

Garza et al. (2015) noted that DL assessments conducted in English do not accurately capture the learning accomplishments of DL learners, and teachers must be prepared to demonstrate, accommodate, and communicate student progress in other ways. Additionally, Garza et al. (2015) expressed concerns about how students' progress and teachers' instruction were valued, including the need for more alignment between the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and expectations for DL teachers. Policies and assessments are needed to support the success of DL programs.

Assessment plays a role in high-stakes decisions that might limit or increase students' options and paths (Ajjawi et al., 2023). Evans et al. (2019) found that teachers should be involved in the reconceptualization of the assessment routine to ensure that it is culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of bilingual students. PD opportunities for teachers are critical to successfully implementing the revised assessment routine. These opportunities can include training on culturally responsive assessment practices and developing bi-literacy assessment skills. Leaders can use data from the revised assessment routine to inform instructional decision-making and improve student outcomes. Moreover, ongoing support and resources are important to sustain these changes and ensure their effectiveness in diverse educational settings, which requires a commitment to ongoing data analysis and a willingness to adjust instructional practices based on the data (Evans et al., 2019).

### **Leadership Role in Bilingual Society**

As the world becomes more diverse and connected, educational leaders are more responsible for promoting multilingual, inclusive, and egalitarian education. The role of bilingual school leaders in ensuring good governance and decision-making procedures is critical to promoting multilingual education (Hill, 2022). Transformative leadership strategies are needed to foster community identity and encourage language responsiveness in instructional environments that welcome bilingualism (Evans et al., 2019). A critical multilingual approach and engagement of stakeholders can help leaders build a shared vision for equitable assessment methods (Evans et al., 2019).

### ***Encouraging Multilingual Education***

According to Hill (2022), bilingual school leaders must be remarkably effective; leaders should be trained and guarantee that staff competent in these areas are present when making

crucial decisions. School governance is a critical issue with the potential for gaps to emerge (Hill, 2022). Evans et al. (2019) examined the leaders' actions, including adopting a critical bilingual perspective, developing bilingual pedagogical spaces, and encouraging the growth of bilingual community identity, using transformative leadership and linguistically responsive schooling. Leaders must create a shared vision of equitable assessment practices and engage stakeholders in a reconceptualization of the assessment routine (Evans et al., 2019). Bilingual education consists of various program types, which may support specific objectives like integrating students into society, bringing a multilingual society together, or developing linguistic and cultural understanding (Miguel et al., 2021). Understanding bilingual education comprehensively requires considering school leaders' backgrounds and the roles languages play in the educational system (Miguel et al., 2021). School principals must comprehend the differences between immersion and traditional programs and the implications for staffing, professional development, resource allocation, instruction, and assessment decisions (Baldwin, 2019). DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2018) emphasized the essential role of leadership in the success of immersion programs. Principals can support dual language education by helping teachers develop their bilingual and bicultural competencies and promoting a school culture that values diversity and equity. Principals play a crucial role in fostering a school culture that embraces bilingualism and multiculturalism.

The importance of increasing diversity in school leadership extends beyond an ethical requirement for the well-being of leaders. It also has significant benefits for communities, fellow teachers, and bilingual learners (Clement et al., 2022). Effective leadership practices, such as building relationships with the community, using data to inform decision-making, creating a culture of collaboration and support, and providing professional development opportunities for

teachers, all contribute to improving the bilingual program that these leaders serve (Morita-Mullaney, 2019). To support the development of bilingual and bicultural competencies among teachers, principals must not only encourage ongoing professional development but also create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn from one another. The active role of principals in fostering a school culture that values diversity and equity is crucial (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018). Brazill and Ruff (2022) stated that transformational leaders can create a brave space by modeling vulnerability and openness, fostering community and belonging, and providing support and encouragement for risk-taking and growth. Leaders can help students and teachers feel that they are part of a larger whole and that their contributions are valued (Brazill & Ruff, 2022).

Solsona-Puig (2019) interviewed nine school leaders from four distinct public-school districts in Southern California, who were chosen using a double layer of inclusion criteria that ensured both leadership experience and overall school performance. According to the study, transformational leadership is critical in encouraging and promoting bilingual education in Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs. Transformational leaders effectively developed trust and unity among stakeholders, implemented the five transformational leadership roles, addressed the complexity of DLI programs, ensured academic and linguistic equity, improved program coherence, progress monitoring, and engaged stakeholder commitment (Solsona-Puig (2019).

### ***Implementing Strategies and Educational Actions***

Dorner and Lee (2020) examined the efforts of district leaders to expand dual-language bilingual education (DLBE) to promote equity and justice. The authors argue that DLBE has the potential to provide culturally and linguistically responsive education for multilingual students and contribute to their academic success. However, Dorner and Lee (2020) also acknowledged that implementing DLBE requires the support of district leaders who understand the potential

benefits of bilingualism and commit to equity-oriented leadership practices. According to Dorner and Lee (2020), district leaders can promote equity and justice in Dual language education by advocating for the expansion of the program and allocating resources to support its implementation. Building partnerships with families and community members is essential to ensuring that DLBE programs are responsive to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. District leaders must communicate with families and seek their input and feedback (Dorner & Lee, 2020). There is a pressing need to engage in continuous advocacy of multilingualism, in addition to connecting with and forming collaborative networks within and outside of institutes of higher learning (Ramadiro, 2022).

According to Dei and Adhami (2022), educational leaders can support alternative learning methods by creating spaces for marginalized voices and perspectives to be heard, challenging dominant narratives and assumptions, supporting critical reflection and inquiry, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect. Evan et al. (2019) discovered that transformational leaders' activities prompted educators to critically examine other aspects of their profession, positively impacting student learning outcomes. Furthermore, transformational leaders can help students reach their full potential by providing the necessary resources and opportunities. Meng (2022) explored the relationship between transformational leadership and educational management in higher education institutions. When leaders use a transformational leadership style, it is more likely to lead to effective educational management in these institutions (Meng, 2022). Transformational leadership can have a significant and positive impact on how educational institutions are managed and run by implementing strategies and educational actions that can help create a positive organizational climate and foster a culture of continuous

improvement and innovation, ultimately leading to improved educational quality for all stakeholders (Meng, 2022).

### ***Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Education***

Educational leaders need to be more sophisticated in their understanding of students' needs and experiences and to be genuine collaborators in the educational endeavor; educational leaders need more research and evidence generation in naturalistic situations to determine what works and what does not work, and also how and why, to encourage inclusion (Ajjawi et al., 2023). Transformational leaders in immersion programs can create inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners and enhance their academic success (Brazill & Ruff, 2022).

Evans et al. (2019) provided a case study of leaders in a two-way immersion program who directed instructors through critically analyzing a literacy evaluation routine. The study employed the frameworks of transformational leadership and linguistically responsive schooling frameworks to advance toward a more equitable reconceptualization of literacy assessment and demonstrate emergent bilingual learners' deficit beliefs. According to the findings, the leaders took a critical bilingual position, enacted bilingual pedagogical spaces, and encouraged the development of a bilingual community identity. According to Evans et al. (2019), transformative leaders are critical to sustaining fair practices, fostering professional learning communities, and encouraging pedagogical change. The study's findings are significant for all leaders who want to foster equity in varied school communities and promote culture and language as assets for learning.

According to Ayscue and Uzzell (2022), several variables contributed to successful program integration, including implementing inclusive and culturally sensitive teaching

approaches, constructing a friendly and collaborative learning environment, and including families in the educational process. Liu (2022) suggested that educational leaders must promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that value linguistic and cultural diversity and support the language development of bilingual learners, moreover, fostering strong partnerships between schools and communities can further enhance the educational experiences of bilingual students. These environments can help shape and construct bilingual students' understanding of reality. Liu (2022) found that teachers who had a say in the implementation of curriculum changes would have more positive outlook on student success in new initiatives. Additionally, teachers fostered a positive identity towards bilingualism and incorporated students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their development.

### **Bilingual Educator Preparation Programs**

Educator preparation programs have been the subject of extensive research on their effectiveness in improving the effectiveness of educators, principals, and teachers in bilingual education. Muniroh et al. (2022) discussed bilingual schools' challenges and proposed that higher education for prospective leaders could be a solution. The program must be a well-established academic foundation in higher education, and unique content and curriculum must be developed (Muniroh et al., 2022).

Jez (2020) asserted that preparation programs must address equity and social justice issues by looking at teacher candidates' experiences in a course that prepares them for working with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The curriculum successfully fostered candidates' cultural competence and knowledge of social justice issues (Jez, 2020), according to the authors' findings from interviews with the teacher candidates. The fact that the candidates felt unprepared to confront matters of privilege and power during their fieldwork



shows the need for more deliberate and explicit training on these subjects (Jez, 2020). Teacher preparation programs emphasize building critical consciousness and the capacity to address structural issues of inequity (Jez, 2020).

Miguel et al. (2021) indicated that effective educator preparation programs in bilingual education should provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn about different cultures and develop culturally responsive teaching practices, focus on bilingualism and multilingualism and coursework, and provide opportunities for practice and reflection, establish partnerships with multilingual communities. Herrera and Rivera-Vega (2020) discussed the practical PD component for professors in an academic environment that supports bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy. Equipping teachers with proper tools and teaching them the theory behind the institution's dual language model would be beneficial for students to develop their bilingual and bi-literate skills (Herrera & Rivera-Vega, 2020). The ongoing mentorship process between teacher trainers and new faculty can provide real examples of applicability in the classroom (Herrera & Rivera-Vega, 2020). Focusing on the advantages of additive bilingual or dual language education programs, such as increasing academic success, improved critical/creative thinking, and reduced achievement gaps by strengthening current dual language programs and providing effective teacher and teacher-leader preparation (Garza et al., 2015).

Hones et al. (2021) investigated the fundamental importance of teachers' lives as they attempt to establish and sustain a small dual-language school. Policymakers at the state and federal levels can continue to encourage dual-language programming. If public charters are funded, they should ensure that initial funding matches ongoing funding to sustain successful programs (Hones et al., 2021). This study centered on the crucial role of educational leaders in supporting similar initiatives to promote bilingual education programs and empower bilingual

teachers. Education programs are responsible for training prospective bilingual teachers to meet the program challenges and best practices for supporting bilingual students' needs (Miguel et al., 2021).

### **Effective Principal Preparation Programs**

Baldwin (2021) emphasized understanding that teaching for biliteracy is part of program knowledge, which would be detrimental to a program if the principal shows that they do not understand the nature of bilingualism and the importance of advocacy for teachers, students, and biliteracy by requiring more English instruction and appropriate standardized assessments. Research has shown that effective principal preparation programs can improve school culture, teacher retention, and student achievement (Roegman, 2020). One key component of effective principal preparation programs is the development of strong leadership skills, which includes effective communication, strategic planning, and data-driven decision-making skills. Roegman (2020) notes that principal preparation programs emphasizing leadership development can help principals build the skills to manage their schools and lead their staff effectively. Roegman (2020) noted that ongoing PD for principals can help them stay current with the latest research and best practices in school leadership, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes. Therefore, school districts and administrators must invest in effective principal preparation programs. According to Donley et al. (2020), another critical aspect of principal preparation programs is the focus on instructional leadership. Donley et al. (2020) discussed that effective principal preparation programs should provide candidates with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve instructional practices and support teachers in their professional growth. Hairston (2020) examined administrators' perceptions of the program components that they believed prepared them to be good school leaders and whether they were consistent with the

Professional Standards of Educational Leaders (PSEL). Baldwin (2021) recommended that the district provide PD and establish a professional learning community for immersion leaders. As new administrators with no prior knowledge of immersion are hired, this targeted work continues to support immersion leaders' PD needs (Baldwin, 2021).

### **Professional Development (PD) for Bilingual Teachers**

Miguel et al. (2021) discussed that ongoing PD could help teachers stay current with the latest research and best practices in bilingual education. The field of bilingual education has changed over time due to changes in legislation, demographics, and programs. Teachers face pedagogical difficulties and must be ready to give their children the best education possible in a multicultural setting (Miguel et al., 2021). Burner and Carlsen (2019) looked into the credentials, perceptions, and practices of instructors in a secondary school that is exclusively devoted to newly arriving students; the findings show that teachers have some fundamental awareness of multilingualism but need to use it in the classroom. The need for more efficient PD programs and improved AL fluency among present instructors contribute to the shortage of skilled Arabic teachers (Garza et al., 2015).

Tang et al. (2020) investigated the importance of PD for bilingual teachers. Their study included 116 first-grade bilingual teachers from 61 Texas elementary schools. All participating teachers were certified bilingual teachers in Texas and taught in bilingual classrooms during the year of participation. Tang et al. (2020) suggested that teachers must be prepared to teach the population of bilingual students effectively. Educators' PD effectively improves teachers' outcomes in bilingual education. Although the teachers developed positive beliefs about multilingualism and multilingually-oriented education, the findings indicated that they tended to persist in monolingual teaching practices, did not acknowledge linguistic and cultural diversity in

the classroom, and failed to employ multilingual teaching strategies systematically, which requires specific improvement in the professional development programs ((Lorenz et al., 2021). PD courses and sessions can also improve teacher outcomes by providing opportunities for collaboration and networking. The skills and knowledge needed by early educators are often described as teacher preparation competencies, skills include the need to cultivate a sense of professionalism (Burner & Carlsen, 2019). The programs' educational leaders must prepare aspiring bilingual educators to tackle these obstacles and comprehend the best methods for addressing the needs of multilingual students (Miguel et al., 2021). The authors suggested that it is expected to hear teachers complain about programs being implemented without sufficient support and training, which leads to a stressful, uncomfortable scenario.

Lee and King (2022) suggested that future studies should explore how teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds can be empowered with customized PD to enhance their teaching practices. Policymakers and researchers may also investigate the influence of cultural values on teaching and learning by exploring language and risk-taking values in diverse forms of student learning beyond the classroom (Lee & King, 2022, p. 631). In conclusion, the references used in this section supported the idea that virtual PD courses and in-person training are essential for improving teacher outcomes in bilingual education. Therefore, school districts and administrators must provide ongoing PD opportunities for teachers in bilingual education.

### **Leaders' Practices**

Illinois educational officials have been advocating and implementing bilingual education programs in recent years, emphasizing Arabic immersion programs. In an increasingly diverse community, these efforts aim to provide pupils with high-quality language training while fostering cultural understanding. These initiatives, however, require good leadership skills and

adequate resources to be successful. This section examines the leadership practices and policies that support the development of bilingual education programs in Illinois, with a particular focus on Arabic immersion programs.

### ***Standards for Implementing Bilingual Model***

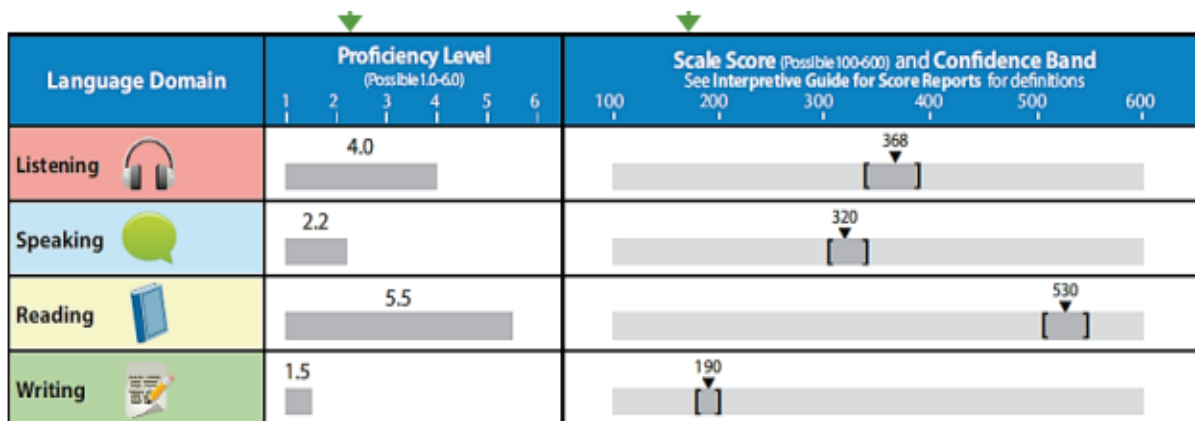
The Illinois State Board of Education prioritizes the holistic development of every child in the state, emphasizing cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional growth. ISBE's Multilingual Department is dedicated to ensuring equitable access to Academic instruction in English for students with diverse linguistic backgrounds and those requiring additional support. These students must be provided with comprehensive educational opportunities. ISBE provides leadership, advocacy, and support to the Illinois education system. It is responsible for setting state educational policies, defining academic standards and tests, supervising teacher certification and professional development, and allocating financing to schools and districts. The ISBE adopted the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) testing as a standardized assessment for all ELLs and bilingual students (*2020-2021 ACCESS for ELLs, 2019*).

According to the research, the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System's interpretive guide clarified ACCESS testing criteria and scores and how to interpret these scores to determine the student's level (WIDA, 2020). Figure 2 is a document that helps bilingual educators understand what students' ACCESS for ELLs scores mean and what to do with that information. According to the WIDA's English Language Development Standards, the objectives of ACCESS for ELLs are to monitor student progress in English language proficiency every year and to serve as just one of the many criteria that educators consider to determine whether English learners have attained an English language proficiency level that will allow them to achieve

meaningfully participate in English language classroom instruction (WIDA, 2020). It also introduces tools available to program coordinators and district administrators interested in reviewing and acting on group performance on ACCESS for ELLs. Permission was granted from WIDA's admins to use the following figure (see Appendix A).

**Figure 2**

*WIDA Domain Scores and Proficiency Level (WIDA, 2020)*



**Proficiency levels** are interpretive scores. In other words, they are based on, but separate from, scale scores. The proficiency level score describes the student's performance in terms of the six WIDA English Language Proficiency Levels:

Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Emerging	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 Reaching
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*Note.* WIDA domain scores and proficiency levels for English Learners are shown. Data adapted from *ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide for Score Reports Grades K-12*, by WIDA, 2020, Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Copyright 2020 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Adapted with permission.

Another policy implemented to support Arabic immersion programs in Illinois is the Seal of Bi-literacy. The Seal of Bi-literacy is an award given to students who demonstrate proficiency in two or more languages, including Arabic (*Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy*, n.d.). The seal

recognizes students who have achieved a prominent level of language proficiency standards and encourages them to continue their language learning. Educational leaders in Illinois have adopted the Seal of Bi-literacy policy to promote language learning and recognize students' language skills (*Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy*, n.d.). Curriculum policies are critical to ensure students receive high-quality instruction and meet the state's learning standards (*ISBE, 2019*). Illinois state laws require that all schools provide a comprehensive education to their students, including language instruction. (*ISBE, 2019*).

### ***Guidance and Resources***

ISBE provides guidance and resources to schools and educators to improve student achievement, ensuring equity and educational access for all Illinois students (*ISBE, 2019*). For a bilingual or immersion program, ISBE would likely offer oversight, support to ensure alignment with state standards, and funding or resources for implementation (*World Languages, n.d.*). The ISBE also provides guidance and resources to schools and educators to improve student achievement and ensure equity and education access for all Illinois students. In the context of an Arabic immersion program, the ISBE would likely provide oversight and support, ensure that it aligns with state standards, and provide funding or other resources to support its implementation (*World Languages, n.d.*). Educational resources and apps are also essential to support language learning. The ISBE provides guidance and resources for teachers to use in their classrooms. For example, the board has established a statewide consortium to provide digital educational resources to schools. The consortium provides access to various educational resources, including apps, videos, and lesson plans to support language learning (*ISBE, 2019*).

Immersion programs in the Mountain View Whisman School District in California have been proven beneficial in meeting the district's goal of providing quality language education to

its students (Hanover Research, 2016). The necessity of good district leadership and support is emphasized in the essay, which includes employing skilled teachers, providing adequate PD opportunities, and encouraging community engagement (Hanover Research, 2016). Teachers ultimately determine the practical application of transitional bilingual education and syllabus implementations. Thus, providing them with adequate resources and curriculum support is crucial for successful TBE program implementation (East, 2021). Furthermore, the article suggested that ongoing program evaluation be conducted to assess the effectiveness and to make necessary adjustments. Illinois educational leaders have also drafted legislation to encourage establishing Arabic immersion programs in their schools, with some schools already implementing Arabic and other global language immersion programs (ISBE, 2019). Some school districts have established language immersion programs that provide students with a comprehensive curriculum focusing on developing language proficiency in Arabic (ISBE, 2019).

Rockford Public School-District 205 is home to one of Illinois's dual language immersion programs (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). The district's website describes bilingual/immersion programs design in its school buildings and the way of managing these programs. The various bilingual programs are currently offered at RPS 205. TPI is a program that serves English Learners at all RPS 205 elementary, middle, and high schools; TBE is a top-rated program within the district and frequently has long waiting lists (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.).

TBE offers K-5 dual language programs in Arabic at Rolling Green Elementary School and Lincoln Middle School (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). The district's guidance in operating the immersion program outlines the program's objectives; instruction is provided in the student's home language to facilitate learning in English (*Bilingual &*



*Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). In kindergarten, 90 percent of instruction is in Arabic; by fifth grade, 40 percent is in Arabic (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.). The district maintains a 24-28:1 student-to-teacher ratio for grades K-5 (Rockford Public School, 2023). The district prioritizes enrollment based on sibling enrollment at the school and English and AL level; the student's home language test is part of the registration process to determine eligibility (*Bilingual & Multicultural Services – RPS-205*, n.d.).

### ***Staffing***

According to Beilstein and Withee (2021), Illinois is experiencing a significant bilingual teacher shortage, which negatively impacts the education of the state's ELs. In a 2021 survey conducted by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools, there were 2,040 unfilled positions in Illinois school districts alone, and the demand for multilingual educators continues to grow. In March 2022, the board announced a \$4 million grant to assist present teachers in obtaining the certifications needed to teach bilingual classrooms in Illinois (Beilstein & Withee, 2021). Many bilingual teachers hold a provisional Educator License with Stipulations with a Transitional Bilingual Education endorsement (ELS-TBE) (Beilstein & Withee, 2021). The grant is meant to ensure that teachers continue to be eligible for multilingual teaching positions after the 5 years have expired (Beilstein & Withee, 2021).

Kennedy (2020) highlighted the significance of education policy outlining the certification requirements and benchmarks for bilingual teachers, including program admission criteria, to eliminate potential hurdles for prospective bilingual teacher candidates. There are 456 temporary licenses for educators in bilingual settings, but these temporary licenses expire after 5 years (Taylor, 2023). Teacher and staffing shortages are felt nationwide and in Illinois (Taylor, 2023). The ISBE ensures that the schools have highly qualified bilingual educators so that

English learners have the support and critical resources to succeed (Taylor, 2023).

Educational leaders in Illinois play a crucial role in addressing the shortage of qualified Arabic bilingual teachers (Taylor, 2023). Educational leaders can provide PD opportunities for teachers to enhance their cultural awareness and support teachers in meeting Arabic-speaking students' unique linguistic and cultural needs (Taylor, 2023). The Illinois State Board of Education has established several initiatives to address the shortage of qualified bilingual teachers in the state; for example, the Illinois Seal of Bi-literacy program recognizes high school graduates who have demonstrated proficiency in English and a second language, including Arabic, and encourages students to pursue careers in bilingual education (*Illinois et al. of Biliteracy*, n.d.). Additionally, the board has partnered with higher education institutions to provide targeted support for bilingual education and teacher preparation programs (*Illinois et al. of Biliteracy*, n.d.). Kennedy (2020) examined a qualitative case study investigating how stakeholders in a Texas school system perceive, experience, and respond to a Spanish bilingual teacher shortage. The study focused on the effect of the bilingual teacher shortage on the elementary education of bilingual Latino students in Texas. The author emphasizes the importance of a concerted and well-funded effort to address the country's multilingual teacher shortage. However, studies that provide a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the Arabic bilingual teacher shortage are limited.

The next step was to find the appropriate methodology to continue this study. Qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study because it allows for the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Qualitative research can provide a unique and crucial contribution to a better understanding of organization and practice within the care disciplines and improve both services and the service user experience (Coleman, 2021).

### **Research Topic Counter Argument**

Bilingual education has been a controversial topic in the US, with some claiming that it may hinder student's ability to acquire the English language and therefore disadvantage them. However, it is essential to understand that studies by academics like Porter et al. (2015) and Hussien (1914) have demonstrated that carefully planned bilingual programs may accelerate English proficiency while preserving and honoring a student's native tongue. It is possible to make a better argument for the advantages of empowering bilingual learners in the United States by taking note of these divergent viewpoints.

### **Chapter Summary**

The literature review emphasized the recent growth of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs in the United States and the necessity of strong leadership in promoting academic success and building inclusive and equitable educational environments (Baldwin, 2021). However, the difficulties and cultural confrontations encountered by bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs underlined the need for appropriate policies and procedures to handle the Arabic population's language and cultural diversity (Dorner & Lee, 2020).

The literature on bilingual education in the US shed light on the theory of transformational leadership. It emphasized its capacity to enthuse and motivate followers to realize their full potential and work together to accomplish a shared objective, particularly in bilingual education (Brazill & Ruff, 2022). It has been demonstrated to help build quality institutions for academic institutions (Brazill & Ruff, 2022). Additionally, it has been noted that transformational leaders can encourage and inspire administrators and instructors to create policies and initiatives that improve students' learning environment (Mlinarevic et al., 2022). Other leadership theories, such as transactional leadership, can also be helpful (Meng, 2022).

Transformational leadership is just one approach to aiding bilingual Arabic learners in improving their proficiency in the language (Solsona–Puig, 2019). In-depth research on transformational and leadership theories has been done in the literature. It has been noted that transformational leadership is crucial for promoting multilingual education, advancing inclusive and equitable education, implementing plans and educational initiatives, creating a pleasant workplace culture, and enhancing the performance of bilingual instructors (Solsona–Puig, 2019). The culture of educational institutions is established and maintained by the values and ideas that such institutions support; this culture can be impacted by the ideals and principles of those institutions' leaders (Evan et al., 2019).

This research on transformational leadership in the framework of bilingual education has the potential to add to the existing body of knowledge by investigating its role in promoting multilingual education, advancing inclusive and equitable education, putting plans and educational initiatives into action, fostering a positive workplace culture, and improving bilingual teachers' performance (Liu, 2022). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide insight into how academic leaders can develop policies and practices that better support BALs and teachers in the immersion program, and whether these policies and practices could create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity in an urban school district in Illinois. Having reviewed the relevant literature and established the theoretical and contextual foundation for this study, the next chapter details the methodology employed to address the research questions. This section outlines the research design, sampling procedures, and data collection methods used to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive investigation.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

Through a qualitative case study approach, this study examined how educators' leadership impacts bilingual Arabic learners' academic achievement. The problem is that the academic success and language proficiency in Arabic of bilingual Arabic learners (BAL) in immersion programs have been limited by a lack of effective policies and practices that address the Arabic population's inclusive and equitable educational environment. The problem is further compounded by a lack of inclusive and equitable practices that value linguistic and cultural diversity and increase world language retention and enrollment (Kristin et al., 2022). The study aimed to understand policies and practices that academic leaders can implement to better support immersion programs in public schools. The study also aimed to create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity.

The study focused on students enrolled in an Arabic immersion program, teachers, and leaders at an urban school district in Illinois. The study investigated many factors that may contribute to a successful program. These factors included program design and policy, curriculums and instructions for bilingual literacy, educational apps, tutoring and intervention, assessments, and the state's standardized tests. Similar factors may influence bilingual students and their teachers in immersion classrooms. Bilingual students require specialized instruction and support to succeed academically and linguistically.

The language separation rules in two-way bilingual education (TWBE) show the philosophies of adopting two distinct monolinguals (Jungwon, 2022). Strategies used in TWBE education ignore the sociolinguistic issues encountered by bilingual and multilingual students Garcia and Lin (2017). Furthermore, an intensive focus on English language literacy resources, curriculums, and educational applications is excellent. However, it may need to pay more

attention to multilingual Arabic learners' linguistic and cultural needs. Therefore, the research topic was raised, leading to the emergence of the following questions.

Research Question 1: What best practices and policies can educational leaders in a large urban public school district in Illinois implement to support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of the bilingual Arabic educators and learners toward the immersion programs in a large urban public school district in Illinois?

These research questions sought to investigate the experiences of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs and determine the best strategies and policies that educational leaders may implement to help them develop their language skills. The study aimed to create an inclusive and fair educational environment that celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity by addressing these topics. The study design and rationale, researcher role, and study procedures were described in the following sections. Data analysis, reliability, validity, and ethical practices were also discussed. Finally, this chapter posed the core of the research methodology.

### **Research Methodology, Design, and Rationale**

Qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study because it allowed for collecting and analyzing qualitative data (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, and surveys) to comprehensively understand the topic (Busetto, 2020). Qualitative research provided insights by exploring the experiences of bilingual Arabic learners and the challenges faced by educators and leaders in immersion programs. These insights, derived from the collected data, offered valuable recommendations to educational leaders and policymakers for effectively supporting bilingual learners and educators. However, it would be challenging to gather data and dig deeper into many policies, documents, and resources associated with this program, so this was a challenging

subject for this study.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Two research tools were used to collect qualitative data. A qualitative approach, such as interviews, was used to investigate the issues that bilingual Arabic educators confront, and it clarified the role of educational leaders in developing the area of bilingual education. A qualitative questionnaire was used to gather data from bilingual learners enrolled in the immersion program (Yang, 2018). These strategies allowed for collecting rich and extensive data about bilingual Arabic learners, educators, and educational leaders' experiences, perspectives, and practices. Qualitative methods helped to identify what effective practices and resources might help bilingual Arabic learners and teachers. Drawing attention to previously overlooked factors influencing educational leaders' decisions, this research also emphasized the critical nature of qualitative research for exploring complex issues and documenting participants' varied perspectives and diverse experiences (Bradshaw et al., 2017).

## **Design**

The approach most applicable to this research topic is a case study. An intrinsic case study was conducted to deeply understand the specific case of a bilingual Arabic program, such as its implementation and outcomes. The case study approach explored the case for its unique and intrinsic value, aiming to provide insights into the program (Merriam, 2009). In this case, the specific phenomenon being studied was the role of educational leaders in empowering bilingual education in a large urban public school district in Illinois. Tomaszewski et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of evaluating various elements when choosing a research design.

Factors such as aligning identified problems, research questions, data collection, and data analysis are crucial in determining the most suitable research design. Thoughtful consideration was essential to achieve internal consistency and reach the optimal research approach. The case study delved into the unique complexities, difficulties, and opportunities in this particular setting by concentrating on a single example. A case study design also made it easier to examine actual events as they develop over time. An inquiry that can capture the dynamic and growing nature of the problem is necessary to comprehend educational leaders' experiences and decision-making processes since they are crucial in forming policies and practices relating to bilingual education (Rashid et al., 2019). The case study also enabled a multifaceted method of data gathering that incorporates many sources like questionnaires and interviews. A thorough and triangulated analysis made possible by diverse data sources produced a more comprehensive understanding of the topic under study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as a bilingual Arabic teacher in an urban school district in Illinois facilitated conducting interviews with bilingual educators and leaders in the multicultural department of the school district. A questionnaire was also administered to students from the fourth and fifth grades in bilingual Arabic classrooms to investigate the experiences of bilingual Arabic learners in the immersion program. The research focused on the broader context of bilingual education, seeking insights from various perspectives within the district leadership, teaching faculty, and students. I took several steps to mitigate bias. To prioritize the protection and confidentiality of participants, each participant was assigned a unique personal identifier, ex, participant #1 (P#1) for students and participant A (PA) for teachers and leaders, instead of using their names directly, this practice enhanced confidentiality by distancing individual identities from the data



collected. Only personal identifiers were known, ensuring that participants' responses and insights remained confidential throughout the study. Additionally, any personal identifiers were securely stored and used exclusively for data analysis. Clear guidance was given to interviewees and students, and an explanation was given that participation in the study was optional and that participants were free to decline or leave the questionnaire or to end the interview at any time with no obligations or consequences. Parents understood concrete concepts such as the freedom to withdraw, the freedom to ask questions, and the potential benefits of the research (Roth-Cline & Nelson, 2013). Parental refusals are parents who either do not return forms or state that they do not want their child to participate (Blom-Hoffman et al., 2009). The questionnaire was created impartially, with straightforward instructions and neutral language that fit the student's educational level. Lastly, adherence to all relevant legal and institutional requirements, including obtaining all necessary permits from the school's administration or pertinent ethics committees, was ensured. These authorizations guaranteed that the research complied with ethical guidelines and safeguards. Researchers can understand human behavior and social action by knowing the setting in which the data concerning social action occurs (Kathy, 2019). Although bias is an issue in qualitative research, it is essential to keep participant bias in mind, as Gelling (2003) noted. Qualitative researchers need to describe relevant aspects of self, including any biases, assumptions, expectations, and experiences, to qualify his or her research ability (Greenbank, 2003).

The research protocol thoroughly identified any conceivable risks to participants, whether they pertain to emotional well-being, privacy concerns, or any other study aspects. Subsequently, the study outlined and implemented specific supports tailored to each identified risk. These supports encompassed emotional support mechanisms, confidentiality measures, or the provision

of additional resources to assist participants in navigating and mitigating any challenges they may encounter during the research process (American Psychological Association, 2004). The protocol expounded on how these supports were effectively communicated and provided to participants, ensuring a comprehensive and participant-centered approach to addressing potential risks.

### **Research Procedures**

Deciding on data collection methods is crucial for ensuring alignment with research objectives when qualitative methods are selected over quantitative approaches (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Timeline, participant access, required approvals, prior study on the subject, and data analysis restrictions were some factors to consider. Before initiating a questionnaire, procedures were taken to guarantee that all Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards were met. Following ethical guidelines was critical to safeguarding the safety of study subjects. Choosing who participated in the study, determining how the study was carried out, ensuring participants' moral rights were respected throughout the study, and establishing the validity of the data gathering and analysis processes were vital steps to adhere to the IRB's research requirements. The selection of the sample was conducted to ensure it was representative of the population being studied, further enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

### **Population and Sample Selection**

The sampling design for adult participants involved selecting bilingual educators and school district leaders currently working in the immersion program in Illinois for at least 3 years. Three of the school district's leaders and two bilingual educators who serve bilingual Arabic learners in the immersion program were interviewed. The research was centered on a broader population of approximately 200 bilingual learners from kindergarten to fifth grade. However,

among these students, parents of approximately 55 students in the fourth and fifth grades received the recruitment email (see Appendix B) and informed consent, in both English and Arabic language, in a sealed envelope for parental consent (see Appendix C). For the research questionnaire, only a subset of 20 students were selected to participate in the study. The study focused on their perspectives on the immersion program. The criteria for students' participation in the study, a key element ensuring the research's comprehensiveness and lack of bias, included being a bilingual Arabic learner in an immersion program, enrollment in this program for at least 3 years, and having the consent of a parent or guardian to participate in the study.

The research site for this study is an urban school district in Illinois. The school district offers an immersion Arabic program for bilingual Arabic learners. The district was chosen for its diversity of languages, cultures, and experiences of bilingual learners. A permission letter was prepared to communicate with the officials (see Appendix D). The email was sent to the school district's Superintendent for approval to conduct the study and collect the research data from the district leaders, bilingual teachers, and bilingual students in the district's immersion program. The Superintendent welcomed the research idea and granted permission to start the research (see Appendix D). After obtaining the IRB approval and forwarding it to school district officials, the final official approval was obtained for authorization to proceed with the research at the chosen site (see Appendix D).

The teachers and leaders received a recruitment email with informed consent (see Appendix E). The email asked the participants to sign the informed consent, send it back by email, and schedule a convenient time and location for the interview (see Appendix E). To obtain parental approval, an informed consent containing demographic pre-screening questions was sent home in a sealed envelope for completion before the students completed the questionnaire (see

Appendix C). The parental guardians were asked to sign and return the consent with their children in a secure drop-off location. The student could only be part of this study with the parent's permission. Parents were welcome to ask any additional questions to clarify the purpose of the study and their children's role as research participants.

More than 20 assent forms were received from approximately 55 fourth and fifth-grade students, and the participant selection followed a systematic approach. The selection process considered predetermined inclusion criteria (see Appendix C), ensuring that participants meet the requirements outlined in the demographic pre-screening questions. In the study, since there were more than 20 assent forms; a stratified sampling method was employed to maintain a representative sample while adhering to the study's eligibility criteria. The stratified sampling approach ensured fairness and diversity among the selected participants.

### **Data Instruments**

In this study, a questionnaire was administered, and interviews were conducted within an urban school district in Illinois to collect the research data. These research tools ensured a more accurate sample, allowing the collection of targeted results and the capacity to draw inferences and make meaningful judgments to collect qualitative data (Davis, 2019). The questions have never been utilized before; questions were created for this study to meet the goals and research setting. The questionnaire and interview questions have been carefully crafted, relying on a thorough analysis of the body of research on language acquisition, educational leadership, and bilingual education. The research questions have never been utilized before, and they were created for this study to meet the goals and research setting. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) were consulted to increase the reliability and validity of the research. SME's feedback was used to refine the questions, ensuring they were clear, comprehensive, and effective for the research.

Ensuring the content validity of this research instrument, in this case, the questionnaire and the interview questions is crucial to guarantee comprehensive coverage of the topic and constructs central to this study.

The development of the questionnaire and interview items was a deliberate process, informed by an extensive review of the existing literature on language acquisition, educational leadership, and bilingual education. The thorough analysis shaped the questionnaire and played a vital role in aligning it with the relevant facets of our research. Additionally, instrument validation was sought through the valuable input of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), whose feedback was integral in refining the questionnaire. SMEs' contributions significantly enhanced the instrument's clarity, comprehensiveness, and overall effectiveness, ensuring it effectively serves its intended research purpose.

### **Questionnaire**

The total population for this study was around 200 bilingual Arabic learners enrolled in the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program in an urban school district in Illinois. The sample size was 20 students from approximately 55 fourth and fifth-grade students. The questionnaire was a helpful data collection instrument for gathering data from a large sample of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs (Oliveira et al., 2023). The students' questionnaire included closed-ended and open-ended questions and the estimated time for completing the questionnaire was 10-15 minutes. Using this type of questionnaire, organized data can be collected, standardized data and participants' more in-depth, subjective responses, giving them a thorough grasp of the research topic (Kelley et al., 2003). Parents must answer the four demographic screening questions, which are impeded in the informed consent before the students take the questionnaire. These questions are: What is your son/daughter's first language?

In which grade level is your son/daughter studying? How long have your son/daughter been enrolled in the Arabic immersion/bilingual program? (see Appendix C). Parents' responses to the demographic screening questions helped focus on the purposive selection. Students' names did not appear on the questionnaire platform to ensure the participant's privacy and confidentiality. Additionally, the questionnaire length and subject matter were addressed to ensure the questions were clear, concise, and appropriate for the target population. Considering the questionnaire's length was crucial as it can affect the response rate, and the quality of responses obtained. Therefore, a 15-question questionnaire could capture all the information needed to achieve the research objectives.

The questionnaire was in both Arabic and English to accommodate the language preferences of the participants (see Appendix F). A rough estimate was that a fifteen-question questionnaire for fourth- and fifth-grade students could take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. There are no rewards or pressures to respond in a certain way. Any other ethical concerns during the study were addressed. The questionnaire provided insight into the challenges and successes these students have. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) highlighted the role of questionnaires as a valuable tool in gathering data from a large sample of participants, mainly when interested in exploring attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. To ensure a streamlined process for data collection. The Google Classroom platform serves as the primary avenue for students to engage with educational materials, and they access it through their school district email addresses, commencing with their unique student ID numbers. Students can access their Google Classroom platform using their Chromebooks or their own devices at home. Maintaining confidentiality, the questionnaire was seamlessly integrated into students' Google Classroom experience and presented as a secure link for easy access with responses accessible only to authorized personnel, guaranteeing the highest

level of privacy, and safeguarding their individual information throughout the research process.

In alignment with minimizing the number of people involved in the study, parents were asked to assist in administering the questionnaire, which could involve parents supervising their child's questionnaire completion at home or in a controlled environment determined by the parents. Students at these grade levels, fourth and fifth, are tech-savvy and well-acquainted with their educational platform, specifically Google Classroom. Students are proficient in utilizing technology and can independently complete the questionnaire without requiring assistance from adults. However, parental guidance was through the contact methods included in the informed consent or a designated point of contact in case they have questions or concerns. Providing clear instructions helped parents to guide their children through the questionnaire, offered guidance on any technical aspects, and emphasized the importance of allowing their child to express their views independently.

### **Interview Protocol**

According to Creswell (2018), interviews are a standard data collection method in qualitative research because they explore the participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. Two educational leaders and two bilingual teachers were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two educational leaders and two bilingual educators in an urban school district in Illinois who are actively engaged in a bilingual immersion program tailored for Arabic learners (see Appendix E). The questions were created with an extensive level of expertise in bilingual education in mind, considering the particular goals of the research as well as the particular circumstances of the study. Rather than being lifted verbatim from previous research, questions were meticulously customized to consider the variety and complexity of the study setting. A copy of the interview questions was provided to the participants before the time

of the interview (see Appendix G) to delve more profoundly into the policies and practices associated with the language development and academic achievements of bilingual Arabic learners and to allow them to review and understand the topic of this research. Interviews were Audio-recorded using the Zoom platform for virtual meetings. The recorded interviews were transcribed for analysis. The interviewers who established a relatively good rapport with their interviewees tended to ask more open-ended questions regarding the events (Lee & Kim, 2021). Semi-structured interviews took approximately 40 minutes. However, it was essential to be flexible with the time limit.

### **Field Testing Process**

According to Elangovan and Sundarvel (2022), conducting a field-testing process using subject matter experts' (SME) feedback is essential to ensure the transparency and relevance of the questionnaire and its suitability for the target population. The focus of the SMEs was to evaluate the questionnaire's clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the student's grade level and cultural background. SMEs' feedback helped identify ambiguous or confusing questions requiring rephrasing or additional explanations.

SMEs were considered for the validation of this study's research instruments. Individuals possessed experience and knowledge in the bilingual education domain related to the research topic. These individuals included bilingual schools' principals, assistant principals, or researchers with a proven record of accomplishment in the relevant field. SMEs' qualifications are assessed through educational background, professional achievements, and contributions to the subject area. An email was sent to three experts. Then, feedback from SMEs was considered to improve the interview and questionnaire questions. Based on the SME's feedback, necessary adjustments were made to the questions (see Appendix H). Emails were sent to three SMEs: a private



bilingual school principal, a public-school assistant principal, and a teacher who served in a bilingual classroom for 13 years. SMEs' feedback was helpful to the study, and all points were considered to improve the interview questionnaire and the interview questions. Emails that contain the experts' comments (see Appendix H).

Working collaboratively with these SMEs proved to be very beneficial to the research. SMEs' feedback was crucial in creating and improving the interview questions and questionnaire. Because of the SMEs' efforts, the interview and questionnaire questions were not only pertinent to the subject matter of the study but also precisely tailored to meet the changing demands of the participants.

### **Data Collection**

The study commenced upon obtaining IRB approval. All ethical considerations were addressed. The process included communicating with the school district officials to get the site approval, followed by dispatching emails including research project-adult informed consent to engage teachers and educational leaders in the research. Parents/guardians recruitment letters with the informed consent were sent home with all fourth and fifth-grade students in a sealed envelope. Adult participants, including teachers and district leaders, submitted the signed consent form as an email attachment to ensure participants' privacy. Acknowledging potential technological barriers some parents may face; parents received a printed copy in a sealed envelope. Parents could return the consent form with their children in a sealed envelope. The research project was committed to ensuring the confidentiality of participant information. Participants' privacy was maintained through coding responses and removing personally identifiable information. The project did not collect identifying information of individuals (e.g., name, address, email address, etc.), and participants' responses were not linked to their

identities; case study numbers like P#1, P#2, etc., were given.

The first qualitative data collection tool is the interview. Emails were sent to the participants. The email began with an invitation to participate in this study, explaining the interview's purpose and assuring the participant's confidentiality. Leaders and teachers signed the informed consent and attached it to the invitation email. Scheduling was considered in advance to ensure mutual convenience. The method of recording interviews was determined based on the participants' preferences and the logistical arrangements for each meeting. The interview for the research study required approximately 40 minutes to complete. For virtual interviews conducted through the Zoom platform, the conversation was recorded through Zoom's built-in recording feature. Worthwhile to mention that the recording only proceeded with explicit approval from the interviewee. The process ensured flexibility in adapting to various interview formats while maintaining consistency in obtaining consent for recording in compliance with ethical guidelines. Participants were notified in advance that their sessions were recorded, and they had the right to leave the session if they decided. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim.

Recording the interview and taking notes was crucial to capture critical information and insights. Being respectful, ethical, and professional throughout the interview was essential. Teachers involved in the research must be treated respectfully and without harm (Office for Human Research Protections, 2022). All interview transcripts, audio recordings, and notes were safely saved on a password-protected device that was difficult to access. If required for auditing or review purposes, individuals from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may be granted access to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines.

The second qualitative data collection tool was the questionnaire design. The targeted student population in this study is around 200 bilingual Arabic learners, and only fourth- and

fifth-grade students, around 55 students, received the recruitment letter and consent form in a sealed envelope to go home for their parent's consent (see Appendix B & C). Only 20 students were the research sample size for this study to complete the questionnaire. The number of received assent forms surpassed 20 among the roughly 55 fourth and fifth-grade students; a systematic approach was employed for participant selection. The process considered pre-established inclusion criteria (see Appendix C), ensuring participants satisfied the requirements outlined in the demographic pre-screening questions. In cases with more than 20 responses, a random and stratified sampling method was utilized to maintain a representative sample while adhering to the study's eligibility criteria. stratified sampling approach was essential to ensure participants aligned with the study's goals.

Regardless of the parents' response, all fourth and fifth-grade bilingual students were encouraged to return the informed consent. A secure and confidential process was maintained for students to return their informed consent forms without breaching their identity. The informed consent drop-off process was carefully designed to prioritize the safety and privacy of participating students (see Appendix I). Consent forms, including parental signatures, were returned to locked boxes within the fourth and fifth-grade classrooms on specific days, Monday, and Tuesday for fourth grade, Wednesday, and Thursday for fifth grade, from 8:00 am to 11:00 am. The locked box is equipped with a secure mechanism to prevent unauthorized access. To further ensure confidentiality, all documents must be sealed in envelopes. The locked boxes were strategically placed in safe and controlled environments within the classroom, minimizing the risk of tampering or theft. The designated time frame for drop-offs (8:00 am - 11:00 am) added a layer of protection, limiting exposure to potential breaches. Notably, the procedure was inclusive, accommodating both participants who accepted and those who declined the research

invitation, with all students encouraged to drop off their forms. The comprehensive process safeguards participants identified throughout the consent collection phase.

Parents can expect to receive regular updates, guiding instructions, and any necessary information about the research study. Parents and their kids who consent to participate understand the tasks they are being requested to undertake. Furthermore, parents and their children were well-informed about the appropriate contact for obtaining information or assistance in case of any concerns or issues arising during the research process. This approach aimed to streamline the consent process and maintain transparency while providing a channel for parents to seek clarification or address concerns regarding their child's participation. Communication with parents helped in seeking their children's verbal or written consent to confirm that the student made the decision to participate without coercion (see Appendix C).

The consent form included the purpose of the study, the benefits of students' participation in this study, and the process of completing the questionnaire, which respects the student's privacy and confidentiality on a secure online questionnaire platform. The questionnaire link was shared with students via Google Classroom, which is associated with the student's school district email address. The responses were recorded in a secure database on the online questionnaire platform. As students were accustomed to participating in surveys and questionnaires distributed by the school district, parents were informed that their children could complete the questionnaire at home.

Parents reported that the questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete, and their kids did not need help logging in and completing it. Emphasizing the increased safety and privacy in having parents involved, the approach is deemed more secure for protecting the students' identities than involving school staff in this stage. The qualitative study commenced in

mid-January 2024, with a projected completion by April of the same year. The data collection process is meticulously structured within a phased timeframe. Initially, two to three weeks were designated for distributing and collecting informed consent forms from parents, teachers, and leaders. Subsequently, two to four weeks were allocated for students to complete the questionnaires. At the same time, interviews with teachers and leaders are scheduled over four to six weeks. Following the conclusion of data collection, an approximate period of six to eight weeks was earmarked for data analysis, encompassing transcription, coding, and interpretation. Additionally, two to three weeks were set aside to finalize the study, prepare the report, and address any supplementary analysis or discussions. These outlined timeframes serve as general estimates, offering a structured and adaptable framework for the research process and accommodating unforeseen delays or additional considerations that may arise during the study.

### **Data Preparation**

After the initial verification for mistakes and inconsistencies, the interview transcripts underwent a meticulous cleaning and organizational process. The process involved a systematic review to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data. To further enhance transparency, a copy of the interview transcript was sent back to the respective interviewees for their review, allowing them to verify the content and offer corrections or clarifications. Interview data was thoroughly verified for mistakes and inconsistencies before being cleaned and organized. A copy of the interview transcript was returned to the interviewee for accuracy. Personal identifiers or names were removed from the data, and each participant was only recognized by a unique code to ensure confidentiality. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorize qualitative data from interviews. The data were retained according to institutional guidelines and will securely be disposed of after the required retention period.

### **Data Analysis**

The study used thematic analysis methods to analyze the answers to the questionnaire and in-person interviews. Thematic analysis is a standard research method that allows researchers to analyze information through coding (Lodico et al., 2010). The selected transcribing technique, which is the audio recording on the Zoom platform, entailed verbatim transcription, in which each word and statement is recorded, or it can take a more targeted approach that extracts only the most essential details, leaving out non-verbal cues like pauses and filler phrases. The questionnaire's answers and interview transcripts were reviewed carefully to familiarize myself with the data. Data analysis involves assigning descriptive codes to segments that reflect various thoughts or concepts after reading the data line by line and creating themes by looking for patterns and trends in the codes (Kathy, 2019). Coding involves identifying and classifying the data segments according to specific categories and subcategories, sorting each category's similar responses to create initial themes. Initial themes or patterns were created within each category by grouping comparable responses and data segments. These preliminary themes provided an organized framework for comprehending the data in the data analysis process.

Researchers can start identifying patterns, recurrent ideas, and similarities in the data by grouping replies and data into themes (Mishra & Dey, 2022). The topics, in light of the study's purpose and questions, were examined, and each theme was considered to play a role in comprehending the study issue as a whole. The study's underlying themes and connections are discovered via a thorough examination, which adds to a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem. Utilizing qualitative research techniques and software, this study allowed for a thorough examination of the data and the detection of recurrent themes and patterns. A coding framework was developed, this framework comprised predetermined

categories and subcategories that align with the research objectives. Having a clear and well-defined coding structure from the outset was crucial. The initial coding round involved sorting and classifying data segments into established categories and subcategories. Each data segment was assigned to the most relevant category based on its content. Similar responses and data segments were grouped within each category, forming initial themes. Coding steps were essential for structuring the data and identifying broad patterns and trends (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

A comprehensive representation of the study's topic was made possible through the interpretation and synthesis of the data, facilitating the derivation of insightful conclusions. Data analysis was meticulously conducted to demonstrate internal consistency (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The data was safeguarded with password protection using the software platform's security features. The three-year data retention period adheres to institutional policies and regulations, ensuring that the data will be accessible for future audits, additional analysis, and follow-up research. Only authorized individuals, like the research committee member and chair, will have access to the data. Permissions and stringent security measures will be implemented to regulate and oversee data access, underscoring the ethical considerations of this research.

The thematic analysis findings were discussed in the data analysis and results section. Themes with corresponding codes were presented in a figure to illustrate the participants' viewpoints and experiences. The other figure included the students' questionnaire responses and focused on the factors that influence Arabic learners' Academic achievement. The findings were also discussed in the discussion section to explain how they relate to the guiding research questions. It is essential to present a clear and convincing narrative to the audience (Im et al., 2023).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability, credibility, dependability, and transferability underpin qualitative research methodologies' robustness and validity. In the context of this study, which sought to explore the experiences and challenges of bilingual Arabic learners and educators in an immersion program while also considering the role of district leaders in enhancing bilingual education in the USA, these principles take on significant importance. Ensuring these qualities in the research process allows for more accurate and meaningful interpretations of the data, ultimately contributing to the advancement of effective bilingual education strategies.

### **Reliability and Credibility**

A research endeavor's integrity is determined by its reliability and credibility. In general, establishing reliability involves ensuring the findings are repeatable in different situations and by different researchers (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021). Considering how the research methodology and data collection procedures can be systematically applied to produce consistent results is crucial. Given that this study delved into the experiences of bilingual Arabic learners and educators, meticulous attention was paid to the clarity of questions and instructions during interviews and data coding. Commitment to transparency in reporting the study's design modifications and any potential bias enhanced credibility. By adhering to systematic data collection techniques and methods, the study demonstrated reliability and strengthened the trustworthiness of its findings.

### **Dependability**

In qualitative research, dependability refers to the consistency and stability of findings over time (Im et al., 2023). Maintaining a well-documented research process, including detailed descriptions of data collection, coding, and analytical procedures, ensured that dependability is maintained in the current study. Transparency allowed for the traceability of decisions made at various stages of the research, establishing a solid foundation for the research's dependability.



Furthermore, the careful recording of reflexive notes and insights about participant interaction contributed to the dependability of the findings, offering insights into the potential impact of its role on the data collection process.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applicable and relevant in other contexts or settings (Johnson et al., 2020). Given that the study focuses on bilingual Arabic learners and educators in the immersion program, the transferability of findings depends on the contextual similarities between the study setting and other educational contexts. Furthermore, detailed descriptions of the study's methodology and context allow for a nuanced understanding of how the findings can be adapted to other settings. The research setting, participant characteristics, and broader sociocultural context were described concisely and comprehensively to enhance transferability, enabling other researchers to assess the applicability of the findings to their contexts. In summary, the principles of reliability, credibility, dependability, and transferability were integral to the qualitative research design proposed for this study. By ensuring a systematic and transparent approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting, the study's validity, and applicability of its findings within bilingual education added to the knowledge base in this area.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Communication with the research participants began once the IRB reviewed and approved the study's topic and methodology. The primary ethical considerations in this investigation are informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. Each of these principles is addressed to ensure their full compliance. Participants' consent forms were sent right after the IRB approval to collect the participants' approval. Informed consent concentrates on the

participant's freedom by safeguarding the participant's determination and rights about an investigation (Cohen et al., 2002). In the context of the research topic, which focuses on empowering bilingual Arabic learners, identifying the experiences and challenges of bilingual learners and educators in an immersion program, and exploring the role of district leaders in enhancing bilingual education in the US, the three ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report have distinct connections.

### **Respect for Personal**

The principle of respect for persons is aligned with considering the autonomy and rights of the participants involved in this research. Bilingual learners, educators, and district leaders were treated as autonomous agents capable of making informed decisions about their participation. Given the potential diversity in language proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and educational roles, it was crucial to acknowledge their perspectives and ensure they understood the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. The principle mandated obtaining informed consent from participants, respecting their choices, and safeguarding the rights of those who may have diminished autonomy due to several factors, such as power differentials (Office for Human Research Protections, 2022). Additionally, measures were taken to provide clear information to all participants, ensuring they could fully engage with the research process.

### **Beneficence**

The principle of beneficence emphasizes the obligation to promote well-being, minimize harm, and maximize benefits for participants (Office for Human Research Protections, 2022). Bilingual learners and educators in the immersion program may gain insights from the research findings that could positively impact their experiences and practices. Furthermore, the research can enhance the educational environment by identifying challenges and potential improvements

in the bilingual education program. Balancing potential benefits against any risks or discomfort experienced by participants was essential, especially given the sensitivity of the explored topics (Office for Human Research Protections, 2022).

### **Justice**

The principle of justice centered on a fair distribution of research benefits and burdens. In this study, justice regarding equitable representation and of diverse participants was relevant. Bilingual learners, educators, and district leaders from divergent backgrounds had equal opportunities to participate and contribute to the research. Ensuring that research outcomes are beneficial not only to specific participants but also to the broader community of bilingual education advocates aligned with the principle of justice. The research can help address potential injustices, such as disparities in educational resources or experiences of bilingual learners and contribute to more just practice (Office for Human Research Protections, 2022).

By incorporating these three ethical principles, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, into this study design, data collection, and participant interactions, the study is aligning with the guidelines set forth by the Belmont Report to ensure the ethical conduct of qualitative research in the field of bilingual education. These ethical considerations were addressed by encouraging the students' parents and guardians to sign consent forms that allow their children to participate in the study. Concerning privacy and confidentiality, these ethical considerations focused on how handling sensitive information was critical. In this study, the student's information and responses are saved with caution to protect sensitive information such as the students' names and individual learning challenges. Students' answers remained confidential to respect differing perspectives, and the effects of including or excluding opposing viewpoints were considered. These ethical considerations were crucial in school research to ensure students

understand the purpose of the study, the need for their participation, and the investigation outcomes (Larsson et al., 2021). Involving colleagues and leaders in the research design and decision-making process can foster transparency, minimize bias, and share responsibility for the ethical considerations of the study. Transparency was ensured by maintaining open lines of communication between adult participants like teachers and administrators in the program, and any information they gave remained private before and after the interview. A transparent result was shared. It is essential to ensure that all these documents comply with the IRB's guidelines and ethical principles to protect the rights and welfare of research participants. Protocols for data retention and destruction were established. After 3 years, when data is no longer needed, it will be securely disposed of and ensured that it cannot be recovered.

### **Chapter Summary**

The methodology chapter outlined the research technique employed to investigate how bilingual educators' leadership influences the academic progress of Arabic learners in immersion programs. Qualitative research is regarded as relevant to providing insight into the experiences of bilingual Arabic learners and the difficulties educators in immersion programs confront. The case study research approach was chosen to elucidate the distinct phenomena of educational leaders' contributions to bilingual education in a rural school district (Merriam, 2009).

In addition to outlining the duties involved in facilitating data collecting, assuring ethical concerns, and maintaining a disciplined approach to data analysis (Cohen et al., 2002). The demography and sample selection were also covered in this chapter, emphasizing bilingual Arabic students, teachers, and educational leaders in an urban school district in Illinois. It is crucial to ensure the questions are transparent and pertinent, and validating the instrument through experts' feedback was crucial. Finally, the chapter presented by emphasizing the

significance of data collection in qualitative research and the use of multiple data sources to enhance the depth and comprehensiveness of the study (Rivaz, 2019). The foundation for this research's conclusion, as well as the presentation and analysis of the data collected, was laid forth in the methodology chapter. The following chapter presents the results, offering insights into the carefully stated research questions and objectives.

#### **Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results**

Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, this study intended to gather more information about the immersion program in an urban school district in Illinois and analyze the role of leadership of educators in bilingual Arabic learners' academic accomplishments. According to Gracia (2022), Arabic is the foreign language studied in American colleges and universities at the quickest growth rate. There are numerous obstacles bilingual Arabic teachers and bilingual Arabic learners (BALs) face, and the demand for solid educational leaders is more significant than ever. Chin (2015) found that teaching students their native language could improve their competency.

The problem is that the academic success and language proficiency in Arabic of bilingual Arabic learners (BAL) in immersion programs have been limited by a lack of effective policies and practices that address the Arabic population's inclusive and equitable educational environment. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide insight into how academic leaders can develop policies and practices that better support BALs and teachers in the immersion program, and whether these policies and practices could create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity in an urban school district in Illinois. The upcoming chapter will cover several key sections: data collection, data preparation, data analysis and result, and reliability and validity. To make a connection between all research elements, the problem, and the purpose of the study, the study must answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What best practices and policies can educational leaders in a large urban public school district in Illinois implement to support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of the bilingual Arabic educators and learners toward the immersion programs in a large urban public school district in Illinois?

### **Site Approval**

Several school districts were carefully researched, focusing on those that offered bilingual/immersion education programs that catered to Arabic learners in the United States. After conducting an in-depth evaluation, the Illinois Board of Education acknowledged that an urban school district is an excellent organization with an excellent reputation in bilingual and multicultural education. Sharing the formal IRB permission letter with the school district was the next step after obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Documentation from both the school district and IRB, included in Appendix D, was essential to start the research.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process for the study involved multiple participants, including 20 students from bilingual Arabic classrooms in an elementary public school, two bilingual Arabic teachers, and three educational leaders. The first instrument, a questionnaire, was given to the bilingual Arabic students. It allowed for structured responses and offered qualitative perspectives.

### **Demographic**

The targeted student population in the study is around 200 bilingual Arabic learners enrolled in the immersion program. Only fourth and fifth-grade students and 55 student parents received the recruitment letter and informed consent form (see Appendix C). Among 34 students eligible for participation based on the research participation criteria, the questionnaire link was shared with 20 random students to complete the research questionnaire. The standard for participation in the study includes being a bilingual Arabic learner in an immersion program

from fourth and fifth grades, enrollment in the program for at least 3 years, and having a parent or guardian consent to participate. Table 1 presents each participant's background data.

**Table 1**

*Participated students' Background Data*

Student by #	Grade Level	Home Language	Years of Enrollment	Obtained Consent Y/N
S#1	5	Arabic	6	Y
S#2	5	Arabic & English	6	Y
S#3	5	Arabic	6	Y
S#4	5	Arabic	5	Y
S#5	5	Arabic & English	5	Y
S#6	5	Arabic	5	Y
S#7	5	Arabic	5	Y
S#8	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#9	4	Arabic & English	5	Y
S#10	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#11	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#12	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#13	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#14	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#15	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#16	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#17	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#18	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#19	4	Arabic	5	Y
S#20	4	Arabic	3	Y

Table 2 summarizes the students' background data, including the inclusion criteria overview. Data presented in table 2 provides a snapshot of the demographics and the students' participation rate. Table 2 ensures a clear understanding of the participant selection process and the foundational context for interpreting the study's findings.



**Table 2***Summary of Participated students' Background Result*

Participation Criteria	Total
Home Language	15% Arabic & English 85 % Arabic only
Years of Enrollment	15% enrolled for 6 years 80% enrolled for 5 years 5% for enrolled for 3 years
Participation Rate	35% fifth Grade, 65% fourth Grade

Leaders, administrators, and educators from an urban school district in Illinois participated in this research. Participants are actively engaged in the bilingual/immersion program. Their participation enriched the study by sharing their practical experiences in managing these programs. Table 3 provides an overview of the participants' roles with the Bilingual Arabic Learners. Table 3 provides an overview of the participants' roles with the Bilingual Arabic Learners (BALs) and their involvement in immersion/bilingual programs.

**Table 3***Adult Participants' Demographic Information*

Participant	Position	Educational Level	Serving in the District
P#1	Bilingual Teacher	Master's	≥ 4
P#2	Bilingual Teacher	Master's	≥ 4
P#3	School Principal	Master's	≥ 4
P#4	Bilingual & Multicultural Edu. Leader	Doctorate	≥ 4
P#5	District Leader	Doctorate	≥ 4

**Interview Data Collection**

Emails containing the informed consent form were dispatched to two bilingual teachers and three educational leaders. The participants signed and attached the form to their responses by

email (see Appendix E). Interviews were scheduled separately and took place via Zoom Conference Platform. Interview Zoom meeting links for participant interviews were shared with the participants, and permission was given to record each interviewee's interview meetings. The criteria for choosing the research participants and conducting interviews were meticulously established to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the data collected. All interviews were conducted during February 2024. Zoom recordings were saved on a password-protected computer in a locked room. Notes were also taken during 65 interviews for additional pertinent information keywords (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The interviewees' experiences provided valuable insights (Sargeant, 2012).

### **Informed Consent**

The invitation email in English and Arabic was meticulously sent to parents' private emails (see Appendix B). Informed consent was diligently sought from the participant's parents (see Appendix C). The research consent approval form was carefully sent home with 55 students in a sealed envelope, ensuring that parents were well-informed and provided their consent for their children's participation (see Appendix C). The collection of consent forms proceeded with utmost precision according to the established plan (see Appendix I), with the sealed envelopes being deposited securely in a designated drop box within the specified area at the scheduled time. Collecting forms took four days; forty-one forms were found in the box. Only 34 students were eligible for participation based on the research participation criteria. Therefore, a random sampling method was employed to maintain a representative sample of 20 students while adhering to the study's eligibility criteria. Random sampling approach ensured fairness and diversity among the selected participants. Subsequently, the collected forms underwent thorough review and verification processes with the research committee chair to maintain accuracy and

reliability throughout the study. All signed forms are kept in a folder for the study's record. See Appendix I for more details about the student questionnaire's protocol and directions for consent drop-off.

### **Administering Questionnaire**

The questionnaire process, involving the careful participation of 20 students, was designed with strict confidentiality measures. The questionnaire did not require the student's names, and their responses will not be associated with identifying information. Using identifiers rather than names was crucial in ensuring the privacy of the participants and encouraging honest responses. The questionnaire protocol and ethical considerations in administering the questionnaire were followed (see Appendix F).

A new Google Classroom class was created for questionnaires, and the class code was shared with the 20 students (see Appendix F). Data collection sessions were conducted in a controlled environment, primarily in the students' houses, to maintain consistency and conducive conditions for accurate responses. Stringent privacy measures were in place to ensure that only the necessary data was collected and that the students' identities were protected.

The initial step was to provide clear instructions to parents, ensuring that students were prepared to begin the questionnaire. Extensive communication was conducted with parents to ensure their children completed the questionnaire in a controlled and conducive environment at home. Parents were briefed on assisting their children and ensuring a smooth process. The coordination effort spanned four days and the most concern was to confirm that the student made the decision to participate, and without coercion. Some parents reported that their children completed the questionnaire in 10-15 minutes, and 20 responses were completed in three days. The questionnaire link was securely stored in a private Google Drive for subsequent data

analysis, and Google Classroom was archived after downloading the questionnaire responses (see Appendix F). The response rate was commendable, with 100% student participation and valuable insights provided.

The only change was to use the Google Form CSV file and diagrams embedded in the responses sheet. The research plan was to analyze the questionnaire data using SPSS software. However, Using SPSS software was unnecessary as the data were generated from the Google Form. No significant or unusual events or circumstances were encountered during the data collection.

### **Questionnaire Data Preparation**

The data from the student questionnaire responses was meticulously prepared for systematic analysis. Initially, responses were collected through Google Forms and exported into an Excel spreadsheet format to serve as the primary dataset. The dataset underwent rigorous cleaning to address inconsistencies, errors, or missing values. Data preparation included correcting spelling discrepancies and handling missing data through imputation or exclusion. Variables were identified and labeled according to type, and data transformation was performed as necessary to facilitate analysis. Open-ended responses were coded using a predefined scheme to categorize them into meaningful themes. A thorough verification process was conducted to ensure data accuracy and integrity. The cleaned and transformed dataset was organized in a structured format with clear documentation of the preparation process. This step was essential for structuring the data and identifying broad patterns and trends (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Finally, the prepared dataset was securely saved for analysis, with the exported Excel spreadsheet as a reference for transparency and reproducibility in the discussion of findings. The systematic approach confirmed that the data was reliable and ready for subsequent in-depth qualitative and

quantitative analysis.

### **Interview Data Preparation**

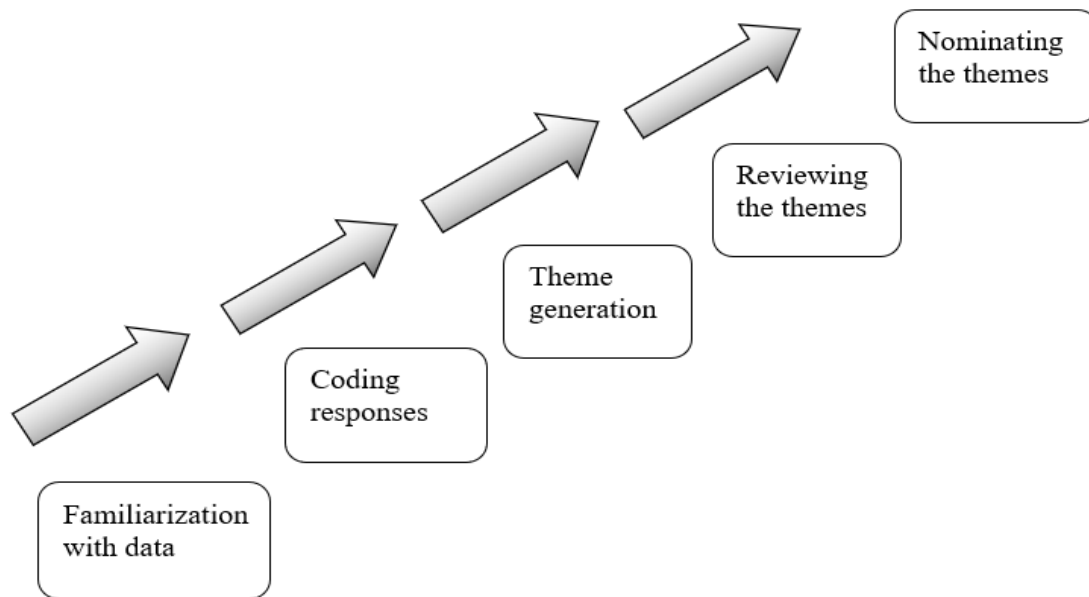
Transcribing a data set can feel overwhelming, and it may be tempting (Lester et al., 2020). The recorded interviews lasted about 40-50 minutes. The Otter Audio recordings app was used to generate the interview transcripts. After reviewing the transcripts, they were returned to participants for a review of accuracy and completeness. Once participants had indicated that these transcripts captured what they wanted to say about the experience, they were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Each transcript was linked to the respective participant's unique identifier, ex, P#1, P#2, to maintain data integrity. To protect the privacy and identity of the participants, all names and any potentially identifiable information were anonymized during the transcription process.

The first step in preparing interview data was sorting and grouping codes after familiarizing myself with the interviewee's responses; grouping similar codes, which helps identify broader themes; arranging sticky notes or written codes in a way that reflects the relationships between them; review the grouped codes and refine them; combine and split codes to create meaningful and distinct categories; and rename the codes to represent the content they encompass accurately. The process of identifying codes in qualitative data involved identifying themes across data by reading and re-reading (and re-reading) interview transcripts until there was a clear idea about what sorts of themes came up across the interviews. Coding helps to achieve the goal of data management and data reduction (Palys & Atchison, 2014). The next step was to apply codes to the entire dataset to generate a theme that describes each code by going through participants' responses and applying the relevant code. Nominating the themes is the last step in the data preparation process. Vaismoradi et al. (2016) steps were used to accomplish a

thorough analysis of data (see Figure 3).

### Figure 3

#### *Thematic Data Analysis Process*

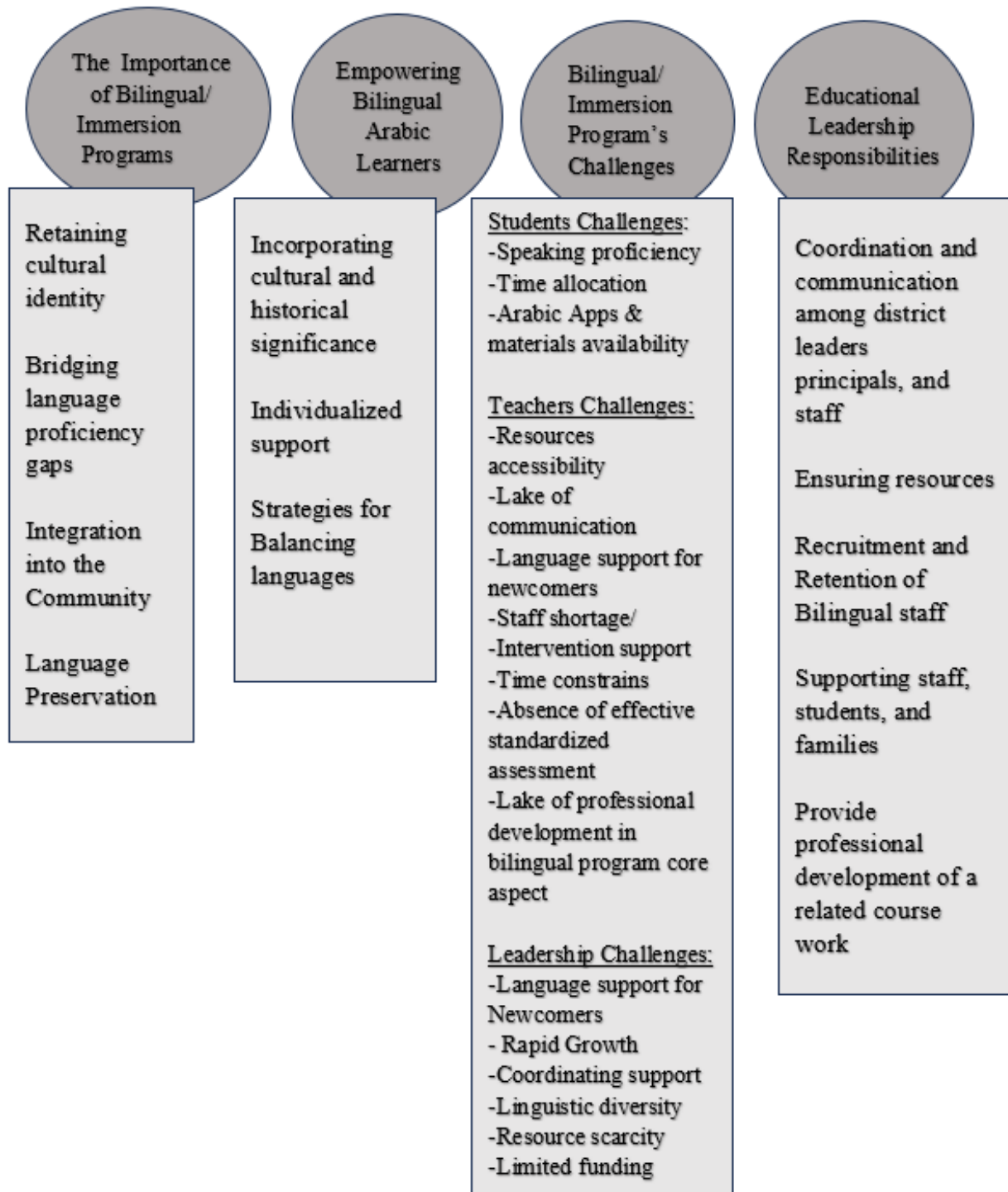



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*Note: Theme Objective and Outcome Aspirations*

### **Data Analysis and Results**

Verbatim transcripts were organized chronologically and saved by date and time for easy reference during the analysis phase. With only five adult participants in the research interviews, a small number of interviewees contributed to data preparation using traditional techniques like coding with colored pens, paper, and sticky notes. These methods helped ensure that the interview data was well-organized, enabling a systematic and thorough analysis. The deeper analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in four theme statements: the importance of bilingual/immersion programs, immersion/bilingual program challenges, supporting bilingual Arabic learners, and leadership responsibilities. Figure 4 presents themes in bubbles with corresponding nested codes in blocks.

**Figure 4***Themes with Corresponding Codes**Note: Themes in bubbles with corresponding nested codes in blocks*

**Theme 1: Importance of Bilingual/Immersion Programs**

Theme one emphasizes the significance of bilingual and immersion programs in aiding integration, bridging language proficiency gaps, and retaining cultural identity and heritage. P#1 highlighted how bilingual programs "keep their heritage and their language, especially students at primary grade levels." Similarly, P#2 emphasized how these programs "aid in integrating students into the community while retaining their cultural identity and improving communication skills." P#2 discussed, "Students from diverse linguistic backgrounds require targeted interventions to ensure proficiency in both languages and equitable learning outcomes." P#1 mentioned, "Parents also want their kids to learn Arabic; they need to be on the same page." The school district superintendent, P#5, referred to the Arabic program as one of the fastest population growths in the district. P#5 said, "Arabic-speaking students are one of our if not our, fastest-growing demographics..." Further insights and clarification can be found in the complete interview transcripts (Appendix J).

**Theme 2: Immersion/Bilingual Program Challenges**

Theme two addresses the challenges BALs, bilingual educators, and educational leaders face in the bilingual program. BALs encounter various challenges impacting their learning experience and proficiency in Arabic. These challenges are reflected in their responses, highlighting common difficulties students in the program face. Many students identify speaking as challenging; one said, "Speaking is my challenge." Student # 6 mentioned "Speaking and writing." The questionnaire questions addressed the time allocation and availability of educational resources. Student # 16 said, "Sometimes I don't understand or have a short time to do it." Student # 18 said, "We only have 20 minutes for Arabic and need more time." Students highlighted the scarcity of Arabic apps and materials; seventeen out of 20 students said, "No



Arabic Apps," and student # 15 said, "We have one Arabic bookshelf in our library." Theme two addressed the teacher's difficulties in multiple areas, such as accessing tangible resources. P# 1 stated, "If you need a tangible resource, like a physical copy of resources, I do not have much." P#2 also mentioned, "Without these resources, enhancing our teaching methods becomes a formidable challenge." Insufficient funding for educational materials was also discussed," P#2 said, "The absence of adequate funding further complicates the ability to produce or acquire the necessary teaching aids." Regarding time constraints, P#1 mentioned, "I do not have enough time to cover all the material that I need to cover as far as English and Arabic." P#2 wondered, "Time! uncertain whether time allocation is suitable for Arabic instruction, it needs to be revised, it could be harming not helping". Bilingual teachers also highlighted the lack of a cohesive communication system between the bilingual department and the Arabic team. P#2 said, "We lack a cohesive means of communication, especially in seeking approval and advocacy from administrators to participate in conferences or workshops that could further our professional development."

Conducting a standardized assessment tailored to students' needs was also listed as one of the challenges faced by bilingual teachers. P#1 stated, "I do not have any assessment; I create my own." P#2 said, "I do not have any assessment; I have not found any testing protocol adopted by any company." Staffing shortage was a common theme, as were many other common themes. For example, P#1 stated, "We lack a liaison or a coordinator between us and the bilingual department." highlighting the need for better communication and support structures. P#1 added, "We do not have a person responsible for finding materials for us, or for seeing, or overseeing problems that we have, or to be coaching." P#1 added, "We do not have a supervisor that would evaluate or monitor Arabic language outcomes." P#2 also mentioned, "We lack professionals in

Arabic speech therapy and special education. Mentoring and coaching are also limited to what I can offer.

A public-school principal, P#3, running a bilingual Arabic program in an urban school district, faces several challenges in managing the program effectively. One of the critical challenges identified by P#3 is the coordination of support within the school building and with the district bilingual department. P#3 states, "Leadership challenges include coordinating the supports here in the building with our district bilingual department, including things like assessments, curriculum materials, and additional support from the bilingual department to give me a rundown on what it is like in the Arabic program." However, P#3 emphasizes the need for more support at the district level to build a robust program and enhance its effectiveness, stating, "We need more support at the district level to increase the number of people within the program."

On the other hand, Participant #4, a bilingual department administrator, highlighted challenges related to managing the bilingual program. One significant challenge mentioned by P#4 is the rapid population growth, which necessitates accommodating the increasing number of bilingual students. Rapid growth poses difficulties regarding resource allocation and availability; as P#4 noted, "One of the challenges we are facing is indeed the rapid population growth, focusing on accommodating the rising numbers of bilingual students." Furthermore, P#4 emphasized the constant search for resources, stating, "Well, we are always on the lookout for resources... It is tough to find Arabic materials."

Additionally, P#4 mentioned the ongoing effort to identify gaps in resources and curriculums, stating, "We are still identifying the gaps in our resources and our curriculums, and to secure culturally around the materials and technology tools." P#4 also highlighted the need for

an Arabic assessment tool, stressing, "We are aware that we need an Arabic Assessment." P#4 further expressed frustration with the delay in obtaining ACCESS data, which affects student placement, stating, "That is one of the biggest complaints to the state that ACCESS data is late. It does not help us place students."

Finally, P#4 acknowledged the program's financial constraints: "It's all about money, and we are cutting money right now." These challenges underscore the complexity of managing a bilingual program amidst rapid population growth and resource limitations."

As a district leader overseeing bilingual education initiatives, the school district superintendent, P#5, identified several significant challenges in managing such programs. Firstly, P#5 highlighted the diversity of languages that must be served within the district, indicating, "One of the problems we face leading to bilingual education is the sheer number of languages that we need to serve." The district leader shed light on the complexity of catering to a diverse student population's linguistic need, each with its unique language requirements.

Moreover, the district leader addressed the challenge of providing adequate language support to students who may lack prior educational experience in their native languages. As P#5 explained, "Another challenge I think we face is that often when we're providing language support to students, even in languages that are very commonly spoken in our district like Arabic and Spanish, you often have students who come to our country that have not had a lot of educational experience in their own country." The district leader highlighted the additional hurdles faced in ensuring academic success for students requiring foundational language skills and content-based instruction.

Additionally, the district leader touched upon the challenge of providing comprehensive language support to students; p #5 said, "It does add to the complexity, so what we're attempting

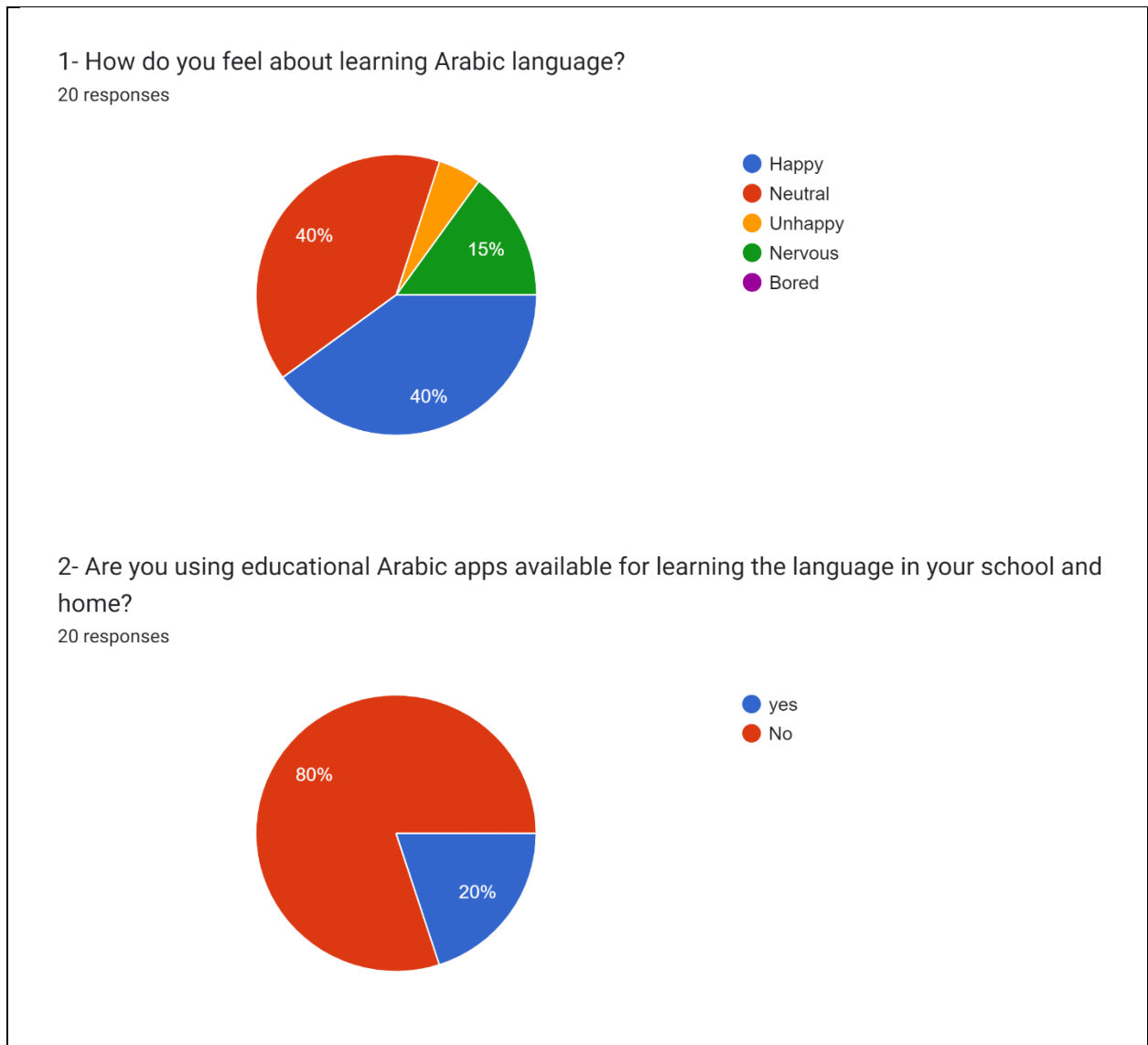
to do is vast in recruiting efforts to ensure that we do have enough teachers, both cultural and language speaking backgrounds." Further insights and clarification can be found in the complete interview transcripts (Appendix J).

### **Theme 3: Supporting Bilingual Arabic Learners**

Theme three emphasized the support needed to empower BALs. Bilingual learners in the questionnaire expressed various preferences regarding the support methods they find most helpful for learning the Arabic language. Their selected responses shed light on the different learning styles and preferences among students in the bilingual program. Some students chose the option “effectiveness of technology-based resources” as they find apps most helpful for learning Arabic. However, multiple answers indicated the lack of Arabic apps to support their learning practices. The questionnaire showed a preference for engaging digital platforms that facilitate language learning. Additionally, some students identified reading materials as helpful for learning Arabic, which suggests that students value written texts to improve their language skills. Students also selected the value of in-class presentations and more speaking activities in Arabic as an effective teaching strategy. Furthermore, students highlighted the value of real-life scenarios for practicing Arabic, indicating a preference for practical and contextually relevant learning experiences that mirror authentic language use in everyday situations. Figure 5 summarizes the questionnaire dataset, offering valuable insights into the experiences of bilingual students in an urban school district immersion program within a public school in Illinois.

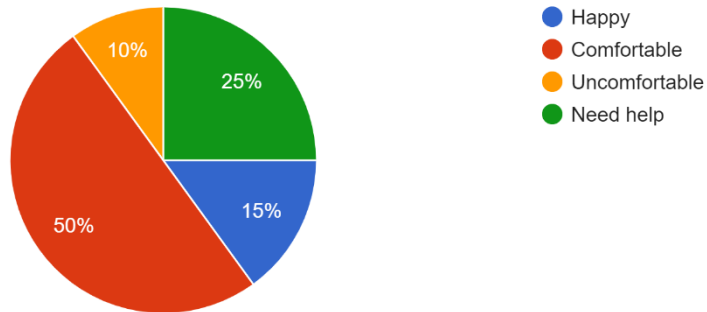
**Figure 5**

*Summary of Dataset's Numerical Distribution*



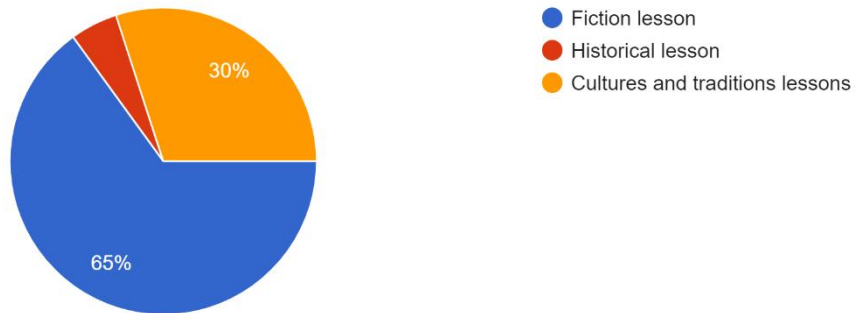
5- How do you feel about the general assessments in the Arabic immersion program?

20 responses



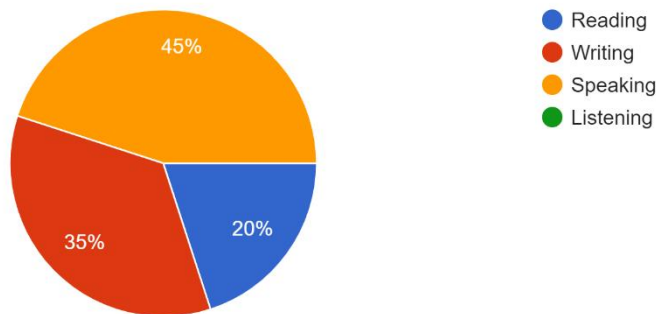
8- What text's genre attract your attention for reading?

20 responses



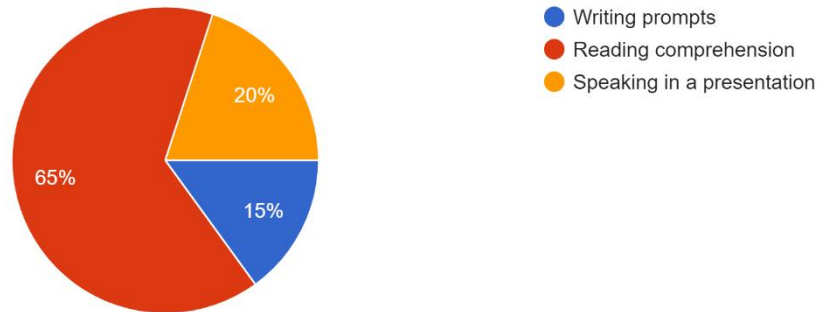
9- What do you find challenging in studying Arabic language?

20 responses



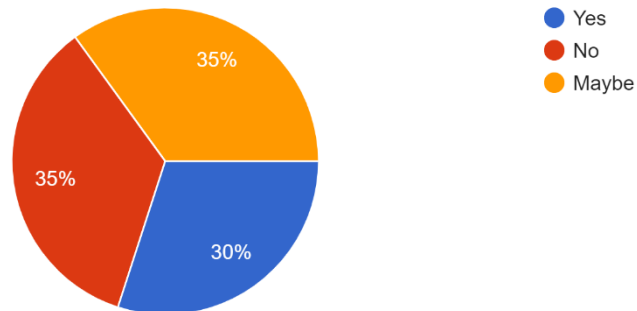
10- What activity do you enjoy the most in studying Arabic language?

20 responses



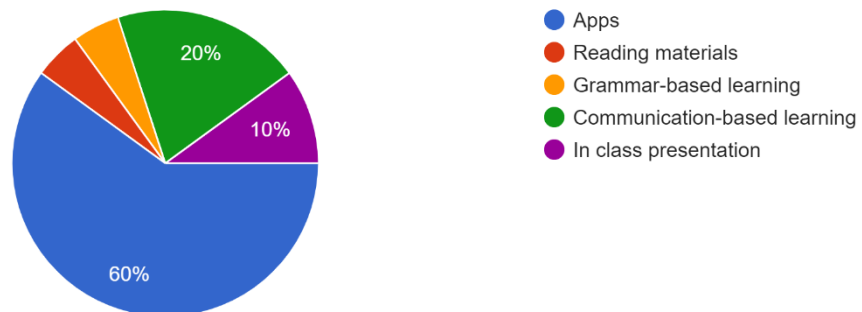
11- Do your Arabic teachers make the lessons interesting and fun for you?

20 responses



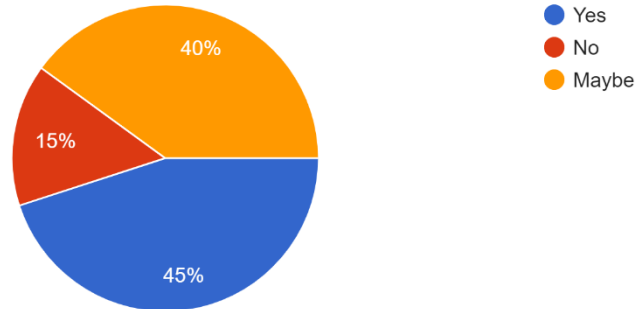
12- What teaching methods do you find most helpful for learning Arabic?

20 responses



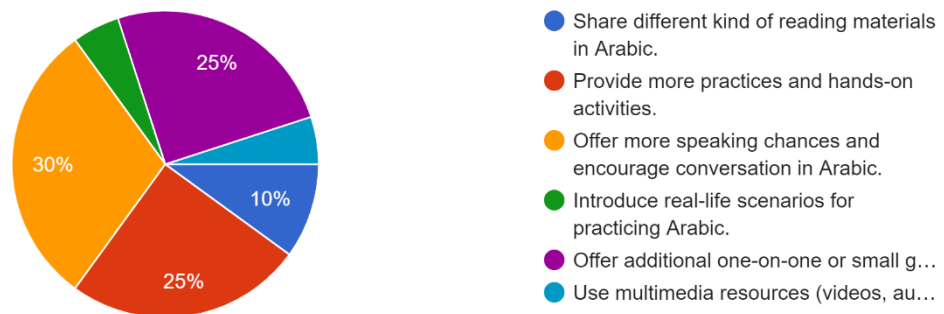
14- Do you feel that your Arabic textbooks and learning materials make it easier for you to learn and engage with the language?

20 responses



15- How can the teachers help you with your Arabic language learning?

20 responses



*Note: Pie charts have been generated from the data collected through a Google Form questionnaire.*

Theme three also addresses the practices used by bilingual teachers to support BALs. Teachers discussed the support associated with accommodating different proficiency levels among BALs without additional staff support, appropriate teaching materials, standardized



assessments, and applications. For instance, P#1 highlighted the efforts to address varying proficiency levels by stating, "I tried to make all three levels of assessment for the weak, average, and high-achieving students." Additionally, P#1 emphasized their incorporation of cultural and historical significance in teaching through various mediums, stating, "I incorporate a lot of cultural and historical significance in my teaching through big trends, videos, and YouTube." P#1 also highlighted their efforts in academic support, mentioning, "When testing, some students need one-on-one help to do this." These personalized approaches underscore P#1's commitment to meeting the diverse needs of their students effectively.

Similarly, P#2 elaborated on how bilingual teachers offer individual support, mentioning, "What I have is teacher-created material." They further explained, "I am trying to find a balance in our transitional bilingual program, where I can create resources that help students comprehend both Arabic and English." Furthermore, participants underscored the need for targeted interventions to ensure language proficiency and equitable learning outcomes for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

District leaders confront challenges in catering to the linguistic needs of a diverse student population, necessitating support for various languages. The school district leader said, "We often have a hard time matching instructors who speak the language or support staff who speak the language providing support for the students." P#5 confirmed, "Arabic-speaking students are one of our if not our, fastest-growing demographics, and we need as a school district to do more." P#5 stressed the necessity of finding a solution for the scarcity of bilingual resources. P#5 said, "We need to have a stronger pool of resources for our core languages that we support, and at a minimum, we need to be Spanish and Arabic." Further insights and clarification can be found in the complete interview transcripts (Appendix J).

**Theme 4: Leadership Responsibilities**

Theme four centers around recruiting and retaining bilingual teachers and support staff within the bilingual educational context. Participants highlighted various strategies and challenges in the aspect of the academic landscape. The school principal, P#3, emphasized the importance of collaboration with the recruitment department to secure additional tutoring allocations. P#3 also stressed the significance of networking and providing conference opportunities to train teachers, indicating proactive measures to address staffing needs. "Networking, connecting with professionals, providing conferences opportunities to train teachers to attend conferences or professional development sessions."

Similarly, the bilingual administrator, P#4, discussed the ongoing efforts to secure resources and funds, focusing on equitable distribution across grade levels and languages. They highlighted the collaboration across departments and active university recruitment efforts with bilingual education programs, showcasing a comprehensive approach to recruitment. P#4 stated, "Administrators have to be trained in multiple areas." P#4 added, "They need to understand bilingual education policies and practices, and research-based instructional strategies... they need to be solidly proficient in budgeting and staffing."

The district has a concern for the bilingual staff shortage and how this could impact the students' language proficiency, P#5 underscored the need for sufficient staff diversity to reflect the student population's diversity; p #5 stated, "We have to find a way to have enough teachers and support staff to reflect the diversity of our student population." P#5 emphasized the importance of expediting licensure for highly educated individuals. P#5 suggested, "Needs to do more to help us expedite licensure, particularly for highly educated people but in another country." P#5 added, "We need to have a state that rises as much as possible in terms of

reciprocity to allow us to bring people into our system faster." Further insights and clarification can be found in the complete interview transcripts (Appendix J).

Theme four also emphasized the leadership responsibilities towards the bilingual staff in exploring professional development opportunities and training in core aspects of bilingual programs. Participants discussed the limited availability of professional development opportunities tailored for bilingual teachers. For instance, P#1 highlighted the scarcity of professional development sessions, stating, "We don't have a lot of PDs for bilingual teachers." Similarly, P#2 expressed their experience of not encountering specific professional development opportunities focused on Arabic language instruction over the past five years. P#2 said, "For instance, in the past five years, I haven't encountered any professional development opportunities specifically focused on Arabic language instruction during conferences or workshops."

On the other hand, P#3 emphasized the importance of connecting with professionals and providing conference opportunities to train teachers, stating, "Connecting with professionals, providing conference opportunities to train teachers to help them stay current." For bilingual leaders and administrators, the school principal, P#3, underscored the importance of professional development programs and university collaborations in bolstering effective bilingual education initiatives. P#3 stressed the need for principal preparation programs to integrate coursework that delves into understanding diverse cultures, strategies for aiding bilingual students, and nurturing strong family relationships within the school community. As P#3 puts it, "Principal preparation programs need to be sure to include coursework in understanding diverse cultures, strategies for supporting bilingual students, and supporting family relationships." Moreover, P#3 advocated for principal programs to feature coursework to evaluate the efficacy of bilingual curriculums, materials, and assessments. P#3 discussed that the principal preparation programs must ensure

that school leaders have the necessary skills to assess and enhance bilingual education programs for optimal learning outcomes. In P#3's words, "Principal programs should also have coursework designed to evaluate effective bilingual curriculums, materials, and assessments."

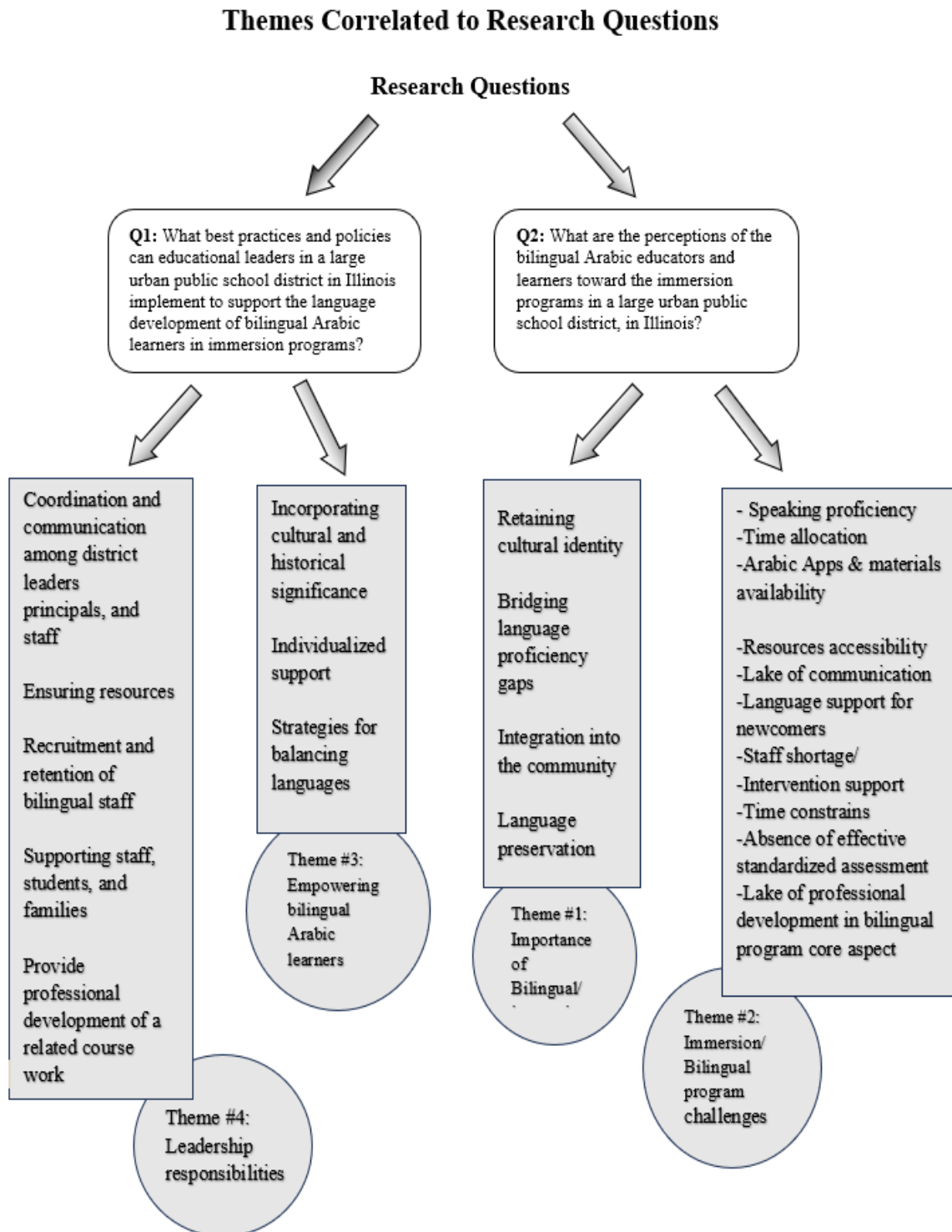
P#4 outlined the professional development initiatives offered by the bilingual department, including workshops, conferences, and online courses focusing on best practices, responsiveness, and technology integration. Lastly, P#5, the district superintendent, underscored the need for comprehensive professional development for bilingual teachers, stating, "I think we need to find additional instructional coaching resources, as well as additional summer, and before and after school professional development opportunities. I think both of those would help improve our system." Further insights and clarification can be found in the complete interview transcripts (Appendix J).

### **Findings**

The findings of the study emphasize the value of bilingual and immersion education in promoting student integration, closing language competency gaps, and preserving cultural identity and history. Teachers and district administrators stressed that these initiatives address issues such as scarce budget, time restraints, and resource limitations while promoting cultural retention and communication skills. One of the biggest challenges was the lack of Arabic teaching resources and Arabic educational apps, Teachers pointed out the need for administrative support and the creation of standardized tests that are suited to the requirements of bilingual students. District executives emphasized the need for increased staffing and resource allocation at the school and district levels. The findings also highlighted how important leadership is in attracting and retaining bilingual educators, supporting the quick licensing of eligible candidates, and guaranteeing bilingual education-specific professional development. All things considered,

the study emphasizes the difficulties and complexity of running multilingual programs while stressing the critical assistance required for effective execution and long-term viability.

Significant findings from questionnaire and interview data included common patterns or responses from 20 bilingual Arabic learners, bilingual educators, and school and district leaders helping to generate themes. These responses were the basis for generating the themes discovered from data collection and analysis. Research question 1, what best practices and policies can educational leaders in a large urban public school district in Illinois implement to support the language development of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs is correlated with themes three and four. The second research question, what are the perceptions of the bilingual Arabic educators and learners toward the immersion programs in a large urban public school district, in Illinois, is correlated with themes one and two. Figure 6 presents the correlations from participant responses to the research questions. Agee pointed out that well-crafted research questions are essential for producing meaningful findings (Agee, 2009). Themes arising from the experiences and perceptions of educators and bilingual Arabic learners participating in immersion programs clearly address the core questions asked in this study.

**Figure 6***Correlations from Participant's Responses to Research Questions*

*Note.* The themes that emerged are connected to the research questions.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The preceding chapter identified potential threats to the research's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This chapter describes these threats and clarifies the measures to eliminate or control them. Several essential criteria were employed to strengthen the reliability and validity of this research and ensure its authenticity. These principles, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, all add to the study's overall rigor (Leung, 2015). Data went through an intensive peer review to improve the credibility of our findings, promote knowledge transfer to diverse contexts, preserve the reliability of the research process, and confirm the neutrality of the employed approach through unique methodologies and practices. This study showed that coding with traditional tools like colored pens, paper, and sticky notes for data analysis and management provides a robust and tested analysis approach for grounded theory generation (Maher et al., 2018).

#### **Credibility**

Various strategies, such as peer evaluations and extensive communication with participants, were used to establish credibility. Extended participation in the setting and population ensured a deep understanding of the context and the participants' perspectives. Sharing study findings was a priority, which could enhance research credibility (Melvin et al., 2020). Applying research findings and sharing recommendations will improve bilingual programs for bilingual learners, as well as a chance for additional research. The dissemination of knowledge can foster collaboration among researchers and educators, leading to ongoing improvements in bilingual education practices.

#### **Transferability**

Transferability relates to the ability of the findings to be transferred to other contexts or

settings (Maher et al., 2018). The particular research context is described in depth and contextually, allowing the reader to assess whether it is transferable to their situation. The research setting, participants, and data collection processes were described in depth and contextually. The research methodology and findings improve transferability to similar contexts or scenarios, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the results.

### **Dependability**

Dependability, also known as consistency, is one of four criteria for rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Janis, 2022). Consistency ensures that the procedure is detailed enough for other researchers to replicate the study, which requires an extensive review and analysis of the data. The purpose was to mitigate investigator prejudice by acknowledging biases (Maher et al., 2018). Transparent documentation of the study process, including thorough descriptions of data collection, analysis techniques, and decision-making, was used in this study to establish dependability. The research method was well-documented and consistent, allowing other researchers to replicate this study.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is comparable to objectivity in quantitative studies (Maher et al., 2018). Several approaches and practices were used to attain confirmability. The study method was carefully documented by recording detailed descriptions of data-gathering procedures. The process includes detailed descriptions of how data was collected and prepared, as well as the interview protocol and the transcription process. The coding and data processing procedures were followed systematically and transparently. Codes and themes were created from the data after an intensive transcript reading, ensuring that interpretations were based on the data, not personal bias. Peer debriefing was used to discuss the research findings and interpretations.



Colleagues and specialists in the field participated in discussions and analysis of the research, providing an outside viewpoint on the validity of the findings. In summary, the study successfully eliminated or controlled threats to reliability and validity through numerous methods, emphasizing improving confirmability in qualitative research.

### **Chapter Summary**

The perceptions, experiences, and challenges of Bilingual Program leadership, educators, and Arabic learners have been investigated in this qualitative study. Data thematic analysis and coding were used to obtain the data. As a source of data, three school district leaders and another two bilingual educators in the school district were interviewed via Zoom, and 20 bilingual students in the bilingual program within the school district completed a questionnaire to collect rich and extensive data about the bilingual Arabic program. Leaders, educators, and students were selected based on criteria. The participants' experience was the common standard between the three categories of the participants.

Data from student questionnaire responses was prepared using systematic methods to guarantee correctness, comprehensiveness, and organization. Interview transcripts were reviewed and coded. The process of code refinement involved combining or splitting them to create meaningful categories and renaming them to represent the content accurately. The data analysis from the participants' experiences, extracted from more than 4 hours of conversation, led to many codes related to the research questions. These codes related to leadership practices and challenges, bilingual teachers' experiences, and students' perceptions toward the bilingual program. Codes emerged from the participants' responses, code descriptions, and excerpts from the interview transcripts, which were presented in two tables to present the data analysis result. The summary of leaders' and educators' challenges was visualized in two diagrams. The research

questions explored challenges and perceptions regarding bilingual education in an urban Illinois school district. Responses from leaders, educators, and students emphasized the need for additional resources, support for educators, and improvements in teaching methods to enhance the effectiveness of bilingual programs. The chapter also addressed the aspects of reliability and validity, underscoring the methods employed to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the study's outcomes. In the next chapter, further interpretation of responses, findings, and data will be presented, and a discussion of the implications of the findings, comparing them to previous research and providing recommendations for future research or practice will be included.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions**

This study aimed to clarify existing academic policies and practices and provide recommendations to educational leaders on how to review, enhance, and better support bilingual Arabic learners and their teachers in the immersion program. Additionally, the study explored whether these policies and practices could promote an equitable, inclusive learning environment that recognizes the diversity of languages and cultures.

The main goal of this study is to understand how educational leadership can empower BALs' language development in bilingual programs in the US. Qualitative tools, questionnaires, and interviews were used to collect the research data. The data collected from questionnaire responses and interviews with bilingual Arabic learners, educators, and school leaders in Illinois's large urban public school district in Illinois revealed several key findings. Firstly, school and district leaders acknowledged the rapid population growth of bilingual students, leading to resource allocation and availability challenges and the need for comprehensive language support to cater to diverse linguistic needs. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of leadership responsibilities in recruiting and retaining bilingual teachers and support staff, providing professional development opportunities, addressing diversity issues, and ensuring equitable educational environments. These findings directly address the first research question concerning identifying best practices and policies for supporting bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs.

Research participants emphasized the importance of bilingual and immersion programs in supporting integration, bridging language proficiency gaps, and preserving cultural identity and heritage, particularly among primary-grade bilingual learners. However, participants highlighted various challenges bilingual Arabic learners face, including limited time allocation for Arabic

instruction, scarcity of educational resources such as Arabic apps and materials, and a need for more cohesive communication between departments. The district leaders expressed concerns about insufficient funding for educational materials. Moreover, teachers think staffing shortages, particularly in specialized areas like speech therapy and special education, are one of the significant challenges. These insights directly respond to the second research question concerning the perceptions of bilingual Arabic educators and learners toward immersion programs in a large urban public school district in Illinois. In the following sections, a critical component of the study's findings, interpretations, limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, specific recommendations for the school districts, and the implications of the findings will be presented.

### **Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions**

Considering the research findings in the context of existing peer-reviewed literature is essential to confirm, refute, or expand knowledge in bilingual education. The literature review explored the importance of immersion/bilingual programs. It addressed the challenges faced by bilingual Arabic learners and educators as discussed by Hill (2022), Alfataftah and Jarrar (2018), Alsahafi (2018), Attaallah (2020), Ayscue and Uzzell (2022), Baldwin (2021), and many other researchers. Moreover, Ajjawi et al. (2023) and Evans et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of assessment in influencing high-stakes decisions for students. The study identifies various challenges facing bilingual education in Illinois, such as lack of resources, time allocation, staffing shortage, and complexity in assessment design.

Hones et al. (2021) emphasized that educators at a successful bilingual school confirmed the importance of demanding content-level literature in both languages and the necessity of more excellent administrative support for technology integration in teaching

bilingual learners as visual learners and bilingual teacher professional development (PD). In a study by Abdul Ghani et al. (2022), students shared their perspectives on the digital game as being able to eliminate speaking anxiety, especially students without an Arabic language background. In this study, bilingual students reported that they do not have an Arabic app to help them learn the language. In the student questionnaire, the multimedia elements are one of the students' teaching preferences, which would help them learn better. Moreover, findings indicated that the district provides ongoing professional opportunities to help bilingual teachers enhance their instructional practices and better meet the needs of bilingual learners in their classrooms; however, teachers and school administrators admitted that there might be some disconnection or miscommunication on many occasions, and part of it could be attributed to a lack of communication.

Garza et al. (2015) discussed the instructional time needed for students to become bilingual and bicultural in the program. This study found that time constraints are another vast topic to be investigated. The time allocation for the bilingual program needs the attention of educational leaders and policymakers. Students' questionnaires indicated insufficient time for learning Arabic for the fourth and fifth-grade levels. Bilingual teachers also discussed the issue of time, especially in large classrooms. The finding also indicated that an ideal bilingual classroom size would help bilingual teachers implement the school curriculums and address all student's needs, especially newcomers who need extra help and support. The study suggested that smaller class sizes or additional support staff can guarantee bilingual students receive the attention and assistance they need to succeed academically.

A prevalent issue in research is the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge and integrate students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the

curriculum. Evans et al. (2019) asserted the need for assessments, professional development opportunities for instructors, and culturally and linguistically appropriate curriculums to facilitate successful implementation. This study highlighted the importance of reviewing bilingual materials, assessments, and curriculums before implementing them in a bilingual classroom setting. Bilingual teachers shared their classroom practices and how they incorporate the students' backgrounds and cultures into their daily activities based on their personal efforts. Bilingual teachers confirmed that the lack of appropriate Arabic resources is one of the challenges they face when teaching the Arabic language. The district leaders shared that finding culturally responsive assessments and curriculum challenges has always been challenging. The district leader asserted the importance of state support by having a more substantial pool of resources in core languages that the district needs, at a minimum, Spanish, and Arabic.

Jiatong et al. (2022), Solsona-Puig (2019), and Baldwin (2021) further emphasized the positive impact of transformational leadership on employee engagement, organizational commitment, and job performance. The study discussed the importance of transformational leadership strategies that promote bilingualism and create a shared vision of equitable assessment practices through critical multilingual approaches and the participation of relevant parties. Hill (2022) pointed out that leadership in bilingual schools extends beyond traditional administrative responsibilities, community identity, and facilitating language-appropriate educational environments. The study underscored the importance of the transformational leadership role, which actively tries to create a welcoming environment that celebrates linguistic diversity and fosters learning and academic success for every learner, regardless of their language background, ensuring decision-making procedures. The finding indicated that leaders must listen more effectively, which is an excellent area for improvement in this school district. The district

leader made a great connection between effective leadership and the leader who listens to families, students, and staff. Findings revealed that educational leaders are responsible for promoting an equitable and exclusive educational system that supports all learners in the school district.

The findings are directly tied to the particular goals and objectives specified in the study, guaranteeing that they are pertinent to the research and do not overstate their importance. The study's results are devoid of subjective interpretation or bias because objectivity was maintained throughout. Additionally, the findings relate directly to the specific research questions without extrapolating beyond the scope of the study. Procedures ensured that conclusions are grounded in the data and does not make speculative or unsubstantiated claims.

### **Limitations**

The study acknowledges several limitations affecting transferability, reliability (internal validity), and confirmability. First, the study sample was primarily focused on a particular geographic or demographic area, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other settings or populations with different backgrounds. The study setting, such as a specific school district or geographic location, may limit the generalizability of the results. Context-specific factors, such as local policies, resources, and demographics, may influence the results and limit their applicability to other contexts.

The second limitation to consider is the potential variation in the effectiveness of bilingual programs across different cultural groups. Research by Lukes (2015) highlighted that students from diverse nationalities within the Spanish-speaking world may have different characteristics and trajectories that can impact their performance in bilingual programs. This variation suggests that the bilingual/immersion program explored for Arabic students may not

necessarily generalize to students from other cultural backgrounds, including Spanish-speaking

The third limitation of this research is the need for more data from upper or lower grade levels. The student questionnaire data indicated speaking anxiety in the Arabic language among fourth and fifth graders. Such indication suggests that researchers can conduct quantitative research to measure the level of speaking anxiety within bilingual classrooms from K-8th, or even upper-grade level in another program that supports bilingualism in the US and establish a correlation between the time allocated for students' first language instruction and learning time and the level of students' anxiety. To find more reasons that contribute to bilingual learners' speaking anxiety, researchers could consider adding more variables to identify the reasons for this phenomenon, such as the impact of teacher-student interaction, students' language backgrounds, student's desire to learn their language, and the strategies used by teachers to promote language development.

Some studies rely on qualitative methods, which may affect the reliability and confirmability of results due to potential subjectivity in data interpretation and analysis (Tenny et al., 2022). Despite these limitations, the study suggested that these findings provide valuable insights and practical implications for other settings and populations. By carefully considering contextual factors and underlying demographic, cultural, and educational differences, stakeholders can adapt and apply findings to inform their actions.

### **Recommendations**

This study offered recommendations for future research in the field of education, especially bilingual education. It provided an opportunity to explore the policies and implications of immersion programs in different locations and their effectiveness in serving specific student populations, such as those with special needs. The research location, population, instructional



design, and current policies need more researchers' attention.

### **Multiple Locations**

Future research on bilingual education should prioritize conducting comparative studies across multiple school districts in Illinois that implement similar bilingual immersion programs. Comparative studies' suggestion aligns with the recommendations of García et al. (2022), who emphasized the value of examining diverse educational contexts to identify effective implementation strategies. By examining the practices, challenges, and successes of these programs in various educational contexts, researchers can understand effective educational implementation strategies comprehensively. Comparative studies across school districts will provide valuable information about differences in program structure, resource allocation, teacher training, community engagement, and student outcomes, informing best practices and policy recommendations to improve outcomes.

### **Special Populations**

It is crucial to focus on specific populations within bilingual learning communities, such as students with disabilities, newcomers, or refugees, in our bilingual education research. An inclusive approach ensures that no student is left behind and that our research is comprehensive and relevant. Research can explore appropriate educational approaches, support services, and intervention policies to meet the unique needs of these populations. Placing special education students in a bilingual classroom is not an easy decision, as bilingual teachers require additional support to effectively work with students with special needs. Administrative backing and further research on the best practices for integrating special needs students into bilingual settings are essential for their success. It is also recommended that comparative studies be conducted between Hispanic population groups and Arabic bilingual learners within the same bilingual

program. A comparative approach within these groups of bilingual learners would enable researchers to analyze the effectiveness of the program's policies that were implemented for these two distinct cultural and linguistic groups in bilingual education settings, further emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in our research.

### **Policy Analysis**

Examine current policies at local, state, and national levels in bilingual education to identify disparities, inconsistencies, and areas of improvement. Researchers could also examine how policy shifts affect bilingual education delivery and student performance. There must be an explicit description of the program goals (i.e., promoting bilingualism or using native language as a tool to acquire the L2), a daily schedule for bilingual classrooms, and time allocation designated for teaching Arabic/English standards. The current policies may not adequately support the maintenance of proficiency in both the home and English languages. It may contribute to language shift and the loss of heritage language proficiency. A clear description will ensure that the outcomes of the programs can be replicated in other places (Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018).

### **Practical Recommendations for the School District**

This study offers recommendations to address the specific challenges faced by BALs, educators, and leaders. The research recommendations aim to improve the Arabic bilingual program and to empower bilingual Arabic learners in the research site. The following recommendations are based on this research findings.

### **Adopting Adaptive Assessment**

Recent data from the study's questionnaire and interviews indicated that there has been no

Arabic adaptive assessment since the program started, which can lead to misleading conclusions if the program is only effective for the most stable people but not for the whole population in the program. Conducting ongoing assessments to determine students' native language proficiency is crucial in maintaining the goal of developing foundational solid literacy skills as a prerequisite for acquiring a second language (Acosta et al., 2019).

A bilingual program could be an excellent opportunity for bilingual Arabic learners to prepare for the Arabic Proficiency Test-APT in the future (APT, 2024). Arabic proficiency test allows students to earn college credit as a required class for their college degrees. District advocacy should extend to promoting the immersion/bilingual program and advocating for policies and initiatives at both district and state levels that recognize the value of language proficiency assessments and provide support for bilingual learners to achieve proficiency levels that qualify them for college credit and other opportunities.

### **Intensive Curriculum Review Before Implementation**

Intensive curriculum review before implementation is another crucial element for program success. It is imperative to make informed decisions following a comprehensive review regarding the suitable curriculums utilized in bilingual classrooms for the English Language Art or Arabic curriculum. For English language art, the review should specifically assess their appropriateness for both bilingual Arabic/Hispanic students enrolled in bilingual programs and ensure alignment with WIDA's standards and the student's cultures.

In this school district, Bilingual Arabic and Hispanic learners have been using the REACH curriculum for the last few years; while this curriculum was designed for Hispanic learners and addressed their heritage, culture, and background, it was not appropriate for Arabic bilingual learners. The Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum is built on the

Science of Reading, and it is a significant and beneficial curriculum adopted by the district this year. Nevertheless, one entire unit was omitted from instruction due to its inclusion of sensitive topics that could not be addressed in bilingual Arabic classrooms. Bilingual students in the TBE program are supposed to be exposed to the history and culture of the country, territory, or geographic area that is the native land of the students or of their parents and to the history and culture of the United States (Section 14C-2(f) of the School Code-ISBE, n.d.).

The Arabic curriculum and textbooks used in this school district have undergone multiple changes during the last few years, which may need to be more conducive to effective learning. Any curriculum or textbook needs to be implemented for a minimum of 5 years to accurately assess its impact on student outcomes. Teachers invest significant time and effort in preparing lesson plans and delivering instruction aligned with specific competencies. Continuously changing the curriculum can disrupt this process and may not serve the best interests of students. Therefore, the school district should ensure the availability of a curriculum for at least 5 years to allow for meaningful evaluation of its effectiveness. An intensive review of proposed curricula must confirm their appropriateness and validity before implementation.

### **Technology Integration**

Using e-learning material/educational apps to enhance language acquisition can be effective, especially for bilingual learners with a visual learning style. The audio helps them pronounce the Arabic vocabulary, while the transliteration feature is used to familiarize the students with Arabic vocabulary (Abdul Ghani et al., 2022). The principles of digital tools create a fun learning experience in Arabic class. Having an Arabic app for BALs could assist teachers in managing time allocation for teaching the Arabic language. With access to the app, subscribed students could learn from home, providing flexibility in their educational experience. On the

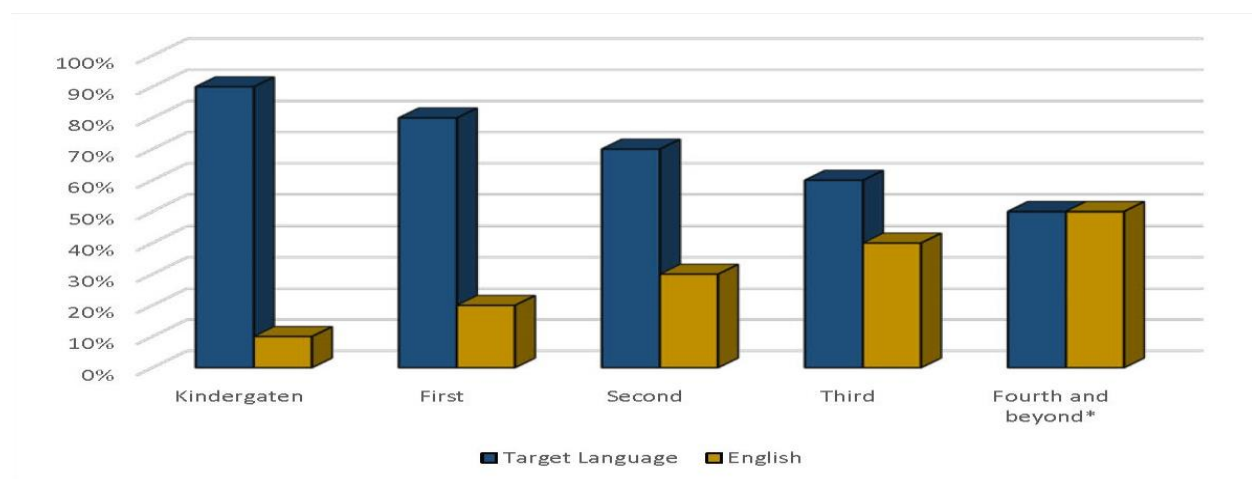
other hand, by integrating technology into instruction, teachers can provide personalized learning experiences, offer additional resources in two languages, and facilitate communication with students and parents. Integrating technology in learning the language can accommodate diverse learning needs, engage students more effectively, and provide valuable support for bilingual learners within the constraints of a large classroom.

### Reviewing the Time Allocation Policy

Another critical policy requiring review and revision pertains to the time allocation for the bilingual program. According to the figures below, English instruction increases by 10% at each grade level. Instruction design is known as *sequential literacy* because it emphasizes literacy development in the target language before explicitly advancing to literacy in English. For many programs, the percentage in the target language is reduced further at the secondary level. Figure 7 illustrates both the target language and English language time allocation in the Dual immersion program (90:10 MODEL – CABE Dual Language Immersion Planning Guide, n.d.).

**Figure 7**

*90:10 MODEL – CABE Dual Language Immersion Planning Guide*



*Note:* The 90:10 model for dual language immersion is shown. Adapted from *90:10 MODEL – CABE Dual Language Immersion Planning Guide, n.d., CABE Dual Immersion Program*

*Models.* Copyright by the California Association for Bilingual Education. Adapted with permission.

Educational policymakers have implemented the 90:10 model for dual language programs on Arabic bilingual/immersion programs, which may not effectively address the needs of bilingual students, particularly in upper-grade levels such as fourth and fifth grade. These classrooms often include newcomers who need more basic skills in both languages. The absence of dedicated out-of-classroom instruction periods or skill groups furthers these students and their teachers' challenges. Bilingual teachers juggle two curricula for large classroom sizes, limiting the time for teachers to implement goal-based differentiation strategies. What may be beneficial and effective for dual language programs may not necessarily be suitable or advantageous for the Arabic bilingual program.

Collier and Thomas (2017) asserted that the primary goal of the TBE program is to maintain and develop skills in the primary language and culture while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English; they also called it early-exit bilingual education. Thomas and Collier define the early-exit approach as an academic instruction through each language and a gradual transition to all-majority language instruction in approximately 2 to 3 years (Thomas and Collier, 2017). Drawing from experience in bilingual programs, the definition provided is contested, highlighting the need for a more precise definition that aligns with a clear and explicit goal.

The Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program teaches almost entirely in Arabic in kindergarten. In first grade, they teach reading and writing in Arabic, and all subject matter in Arabic, which is 80% of their learning day, with only an hour or so a day of English. In the second grade, some subject matter may be taught in English, and 70% of the classroom activities

and subjects are taught in Arabic. In short, the first 2 years of the early-exit program are almost entirely in Arabic, although their goal is to transition the students to an all-English program as soon as possible. Thus, the significant difference between developmental and transitional (or early exit) bilingual education in the first 2 years is the goal, not the amount of English.

Furthermore, Arabic language standards are getting more difficult for upper-grade levels. Given the limited 30-minute duration allocated for Arabic learning in fourth and fifth grades, resulting in a decline in their Arabic proficiency, therefore, time allocation for bilingual programs needs an educational leaders and policymaker review.

### **Co-teaching and Separate instructional periods**

ISBE-105 ILCS 5/ School Code suggested that the TBE program offers additional services through co-teaching or as a separate instructional period (Instructional design. ISBE. n.d.). Given the challenges that bilingual teachers shared in this study regarding the large size of bilingual classrooms, a practical solution would be to hire more Title One or ESL teachers to receive either pull-out or co-teaching instruction in core academic subjects using specific strategies for bilingual learners (Instructional design. ISBE. n.d.). Given the school district's budget constraints in hiring more bilingual staff, employing an educational paraprofessional would assist the bilingual teacher in managing a large class size and allow for more time dedicated to differentiation efforts. Collaboration between teachers serving English learners is required. Board of Education bilingual leaders must ensure that all codes and actions align with the program policies.

### **Policy Advocacy**

Equitable educational settings for bilingual learners can be sustained over time by supporting federal and state policies that encourage bilingual education, provide funding for

language learning initiatives, and encourage diversity and inclusion in the classroom. Support includes supporting programs for bilingual education with sufficient finance, personnel, and chances for professional growth. A Critical responsibility for district administrators is to advocate for the rights of bilingual learners to ensure equitable access to quality education and services to ensure their academic success. Additionally, fostering partnerships between educational institutions, community organizations, and policymakers can further support the sustainability of equitable educational settings for bilingual learners by promoting collaboration, resource-sharing, and advocacy efforts.

### **Implications for Leadership**

Title III of Every Student Succeeds ACT (ESSA), passed by Congress in 2015, provides federal funding to support English language acquisition programs and services for English learners, including professional development for educators working with ELLs. Illinois receives federal funding through Title III grants, which support bilingual education programs and services across the state (Title III Grants, ISBE, n.d.). Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 sought funding for the K-12 public education of needy students. Through ESEA, all students were promised an equal opportunity for quality education.

Reviewing some of the Board of Education (ISBE) released memorandum, guidelines, and slides that address the program's policies, codes, and students' rights, the board asserts adhering to the federal laws and regulations, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA), CODE 228, and 105 IL CS. Delving into these documents, bilingual and English language learners' rights could be summarized as the following: Access to Equitable Education; Instruction in Both Languages; Culturally Responsive Curriculum; Qualified Teachers, Individualized Support, Parent and Family



Involvement; Assessment and Progress Monitoring; Safe and Supportive Environment, Advocacy and Representation; and Protection from Discrimination. By implementing these standards, we can ensure the achievement of bilingual students and promote equitable educational access for all students in Illinois, fostering an inclusive learning environment that promotes equality. Considering this research's recommendations outlined in the recommendation section could have a significant positive impact on various levels of society. At the individual level, bilingual learners will benefit from improved language acquisition and academic success, enhancing opportunities for personal growth and future success. Organizational impacts include the creation of more inclusive and equitable educational environments where diverse perspectives and cultural backgrounds are valued and integrated into the curriculum, promoting a sense of unity and respect among students and staff.

At the societal and policy level, the implementation of these recommendations can contribute to broader social change by advocating for policies that support bilingual education, promote diversity and inclusion in schools, and allocate resources to address the needs of bilingual learners, ultimately leading to more equitable educational opportunities for all students. Academic leaders can take specific actions based on these findings and results to drive positive change.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this study examined best practices and policies for supporting Arabic bilingual learners in the bilingual/immersion program in a school district in Illinois. The study explored the perceptions of leaders, educators, and Arabic bilingual learners towards bilingual/immersion programs. Participants indicated specific challenges, especially in bilingual resource availability, staff shortage, funds, and coordination between departments. Findings

highlighted the importance of bilingual and immersion programs in facilitating the integration and maintenance of cultural identity and the challenges that learners, educators, and leaders face. Leadership responsibilities toward bilingual/immersion programs could be vital in recruiting and retaining bilingual teachers, providing essential resources and applications, professional development opportunities and addressing issues of diversity and licensure are also highlighted.

The study identified actions that stakeholders and leaders can take, such as culturally responsive teaching, language support services, customized professional development, technology integration, and policy advocacy to promote an inclusive and equitable educational environment for bilingual learners. Reflecting on the new knowledge, it becomes clear that meeting the needs of bilingual learners requires a multifaceted approach, including collaboration among educators, administrators, district leaders, and policymakers. The implications of the study highlight the importance of creating supportive, culturally appropriate educational environments to promote the academic achievement and language development of bilingual Arabic learners, ultimately contributing to a positive impact on bilingual education in the United States. School district leaders and educators are grappling with the complexity of meeting the diverse needs of their student population in an environment where resources are limited and traditional approaches to education may not suffice. These students might be disadvantaged compared to their peers if there is not enough support received for their linguistic needs, which would fuel cycles of inequity.

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## Appendix A

## Copyright Permission

## Copyright Permission 1

(no subject)



Rihan Abuhamdan <Rihan.Abuhamdan@tobergdelagarza@roosevelt.edu>  
To



5/27/2023

Hi Dr. Garza, hope my email finds you well.

I'm a doctoral candidate at ACE university. I found your research about dual language instruction and achievement as an important reference to my research. My research topic is "Empowering Bilingual Education in the US."

I need your permission to use one of the figures that you included in your research, this figure depicts the challenges for bilingual educators. I like how you classified these challenges into four categories, and I found it so informative. The figure will be cited under your research title and authors. Thank you for your work in this field research.

Rihan Abuhamdan (MA)

Bilingual Arabic Teacher  
Rolling Green Elementary School  
815.229.2881  
76110 (Internal)



Tammy Oberg De La Garza <tobergdelagarza@roosevelt.edu>



To: Rihan Abuhamdan

Wed 5/31/2023 8:27 AM

Cc: Erin Mackinney <emackinney@roosevelt.edu>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of RPS205!

Hi Rihan,

We are happy to grant permission for you to use Figure #3 on pg. 373 of *Perceptions of School Leaders on the Top Challenges Facing DL Teachers*. Best of luck on your dissertation!


Tammy~

**Tammy Oberg De La Garza, Ph.D.**

Professor  
Dual Language Teacher Leadership Program Director  
430 S. Michigan Ave., #728  
Chicago, IL 60605  
(312) 281-3167

## Copyright permission 2

**FW: Re: Copyright document permission** 📎 1 🔍


 Rihan Abuhmdan 😊 📎 ↶ ↷ ➡ 🗄️ ...  
 To: store@wceps.org Tue 6/13/2023 9:01 AM


Hi there,  
 My name is Rihan Abuhmdan, I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education (ACE). I am working on my dissertation and its topic is "Empowering Bilingual Education in the USA." I found a document that is related to your organization, and I would love to attach it to my paper as a reference. The figure is here:  
 "ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide for Score Reports Grades K-12," 2022, Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Interpretive-Guide.pdf>

I need your permission to reflect on ELL's proficiency level and how they are scored. Your approval is appreciated. Thank you in advance for supporting the bilingual education research.

Rihan Abuhmdan (MA)  
 Bilingual Arabic Teacher  
 Rolling Green Elementary School  
 815 229 2881  
 76110 (Internal)

**FW: Re: Copyright document permission** 📎 1 🔍

 Allison Schweiger <allison@wceps.org> 😊 📎 ↶ ↷ ➡ 🗄️ ...  
 To: Rihan Abuhmdan Thu 6/15/2023 12:23 PM

 Guidelines-for-Sharing-and-...  
 86 KB

Caution! This message was sent from outside of RPS205!

Dear Rihan,  
 Your request has been approved. Please follow the attached use guidelines and ensure that WIDA is properly cited.  
 Thank you,  
 Allison

Allison Schweiger  
 Marketing Director  
 Wisconsin Center for Education Products and Services  
 1213 N. Sherman Avenue, #322, Madison, WI 53704  
[allison@wceps.org](mailto:allison@wceps.org)

...

## Copyright Permission 3

**Subject** Copy right permission

**Message** Hi CABA, my name is Rihan Abuhmdan, a doctoral candidate currently conducting research in the field of bilingual education. I am writing to kindly request permission to utilize the 90:10 model figure displayed on your homepage as a visual aid in my dissertation.

I want to assure you that I fully respect copyright regulations and will adhere strictly to any reference guidelines you provide for including this figure in my dissertation. The purpose of incorporating this figure is to exemplify program time implementation in a bilingual classroom setting, a crucial aspect of my research. Thanks

### Re: CABA PDS Information Request Result #13948465



Sara Kennedy <sara@gocabe.org>

To ○ CABA PDS; ● rihan.abuhmdan@rps205.com



11/13/2023

Good afternoon Rihan,

We are happy this can support you in your research! Please feel free to use this, with credit to CABA and a link to our website if applicable: <https://www.gocabe.org/>

Please let us know if you have further questions!

#### Sara Kennedy

*she • her • ella*

**Professional Learning Program Specialist**

CABA • California Association for Bilingual Education

Phone: (626) 814-4441 Ex. 125

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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION



**From:** Formsite <[noreply@fs3.formsite.com](mailto:noreply@fs3.formsite.com)>

**Date:** Sunday, November 12, 2023 at 6:35 PM

**To:** CABA PDS <[CABEPDS@gocabe.org](mailto:CABEPDS@gocabe.org)>

**Subject:** CABA PDS Information Request Result #13948465



## Appendix B

### Parents' Research Invitation Email

#### Parents/Guardians Approval Needed for Student Questionnaire



Abuhamdan, Rihan F <rihan.abuhamdan@rps205.com>

To rihan.abuhamdan@rps205.com



1/23/2024

Dear student's parent/guardian

My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE). I am writing to let you know about an opportunity for your son/daughter to participate in a dissertation research study. This research aims to investigate the factors that may affect the academic success and language proficiency of Arabic language learners (ALLs), and to gain a deeper understanding of how to best support the academic success and language proficiency of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs in the United States.

The criteria for participation is being an Arabic bilingual learner, enrolled in the immersion program for at least three years, and obtain the student's parent or guardian to participate in the study. Your child's participation in the study will be voluntary. If you decided to cancel your approval or your child wish to withdraw from the research at any time, he/she may do so by contacting me using the information below.

I may publish the results of this study; however, I will not use your child's name nor share identifiable data provided. Information will remain confidential. If your child meets the criteria above, is interested in participating in the study, and would like to be included in the potential participant pool, please sign the attached informed consent, and send it with your child in a sealed envelope. Rooms 10 and 13 are where the student can find the drop-off safe box. Monday and Tuesday for 4th grade, Wednesday, and Thursday for 5th grade, during the hours of 8:00 am to 11:00 am.

Thank you again for considering this dissertation research opportunity. Additional communication and guidance will be provided to guarantee the student's verbal approval and to assist you in facilitating your child's completion of the questionnaire at home, utilizing either their school-issued Chromebook or any other available device.

Please note that this research study follows the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), ensuring the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for considering this invitation, your child participation will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of bilingual education.

Best regards,

Rihan Abuhamdan

## Parents/Guardians Approval Needed for Student Questionnaire

الموضوع: الموافقة المطلوبة لاستبيان الطالب

عزيزي الوالد / الوصي

أمل أن يكون كل شيء على ما يرام، اسمي ريجان أبو حمدان ، وأنا طالبة دكتوراه في كلية التعليم الأمريكية. أكتب إليك لإعلامك بفرصة لابنتك / ابنتك للمشاركة في دراسة بموجب رسالة الدكتوراه الخاصة بي . يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف العوامل التي قد تؤثر على النجاح الأكاديمي والكفاءة اللغوية لمتعلمي اللغة العربية ، واكتساب فهم أعمق لكيفية دعم النجاح الأكاديمي والكفاءة اللغوية لمتعلمي اللغة العربية/ ثنائيي اللغة في الولايات المتحدة

معايير المشاركة هي أن يكون الطالب في البرنامج ثنائي اللغة/ العربية ، وأن يكون مسجلاً في البرنامج لمدة ثلاث سنوات على الأقل ، وأن يحصل على موافقة ولي الأمر الوصي على المشاركة في الدراسة. ستكون مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك في الدراسة طوعية. إذا قررت إلغاء موافقتك أو إذا كان ابنك/ابنتك يرغب في الانسحاب من الاستبيان في أي وقت ، فيمكنه القيام بذلك عن طريق الاتصال بي باستخدام المعلومات أدناه. قد أقوم بنشر نتائج هذه الدراسة؛ ومع ذلك، لن أستخدم اسم طفلكم ولن أشارك البيانات التي يمكن تعريفها المقدمة. ستظل المعلومات سرية. إذا كان طفلكم يلبي المعايير أعلاه، ويبدى رغبة في المشاركة في الدراسة، ويرغب في أن يتم تضمينه في حوض المشاركين المحتملين، يرجى توقيع استمارة الموافقة المرفقة وإرسالها مع طفلكم في مطروف مختوم. يمكن للطلاب العثور على صندوق الإيداع الآمن في الغرف 10 و 13. يومي الاثنين والثلاثاء للصف الرابع، والأربعاء والخميس للصف الخامس، خلال ساعات الثامنة صباحًا حتى الحادية عشر صباحًا

سيتم النظر في المزيد من التعليمات والتواصل معك إذا قررت إعادة نموذج الموافقة مع طفلك. شكرا لك مرة أخرى للنظر في هذه الفرصة البحثية. سيتم توفير تواصل إضافي وإرشاد لمساعدتك في تيسير إكمال طفلك للاستبيان في المنزل، باستخدام جهاز الحاسوب الذي تم توفيره من قبل المدرسة أو أي جهاز آخر متا

يرجى ملاحظة أن هذه الدراسة البحثية تتبع المبادئ التوجيهية التي وضعها مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية، مما يضمن حماية حقوق المشاركين وسريتهم. ستكون مشاركة طفلك طوعية تماما

شكرا لك مقدما على النظر في هذه الدعوة ، ستساهم مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك في النهوض بالمعرفة في مجال التعليم ثنائي اللغة

مع أطيب التحيات

ريجان أبو حمدان

American College of Education (ACE)

[Rihan.abuhamdan4823@my.ace.edu](mailto:Rihan.abuhamdan4823@my.ace.edu)

## Appendix C

### Research Informed Consent in Arabic and English Language

**Prospective Research Participant:** Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

**Project Title:** Empowering Bilingual Arabic Learners: A Qualitative Study of the Impact of Educational Leadership on Arabic Language Proficiency in US Immersion Programs

**Researcher:** Rihan Abuhamdan

**Organization:** American College of Education

**Email:** [Rihan.abuhamdan4823@my.ace.edu](mailto:Rihan.abuhamdan4823@my.ace.edu)

**Telephone:** (773) 732-8692

#### Date of IRB Approval:

Please note that this research study has been approved by the American College of Education Institutional Review Board. The IRB approved this study on January 12, 2024. A copy of the approval letter will be provided upon request.

**Researcher's Dissertation Chair:** Wes Anthony, PhD

American College of Education-Senior Core Faculty, Doctoral Studies

**Email:** [Wes.anthony@ace.edu](mailto:Wes.anthony@ace.edu)

#### Introduction

I am Rihan Abuhamdan, and I am a doctoral candidate student at American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of the dissertation chair, Dr. Wes Anthony. I will give you some information about the project and invite your child to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. If you have questions, ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will explain. If you have questions later, feel free to ask me then.

#### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to provide insight into how academic leaders can develop policies and practices that better support BALs and teachers in the immersion program, and whether these policies and practices could create an inclusive and equitable educational environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity in an urban school district in Illinois. This research aims to investigate the factors that may affect the academic success and language proficiency of Arabic language learners (ALLs). Conducting this qualitative will assist in gaining a deeper understanding of how to best support the academic success and language proficiency of bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs in the United States.

**Research Design and Procedures**

The study will use a qualitative methodology and an intrinsic case study design. Questionnaire will be disseminated to specific participants within the selected school district from and fifth grade/ bilingual classroom. The study will be composed of participants who participate in language immersion programs. Participants will be selected to represent diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds specific to bilingual Arabic learners.

**Participant selection**

Your children are being invited to take part in this research because of their experience as a bilingual learner, who can contribute to the field of bilingual education, fostering success, and improving current practices, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria are being an Arabic bilingual learner, enrolled in the immersion program for at least three years, and obtaining the student's parent or guardian to participate in the study.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your son/daughter's participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to accept or reject the invitation. If you choose not to allow your son/daughter participation, there will be no punitive repercussions.

**Child's Assent**

Before proceeding, I will communicate with you, the parent, to provide your child with age-appropriate information about the study's purpose, procedures, and any potential risks or benefits. Subsequently, I will seek your child's verbal or written assent through you, depending on their age and capacity to understand. This assent is an expression of their willingness to participate, and I consider it an integral part of the informed consent process.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

Participation is voluntary. At any time, you wish to end your son/daughter's participation in the research study, you may do so by sending me an email explaining you are opting out of the study. There will be no repercussions for leaving the study.

**Procedures**

I am inviting your son/daughter to participate in this research study by completing a 15-question questionnaire. The estimated time for completing the questionnaire is 10-15 minutes. The questionnaire will be in both Arabic and English to accommodate the language preferences of your child. You will be asked to assist your child in the administration of the questionnaire. This could involve parents supervising their child's completion of the questionnaire at home or in a controlled environment determined by the parents. I will provide clear instructions to you on how to guide your children through the questionnaire. I will offer guidance on any technical aspects and emphasize the importance of allowing your child to independently express their views. You will find my contact information in this form in case you have questions or concerns.

### **Risks**

While efforts have been made to minimize risks associated with participation, it is essential to recognize that there may be potential discomfort or challenges, particularly in responding to certain questions. Therefore, you do not have to answer any question or to give any reason for not responding to any question.

### **Benefits**

The questionnaire will investigate the experiences that bilingual Arabic learners face in immersion programs in the United States, and the findings will be considered by educational learners and policy maker to provide insight and recommendations for educational leaders working with bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs.

### **Confidentiality**

I will not share information about your son/daughter. Data for this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent federal and state law allows. Data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee during the defense of the doctoral dissertation. Participants' names will not be disclosed, and identifiers, such as Participant #1, will be assigned to their responses. The data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet or encrypted computer file. Any information about your son/daughter will be coded and will not have a direct correlation, directly identifying the student as the participant. I will only know what the student's number is, and I will secure the information on a password-protected computer.

### **Sharing the Results**

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. It is anticipated to publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

### **Questions About the Study**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact me on 7737328692 or Dr. Anthony: [Wes.anthony@ace.edu](mailto:Wes.anthony@ace.edu)

This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email [IRB@ace.edu](mailto:IRB@ace.edu).

If you approve your son/daughter's participation, please answer the following four questions:

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
1- What is your son/daughter's first language? (Home language)	
2- In which grade level is your son/daughter studying?	
3- How long has your son/daughter been enrolled in the Arabic bilingual/immersion program?	
4- Do you approve of your son/daughter's participation in this questionnaire?	

**Certificate of Consent**

I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I confirm that my son/daughter made the decision to participate without coercion, and I consent voluntarily to allow my son/daughter to participate in this study.

After discussing the study's objectives, benefits, and potential risks with my son/daughter, I successfully secured his/her verbal approval to participate in this research questionnaire.

Print or Type Name of Parent/Guardian's Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant were answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type name of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Arabic Translation of Informed Consent Form

#### نموذج موافقة

يرجى قراءة هذا النموذج بعناية وطرح أي أسئلة ترغب في طرحها قبل أن تقرر ما إذا كنت : المشاركون المحتملين في هذه الدراسة ترغب في مشاركة طفلك في هذه الدراسة البحثية. ولدى الوالد/الوصي و الطالب حرية طرح الأسئلة في أي وقت قبل أو أثناء أو بعد مشاركته في هذا البحث

معلومات المشروع

تمكين الطلاب الناطقين باللغة العربية: دراسة نوعية حول تأثير القيادة التربوية على مهارة اللغة العربية في برامج : عنوان الدراسة في الولايات المتحدة الدمج

ريحان أبو حمدان :الباحثة

كلية التعليم الأمريكية :المؤسسة (ACE)

البريد الإلكتروني : [Rihan.abuhamdan4823@my.ace.edu](mailto:Rihan.abuhamdan4823@my.ace.edu)

الهاتف : 7737328692

تاريخ موافقة لجنة مراجعة (IRB) : -

يرجى ملاحظة أن هذه الدراسة البحثية تمت الموافقة عليها من قبل مجلس المراجعة في كلية التعليم الأمريكية. وافق مجلس المراجعة على هذه الدراسة في تاريخ \_\_\_\_\_ سيتم تقديم نسخة من خطاب الموافقة عند الطلب

د. ويس أنتوني :رئيس أطروحة الباحث

كلية التعليم الأمريكية :المؤسسة (ACE)

رئيس الأطروحة :المنصب

البريد الإلكتروني : [Wes.anthony@ace.edu](mailto:Wes.anthony@ace.edu)

أنا ریحان أبو حمدان، طالبة دكتوراه في كلية التعليم الأمريكية :المقدمة أقوم بالبحث تحت إشراف رئيس الأطروحة الخاص بي، الدكتور ويس أنتوني. اسأل الباحث لشرح أي شيء لا تفهمه. يمكنك رفض . منح الإذن أو سحب موافقتك على مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك في الدراسة لأي سبب. حتى إذا قدمت إذنك، يمكن ابنك/ابنتك أن يقرر عدم المشاركة في الدراسة أو مغادرتها في أي وقت. سيطلب أيضاً من ابنك/ابنتك أن يقرر ما إذا كان يرغب في المشاركة في هذه الدراسة أم لا

هدف البحث

غرض البحث هو توفير رؤى حول الطرق التي يمكن للقيادة الأكاديميين من خلالها تطوير سياسات وممارسات تدعم بشكل أفضل تطوير لغة الطلاب وتخلق بيئة تعليمية شاملة وعادلة تقدر التنوع اللغوي والثقافي. يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف العوامل التي قد تؤثر على النجاح الأكاديمي واللغوي لطلاب اللغة العربية وفهم أعمق حول كيفية دعم النجاح الأكاديمي واللغوي للطلاب العرب الذين يدرسون في الولايات المتحدة باللغتين في برامج الدمج

تصميم البحث والإجراءات

سيستخدم البحث منهجية طرق البحث النوعية ودراسة حالة. سيتم توزيع الاستبيان على مشاركين محددین ضمن المنطقة المدرسية المختارة. يتألف البحث من مشاركين من المستوى الرابع والخامس يشاركون في برامج الدمج اللغوي. يشمل البحث جمع البيانات. سيتم اختيار المشاركين لمشاركة خبراتهم المتعلقة بوجودهم في برنامج ثنائي اللغة

## اختيار المشاركين

ابنك/ابنتك مدعو للمشاركة في هذا البحث بناءً على خبرتهم الذي يمكن أن يسهم بشكل كبير في مجال نجاح التعليم ثنائي اللغة وتحسين الممارسات الحالية ، مما يتفق مع معايير هذه الدراسة. معايير اختيار المشاركين: أن يكون الطالب ناطقاً باللغة العربية، مسجل في برنامج ثنائي اللغة/ عربي لمدة ثلاث سنوات على الأقل، والحصول على موافقة ولي الأمر أو الوصي على مشاركة الطالب في الدراسة

## المشاركة الطوعية

مشاركتك في هذا البحث هي تمامًا طوعية. إنها خيارك ما إذا كنت ترغب في مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك. إذا اخترت عدم المشاركة، فلن يكون هناك عواقب عقابية

## موافقة الطفل

قبل المضي قدمًا، سأتواصل معكم، الأهل، لتوفير معلومات مناسبة لعمر طفلك حول هدف الدراسة والإجراءات المتوقعة وأي مخاطر أو استنادًا إلى عمرهم وقدرتهم على الفهم، هذه ،فوائد محتملة. بعد ذلك، سأسعى للحصول على موافقة طفلكم الشفهية أو المكتوبة من خلالكم الموافقة تعبر عن استعدادهم للمشاركة، وأعتبرها جزءًا أساسيًا من عملية الموافقة المستنيرة

## الحق في الرفض أو الانسحاب

المشاركة طوعية. في أي وقت ترغب في إنهاء مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك في دراسة

## الإجراءات

أدعو ابنك/ابنتك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية عن طريق إكمال استبيان يتكون من 15 سؤالاً. سيكون الاستبيان باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية لتلبية تفضيلات لغة طفلك. ستطلب منك مساعدة طفلك في إدارة الاستبيان، وقد ينطوي ذلك على إشراف الأهالي على إكمال طفلكم للاستبيان في المنزل أو في بيئة مراقبة تحددها الأهالي سأقدم لك تعليمات واضحة حول كيفية إرشاد أطفالك خلال الاستبيان. سأقدم التوجيهات حول أي جوانب تقنية وأشدد على أهمية السماح للطفل بالتعبير عن آرائه بشكل مستقل. ستجد معلومات اتصالك في هذا النموذج في حال كان لديك أي أسئلة أو مخاوف

## المخاطر

بينما تم بذل جهود لتقليل المخاطر المرتبطة بالمشاركة، من المهم أن ندرك أنه قد يكون هناك احتمال للإزعاج أو التحديات، خاصة في الرد على بعض الأسئلة. لذلك، ليس على ابنك/ابنتك الإجابة على أي سؤال أو تقديم أي سبب لعدم الرد على أي سؤال

## الفوائد

في حين لن يكون هناك فائدة مالية مباشرة لك، إلا أن مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك قد تساعدنا في معرفة المزيد حول سيقوم الاستبيان بتحقيق تجارب الطلاب الناطقين باللغة العربية في برامج الدمج في الولايات المتحدة، وستعتبر النتائج من قبل المعلمين وصناع السياسات التعليمية لتوفير رؤى وتوصيات للقادة التربويين العاملين مع الطلاب الناطقين باللغة العربية في البرامج

## السرية

لن أشارك معلومات حول ابنك/ابنتك. ستُحفظ البيانات لهذه الدراسة بشكل خاص وسري إلى حدود السماح وفقاً للقوانين الفيدرالية والولائية. ستقدم البيانات المجمعَة إلى لجنة الدراسات العليا خلال مناقشة أطروحة الدكتوراه. لن يتم الكشف عن أسماء المشاركين، وسيتم تعيين معرفات، مثل المشارك #1، لتتبع إجاباتهم. ستُحفظ البيانات المجمعَة في ملف مقفل أو ملف كمبيوتر مشفر. سيتم تشفير أي معلومات حول ابنك/ابنتك ولن تكون لها ترابطاً مباشراً يحدد الطالب بصفته المشارك. سأكون الوحيد الذي سيعرف رقم الطالب، و سأحمي المعلومات على كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور

## مشاركة النتائج

في نهاية الدراسة البحثية، ستكون النتائج متاحة لكل مشارك. من المتوقع نشر النتائج حتى يتعلم الأشخاص الآخرون المهتمون من البحث

## أسئلة حول الدراسة

: تمت مراجعة واعتماد خطة البحث هذه من قبل لجنة مراجعة في الكلية الأمريكية للتعليم. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة، يمكنك طرحها الآن أو في وقت لاحق. إذا كنت ترغب في طرح أسئلة لاحقاً، يمكنك الاتصال بـ 7737328692. تمت مراجعة واعتماد هذه الخطة البحثية من قبل لجنة مراجعة في الكلية الأمريكية للتعليم. إن هذه اللجنة تلعب دوراً في ضمان حماية المشاركين في البحث من الأذى



إذا كنت ترغب في طرح أسئلة لهذه الفرقة، يمكنك إرسال بريد إلكتروني إلى [IRB@ace.edu](mailto:IRB@ace.edu).

إذا وافقت على مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك في هذه الدراسة، يرجى الإجابة على الأسئلة الأربعة التالية

السؤال	الإجابة
ما هي لغة ابنك/ابنتك الأولى؟ لغة المنزل في أي صف دراسي يدرس ابنك/ابنتك؟ كم قضى ابنك/ابنتك مسجلاً في برنامج اللغة العربية؟ هل وافقت على مشاركة ابنك/ابنتك في هذا الاستبيان؟	

#### إقرار بالموافقة

أقر بأنني قرأت هذه المعلومات المتعلقة بالدراسة، أو تمت قراءتها لي. أتعهد بالسبب الذي تم بموجبه طلب مشاركتي في دراسة البحث. تم منحي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة حول الدراسة، وتم الرد على جميع الأسئلة بما يرضيني. أشهد أنني على الأقل في الثامنة عشرة من عمري. أقر بأنني أوافق طوعاً على مشاركة ابني/ ابنتي في هذه الدراسة

بعد مناقشة أهداف الدراسة و الفوائد والمخاطر المحتملة مع ابني/ابنتي، تمكنت بنجاح من الحصول على موافقته/موافقتها الشفهية للمشاركة في استبيان البحث هذا

اسم الوالد/الوصي

توقيع الوالد/الوصي

أؤكد أن المشارك قد أعطي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة حول الدراسة، وتم الرد على جميع الأسئلة بأفضل ما في وسعي. أؤكد أن هذا الفرد لم يتعرض للإكراه لمنح الموافقة، وأن الموافقة تمت بحرية وطوعاً. تم توفير نسخة من هذا النموذج للمشاركة

اسم الباحث الرئيسي

توقيع الباحث الرئيسي

تاريخ

يرجى الاحتفاظ بهذا النموذج سجلاتك

## Appendix D

## Request Site Permission and Documentation

## Request for Superintendent's Approval



Rihan Abuhmdan &lt;[redacted]&gt;

To [redacted]



If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.

Research Project Consent Form-Rihan.docx  
22 KB

Dr. [redacted]

I am pursuing my doctoral degree in leadership (E.d.D) and am close to completing my journey. I must conduct a research study on a topic connected to the core of my degree and my career in education. My dissertation topic is **“Empowering Bilingual Arabic Learners: A Qualitative Study of the Impact of Educational Leadership on Arabic Language Proficiency in US Immersion Programs.”**

I would like to ask for your permission to conduct my research in the [redacted]. This study aims to explore the successful experiences and perceptions of bilingual Arabic learners, educators, and educational leaders in immersion programs in the district.

I have chosen the [redacted] for its diversity of languages, cultures, and successful experiences of bilingual learners. This study will contribute significantly to understanding how bilingual immersion programs can be implemented effectively in diverse school environments. To accomplish this, I would like to conduct interviews with a small number of educational leaders, educators, and coaches who work with bilingual Arabic learners in immersion programs and distribute a survey to bilingual Arabic learners in the district. The information collected will be used better to understand the stakeholders' perspectives in the district and identify areas for improvement.

As a scholar student, I respect the protocol of conducting research in educational settings. The study will be conducted with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality to ensure the privacy of all participants.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to conduct this study in your school district, as the targeted population includes bilingual Arabic learners, educators, and educational leaders in immersion programs within the [redacted]. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rihan Abuhmdan (MA)  
Bilingual Arabic Teacher

Research Site Approval

RE: Request for Superintendent's Approval

EJ To Rihan Abuhamdan Cc

Rihan,

Happy to help! The next step is work through the IRB process with Dr.

From: Rihan Abuhamdan

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval



January 11, 2024

To : Rihan Abuhamdan Wes Anthony, Dissertation Committee Chair

From : Institutional Review Board American College of Education

Re: IRB Approval

"Empowering Bilingual Arabic Learners: A Qualitative Study of the Impact of Educational Leadership on Arabic Language Proficiency in US Immersion Programs"

The American College of Education IRB has reviewed your application, proposal, and any related materials. We have determined that your research provides sufficient protection of human subjects.

Your research is therefore approved to proceed. The expiration date for this IRB approval is one year from the date of review completion, January 11, 2025. If you would like to continue your research beyond this point, including data collection and/or analysis of private data, you must submit a renewal request to the IRB.

Candidates are prohibited from collecting data or interacting with participants if they are not actively enrolled in a dissertation sequence course (RES6521, RES6531, RES6541, RES6600, RES6551, RES6561, RES6302) and under the supervision of their dissertation chair.

Our best to you as you continue your studies.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hamlett Chair, Institutional Review Board American College of Education

School District Official Approval

ROCKFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH APPROVAL

The [redacted] School District recognizes the importance of educational research in improving the education of our children and will consider requests from responsible parties or agencies to conduct research in the school district. The following information must be completed and submitted to the Executive Director of Improvement and Innovation c/o Administration Building, [redacted] before approval to conduct research is granted.

Date: Nov. 30, 2023

Applicant name (s): Rihan Abuhamdan

Address: [redacted]

Phone: (H) 773 732 8692 , 815 229 2881 , C: [redacted]

District Employee: (Y/N) Y Duration of study: (# of months) 4 months

Requests to conduct research will be denied if any of the following is included in the application:

- Compensation for individuals whose involvement takes place during the regular school hours.
- Proposals requiring the use of curricular materials not approved by [redacted]
- Requests that involve excessive use of instructional time.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	APPROVED	<i>No subjects under 18 years of age at worksite school.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	DENIED	
<i>[Signature]</i>		<i>1-22-24</i>
Dr. [redacted]	Executive Director	Date

## Appendix E

## Research Recruitment Letter and Correspondences

## Invitation to Participate in a Dissertation Research Interview



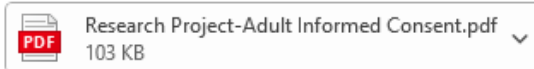
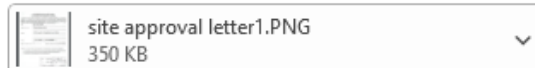
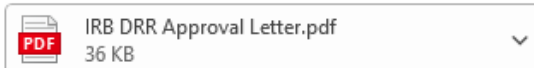
Rihan Abuhmdan &lt;Rihan.Abuhmdan

To Amal Hindi

Cc wes.anthony@ace.edu



1/23/2024



I hope this email finds you well. I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE). I am inviting you to participate in an important research study as a potential participant. The focus of my dissertation research is on the topic of "Empowering Bilingual Arabic Learners: The Impact of Educational Leadership on Arabic Language Proficiency in US Immersion Programs." This study aims to explore the role of educational leadership in enhancing Arabic language proficiency among bilingual Arabic learners in US immersion programs. Your unique experiences and insights in this context are highly valued and can contribute significantly to the findings of this study. By participating in an interview, you will have the opportunity to share your perspectives, challenges, and successes in promoting Arabic language proficiency within the immersion program.

Please note that this research study follows the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), ensuring the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality. Your participation will be completely voluntary. The interview will take approximately 40 minutes and can be conducted either in person or through video conferencing, based on your convenience. Your responses will be audio-recorded solely for accurate data collection, and all recordings will be stored securely and deleted upon completion of the study.

You can participate in the research if you are a school district's leader, administrator, or bilingual educator who serves bilingual Arabic learners in the immersion program. If you are willing to participate in this research, kindly respond to this email. If you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Thank you in advance for considering this invitation, and I sincerely hope to have the opportunity to include your valuable insights in my research. Your participation will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of bilingual education and educational leadership.

Attached is the IRB approval letter, the site approval letter from the school district, and the informed consent form. Thank you in advance for being part of this.

Rihan Abuhmdan (MA)

Doctoral Candidate

American College of Education (ACE)

Rihan.abuhmdan4823@my.ace.edu

**Participant #1**

Re: Invitation to Participate in a Dissertation Research Interview



Amal Hindi <amal.hindi@rps205.com>  
To Rihan Abuhamdan  
Cc wes.anthony@ace.edu



1/26/2024

I am happy to participate.  
Thank you!

**Participant # 2**

Re: Invitation to Participate in a Dissertation Research Interview



Thamir Aljobori <Thamir.Aljobori@rps205.com>  
To Rihan Abuhamdan



1/26/2024

You're welcome! We are so proud of you too!

**Participant #3**

Re: Invitation to Participate in a Dissertation Research Interview



Amy Powell <amy.powell@rps205.com>  
To Rihan Abuhamdan



1/26/2024



Hi Rihan,  
Here is my signed informed consent regarding your research. I approve of you conducting the research with staff members at RG.

Amy Powell  
Principal  
Rolling Green Elementary  
815.229.2881 (office)  
779.772.1528 (work cell)  
815.229.2135 (fax)  
76002 (internal)



**Participant # 4**

RE: Interview Schedule



Alla Harnish <alla.harnish@rps205.com>  
To Rihan Abuhamdan  
Cc wes.anthony@ace.edu



2/2/2024

Hi Rihan,

I can do it on Feb 13 from 2:30 to 3:30 or on Feb 16 at 1pm.

Thank you,

**Participant # 5**

RE: Invitation to Participate in a Dissertation Research Interview



Ehren Jarrett <ehren.jarrett@rps205.com>  
To Rihan Abuhamdan  
Cc Amy Lozano



2/6/2024

Rihan,

I will be happy to participate in the interview to support your study.  
I have cc'd Amy to coordinate a time.

I will also forward Amy the consent materials, so I can sign and send them back to you.

## Appendix F

## Research Questionnaire

Rihan Abuhamdan 1

bilingual education

Meet

Generate link

class code

7ws2bo

coming

work due soon

View all

Announce something to your class

Rihan Abuhamdan  
5:53 PM

Here are two versions of my research questions in both English and Arabic. Choose the one you like and answer the questions in that language.

English Language: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOY\\_L-VLQjsH0Ha8JVtMLa3ZO\\_WeL4bVYAySsLvtKA9XTXw/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOY_L-VLQjsH0Ha8JVtMLa3ZO_WeL4bVYAySsLvtKA9XTXw/viewform?usp=sharing)

Arabic Language: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc-mG30H7EZmgFdFtWG8FdckFSiG9dvPnAI662TYTfwaAfeOA/viewform?usp=sharing>

Add class comment...

**1- How do you feel about learning Arabic?**

Happy  
Neutral  
Unhappy  
Nervous  
Bored

**2- Are you using educational Arabic apps available for learning the language in your school and home?**

Yes  
No

**3- Is there an Arabic textbook for your Arabic class? If so, do you enjoy the content?**



**4- Does your school have a standard Arabic test that all students take? Is the test a good fit for what you are learning in your Arabic class?**

-----

-----

-----

**5- How do you feel about the general assessments in the Arabic immersion program?**

Happy  
Comfortable  
Uncomfortable  
Need help.

**6- What challenges (difficulties) do you face during Arabic class in the Arabic immersion program?**

-----

**7- Do you have Arabic books in the school library or in your classroom? How do you find these books which are available for you?**

-----

-----

-----

**8- What text's genre attracts your attention for reading?**

Fiction lesson  
Historical lesson  
Cultures and traditions lessons

**9- What do you find challenging in studying Arabic language?**

Speaking  
Listening  
Reading  
Writing

**10- What do you enjoy the most in studying the Arabic language?**

Reading  
Writing  
Speaking

**11- Do your Arabic teachers make the lessons interesting and fun for you?**

Yes  
No  
Maybe

**12- What teaching methods do you find most helpful for learning Arabic?**

Apps  
Reading materials  
Grammar-based learning

Communication-based learning  
In class presentation

**13- Do you feel that the amount of time allocated for learning and practicing Arabic in the class is sufficient?**

Yes  
NO  
Maybe

**14- Do you feel that your Arabic textbooks and learning materials make it easier for you to learn and engage with the language?**

Yes  
No  
Maybe

**15- How can the teachers help you with your Arabic language learning?**

Share different kinds of reading materials in Arabic.  
Provide more practices and hands-on activities.  
Offer more speaking chances and encourage conversation in Arabic.  
Introduce real-life scenarios for practicing Arabic.  
Offer additional one-on-one or small group support (tutor)  
Use multimedia resources (videos, audio recordings)

### Arabic Version of the research questionnaire

استبيان للمتعلمين الناطقين باللغة العربية

كيف تشعر بتعلم اللغة العربية؟

- سعيد  
- محايد  
- غير سعيد  
- عصبى  
- ممل

هل تستخدم تطبيقات عربية تعليمية متاحة لتعلم اللغة في مدرستك ومنزلك؟

- نعم  
- لا

هل هناك كتاب مدرسي اللغة العربية في فصلك؟ وإذا كان الجواب نعم، هل تستمتع بمحتواه؟

هل تخضع مدرستك لاختبار عربي قياسي يخضع له جميع الطلاب؟ هل الاختبار مناسب لما تتعلمه في فصل اللغة العربية؟

كيف تشعر بالتقييمات العامة في برنامج اللغة العربية؟

- سعيد

- مرتاح
- غير مرتاح
- بحاجة للمساعدة

ما التحديات (الصعوبات) التي تواجهها أثناء دروس اللغة العربية في برنامج اللغة العربية؟

---

هل يوجد لديك كتب عربية في مكتبة المدرسة أو في صفك؟ وكيف تجد هذه الكتب المتاحة لك؟

---

- ما نوع النصوص التي تجذب انتباهك للقراءة؟
- دروس الخيال
  - دروس التاريخ
  - دروس الثقافات والتقاليد

- ما الذي تجده صعبًا في دراسة اللغة العربية؟
- القراءة
  - الكتابة
  - التحدث
  - الاستماع

- ما الذي تستمتع به أكثر في دراستك للغة العربية؟
- فهم النصوص القرائية
  - الكتابة
  - التحدث

- هل يجعل معلموك في اللغة العربية الدروس ممتعة ومسلية بالنسبة لك؟
- نعم
  - لا
  - ربما

- أي الطرق التعليمية تجدها أكثر فائدة لتعلم اللغة العربية؟
- تطبيقات
  - مواد القراءة
  - التعلم المستند إلى القواعد
  - التعلم المستند إلى التواصل
  - العروض الدراسية داخل الصف

- هل تعتقد أن المدة المخصصة لتعلم وممارسة اللغة العربية في الصف كافية؟
- نعم
  - لا
  - ربما

- هل تعتقد أن كتبك ومواد التعلم العربية تسهل عليك تعلم اللغة والتفاعل معها؟
- نعم
  - لا
  - ربما

كيف يمكن للمعلمين مساعدتك في تعلم اللغة العربية؟

مشاركة أنواع مختلفة من المواد القرائية باللغة العربية  
توفير المزيد من التمارين والأنشطة العملية  
توفير فرص أكثر للتحدث وتشجيع المحادثات باللغة العربية  
إدراج سيناريوهات حياتية حقيقية لممارسة اللغة العربية  
تقديم دعم إضافي بشكل فردي أو في مجموعات صغيرة مع مدرس خاص  
استخدام مصادر وسائط متعددة (مقاطع فيديو، تسجيلات صوتي

## Appendix G

### Interview Protocol/Questions

INTERVIEWEE'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 INTERVIEWEE'S TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 INTERVIEWER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **I. Introduction/Background**

Good [morning/afternoon], [Interviewee's Name]. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I will be conducting the interview today. Before we begin, I want to make sure that everything is set up properly. Could you please confirm if your computer, or tablet is fully charged? I will be taking notes during the interview, so I have a writing pad and pen/pencil with me. If we are conducting an in-person interview, I will also test the recording app on my phone to ensure it is working properly. Are you ready to proceed?

#### **II. Interview Questions for Program's Leaders**

1. Describe the leadership challenges you have encountered in managing bilingual education programs within your school district. (Rapid increase in population, bilingual teachers' shortage, curriculums, and apps, etc....)
2. How do you address the pedagogical complexity of bilingual programs that require education in two languages across the curriculum? (Ex: resources availability, proper materials, and educational apps).
3. In your experience, what are the specific responsibilities administrators need to undertake to run the program effectively?
4. How do you ensure that bilingual educators receive the necessary administrative support (ex: intervention, paras, tutors, intervention)?
5. What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to address the lack of resources, especially Arabic apps and curriculum that addresses students' culture and background in bilingual education programs?
6. How do you manage the allocation of resources, such as staffing, and instructional materials, to meet the needs of bilingual education programs?
7. How do you support bilingual teachers in addressing teaching-specific concerns and improving classroom instruction for bilingual learners? (Ex: Coaching, Tutoring, Bilingual building admin, Arabic Bilingual mentor, Observation).
8. What efforts have you made to attract and retain qualified bilingual/Arabic teachers in the face of teacher shortages? (Staffing procedures)
9. Have you explored alternative strategies, such as the replacement teacher certification initiative, to address the shortage of bilingual/Arabic teachers? Explain the alternative strategies you have used.
10. Have you ever piloted an Arabic assessment or shared it with the bilingual teachers to see if it was effective and aligned with these standards?
11. What professional development opportunities do you provide to bilingual Arabic teachers to enhance their teaching skills and assessment practices?
12. How do you utilize data from assessments (ex: ACCESS Testing) to inform instructional decision-making and improve student outcomes in bilingual education programs?
13. How do you promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual learners?

14. What components do you consider important in effective principal preparation programs, particularly in the context of bilingual education?
15. How do you support ongoing professional development for bilingual teachers to stay current with the latest research and best practices in bilingual education?

### **III. Interview Questions for Bilingual Educators:**

1. To what extent do you believe that teaching the Arabic language is important for the newcomers to the US, especially the students in primary grade levels?
2. How do you incorporate the cultural and historical significance of the Arabic language into your teaching strategies?
3. What resources do you currently use in your bilingual classroom to support Arabic language learning and cultural awareness? Do you think these resources are enough to address your students' needs?
4. Do you have a standardized Arabic assessment (state or district level) that helps you to assess your students' proficiency level? If yes, how do you use the assessment scores and data to regroup your students based on their reading level to plan or organize your reading instruction?
5. How do you evaluate the language proficiency of native speakers and pinpoint elements that could influence their linguistic growth?
6. What difficulties do you have with delivering effective instruction across the curriculum in two languages? (Discussing the program's curriculums and resources for the bilingual learners).
7. What difficulties have you faced as a bilingual Arabic teacher trying to teach students the Arabic language in a bilingual learning environment? (Ex: a shortage of resources, time restraints, and problems communicating with parents and teachers as a bilingual team).
8. In bilingual education settings, how do you deal with issues including?
  - a. A shortage of resources
  - b. Time restraints
  - c. Problems communicating with parents and teachers as a bilingual team
9. What kind of assistance and chance for professional growth do you think would be beneficial in addressing bilingual educators' concerns about teaching in particular? (Ex: Professional Development Workshops, Mentorship Programs, and Regular Feedback and Assessment)
10. Have you experienced shortages of supplies or educational materials? How did you overcome this to assist your students?
11. How do you see school-wide leadership playing a role in advancing bilingual teacher education and enhancing classroom instruction?

### **IV. Closing Script**

This is the end of my questions. Before we leave, is there anything we have not covered or anything you would like to add?

Thank you, [Interviewee's Name], for your valuable time and insights during this interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate and share your expertise. If there are any additional points or thoughts you would like to add, please feel free to do so. Rest assured that all information provided will be treated with confidentiality and used solely for the purpose of this research. Should you have any questions or if there is anything else you would like to discuss, please let me know. Once again, I highly appreciate your cooperation, and I look forward to analyzing the data and incorporating your perspectives into the final outcomes. Have a wonderful day!

## Appendix H

### Subject Matter Experts' Emails and Feedback

#### Subject Matter Expert's Feedback



Rihan Abuhamdan <Rihan.Abuhamdan@rps205.com>

To wmzaitawi@cps.edu



8/13/2023

If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.

Dear Mrs. Zaitawi,

I hope you are doing well. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE). I invite you to contribute your expertise as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) for my dissertation research on "**Empowering Bilingual Arabic Learners: The Impact of Educational Leadership on Arabic Language Proficiency in US Immersion Programs.**"

As a respected expert in the bilingual education field, I would greatly appreciate your insights and knowledge; I am looking for feedback on my research questionnaire and interview questions.

One of the requirements of the methodology chapter is to consult at least three experts for their feedback. If you would like to contribute as a Subject Matter Expert for this research, read the questions in the attachment and let me know your thoughts. These will be my interview questions for the research participants, educational leaders, and educators in my school district. The questionnaire questions will be distributed to bilingual Arabic learners in the district immersion program.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my email and the questions I've attached. I appreciate your support for bilingual learners in the US.

Rihan Abuhamdan (MA)

### Subject Matter Expert's Feedback #1

Re: Your Feedback

Al-Amal School, Principal <Principal@al-amal.org>

Wed 8/9/2023 7:46 AM

To:Rihan Abuhamdani <[redacted]>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of [redacted]

Walikum Assalam Ms. Rihan,

Excellent work- Masha Allah- I'm eager to read your dissertation.

These are my comments about the questionnaires:

- Simplify the language by replacing words like pique, curriculum, allocated, sufficient...etc.
- Questions number 8,9,10, and 12, you may add an "other" option to give you more information if this applies to your research.
- Question number 11: You may add "How?" or "Explain" for more information.
- Question number 13 can be the last question of the survey, and add more open ended questions if you can.
- Question number 15 is so complex for third graders that you may need to look into it.

Please let me know if this is helpful, and let me know if you need further clarification.

Thanks,

Ghada

### Subject Matter Expert's Feedback #2

#### Questionnaire Suggestions

Charon Sargeant-Cal <[redacted]>

Sat 8/12/2023 1:46 PM

To:Rihan Abuhamdani <[redacted]>

Hi Rihan,

Good job with the questionnaire! Here are my suggestions for your questionnaire. Let me know if you have any questions.

[INTERVIEW & QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS Suggestions - FINAL 3- Copy.docx](#)

[redacted]

Assistant Principal



## I. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Can you** describe the leadership challenges you have encountered in managing bilingual education programs within your school district? (Rapid increase in population, bilingual teachers' shortage, curriculums, and apps, etc....) **Remove- Can you start the sentence with "Describe."**
2. How do you address the pedagogical complexity of bilingual programs that require education in two languages across the curriculum? (Ex: resources availability, proper materials, and educational apps).
3. In your experience, what are the key tasks and responsibilities that educational leaders in the multicultural department need to **handle to** support successful bilingual education? **Are you asking about the specific skill sets that the administrator should possess so they can effectively support bilingual education or are you inquiring about the specific responsibilities' administrators need to undertake to run the program effectively?**
4. How do you ensure that bilingual educators receive the necessary administrative support (ex: intervention, paras, tutors, intervention)?
5. What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to address the lack of resources, (such as Arabic apps and curriculum) in bilingual education programs, **especially Arabic apps, and curriculums?**
6. How do you manage the allocation of resources, such as policy decisions, staffing, and instructional materials, to meet the needs of bilingual education programs? **Remove policy decisions. You might ask a separate question about how district/school policy impacts the bilingual program.**
7. How do you support bilingual teachers in addressing teaching-specific concerns and improving classroom instruction for bilingual learners? (Coaching, Tutoring, Bilingual building admin) –(Arabic Bilingual mentor, Observation). **Make these two separate questions. Specific concerns is one question so is improving instruction.**
8. What efforts have you made to attract and retain qualified bilingual/Arabic teachers in the face of teacher shortages? (Staffing procedures)
9. Have you explored alternative strategies, such as the "replacement teacher certification" initiative, to address the shortage of bilingual/Arabic teachers? **This is a Yes/ No question as is. Do you want the respondent to explain the alternative strategies they have used or to just list them?**
10. Have you ever piloted an Arabic assessment or shared it with the bilingual teachers to see if it was effective and aligned with these standards?
11. What professional development opportunities do you provide to bilingual Arabic teachers to enhance their teaching skills and assessment practices?
12. How do you utilize data from assessments (ex: ACCESS Testing) to inform instructional decision-making and improve student outcomes in bilingual education programs? **(REMOVE-Teachers complain that they receive the ACCESS scores too late)**

13. How do you promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual learners?
14. What components do you consider important in effective principal preparation programs, particularly in the context of bilingual education?
15. How do you support ongoing professional development for bilingual teachers to stay current with the latest research and best practices in bilingual education?

## II. Questions for bilingual educators:

- 1- To what extent do you believe that teaching the Arabic language is important for the newcomers to the US, especially the students in primary grade levels?
2. How do you incorporate the cultural and historical significance of the Arabic language into your teaching strategies?
- 3- What resources do you currently use in your bilingual classroom to support Arabic language learning and cultural awareness? Do you think these resources are enough to address your students' needs?
- 4- Do you have a standardized Arabic assessment (state or district level) that **helps** you to assess your students' proficiency level? If yes, how do you use the assessment scores and data to **regroup your students based on their reading level to plan or organize your reading instruction?**
- 5- How do you evaluate the language proficiency of native speakers and **pinpoint** (identify) elements that could influence their linguistic growth?
- 5- What difficulties do you have with delivering effective instruction across the curriculum in two languages? (Discussing the program's curriculums and resources for the bilingual learners).
- 6- What difficulties have you faced as a bilingual Arabic teacher trying to teach students the Arabic language in a bilingual learning environment? (Ex: a shortage of resources, time restraints, and problems communicating with parents and teachers as a bilingual team).
- 7- In bilingual education settings, how do you deal with issues including: Change **formatting to make this easier to read e.g., below**
  - a) a shortage of resources,
  - b) time restraints,
  - c) problems communicating with parents and teachers as a bilingual team?
- 8- What **(kind of assistance and chances)** for professional growth do you think would be beneficial in addressing bilingual educators' concerns about teaching in particular? (Ex: Professional Development Workshops, Mentorship Programs and Regular Feedback and Assessment)
- 9- **Have you ever run out of** Arabic-language apps or adequate educational materials? What do you do to help your bilingual Arabic students? **Have you experienced shortages of supplies or educational materials? How did you overcome this to assist your students?**
- 10- How do you see school-wide leadership playing a role in advancing bilingual teacher education and enhancing classroom instruction?

### III. Students' Questionnaire

1- How do you feel about learning Arabic in the immersion program **that you enrolled in? Remove**

Happy

Neutral

Unhappy

**Add Other (to give an opportunity to express other feelings i.e., excited, nervous, bored)**

2- Are you using educational apps available for learning Arabic in your school or that you use at home?

Yes

No

3- Is there a curriculum specifically designed for your Arabic class? If so, does it pique your interest and engage you in the learning process? **Simplify this question – this is two, actually three questions. Students might not understand the word pique (**

---

4- Does your school have a standard Arabic test that all students take? Does your school have standard Arabic test that all students take? If yes, is the test a good fit for what you are learning in your Arabic class? (Explain)

---

5- How do you feel about the general assessments in the Arabic immersion program?

Satisfied

Somewhat satisfied **too vague**

Dissatisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied **too vague**

6- What challenges (difficulties) do you face during Arabic class in the Arabic immersion program?

7- Does your Arabic teachers make the lessons interesting and fun for you?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

8- What parts of the curriculum attract your attention for reading?

- Fiction lesson
- Historical lesson
- Cultures and traditions

9- What **parts of the curriculum** do you find most challenging? **remove parts of the curriculum**

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking

10- What **parts of the curriculum** do you enjoy the most? **remove Parts of the curriculum**

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking

11- Do your Arabic teachers make the lessons interesting and fun for you?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



12- What teaching methods do you find most helpful for learning Arabic?

- Apps
- Reading materials
- Grammar-based learning
- Communication-based learning
- In class presentation
- Add **other** \_\_\_\_\_

13- How can the teachers help you **better** with your Arabic language learning? **Remove better**

-----

14- Do you feel that the amount of time allocated for learning and practicing Arabic in the immersion program is sufficient?

- Yes
- No

15- Do you feel that your Arabic textbooks and learning materials adequately represent your culture and interests, **making it easier for you to learn and engage with the language?** (Make this another question see **below**)

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**Change to "Do you feel that your Arabic textbooks and learning materials make it easier for you to learn and engage with the language?"**

**Subject Matter Expert #3****Re: Subject Matter Expert's Feedback**

Zaitawi, Sarah &lt;wmzaitawi@cps.edu&gt;

Mon 8/14/2023 10:27 AM

To:Rihan Abuhmdan [REDACTED]

Caution! This message was sent from outside [REDACTED]

Dear Rihan,

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for your exceptional effort and dedication to your research on bilingualism in the US.

I had the chance to review the document you shared, and your questions for both the interview and the questionnaire are incredibly well thought out and thorough. Your attention to detail and ability to capture the essence of each aspect of bilingual education is evident in every question. Your document speaks volumes about your hard work in shaping this research.

I have attached my comments directly to the same document you shared. I found your work already of high quality, and my comments are meant to refine further and polish your efforts.

Once again, I want to thank you for your dedication to this critical study area. Your commitment to improving bilingual education and promoting a better understanding of its challenges and nuances is genuinely inspiring. Keep up the excellent work!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about my comments or if you'd like to discuss any aspect of your research further. I'm here to support you in any way I can. Keep shining!

Ms. Zaitawi

On Mon, Aug 14, 2023 at 10:19 AM Zaitawi, Sarah <[wmzaitawi@cps.edu](mailto:wmzaitawi@cps.edu)> wrote:

Yes, I would be happy to help.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe the leadership challenges you have encountered in managing bilingual education programs within your school district? (Rapid increase in population, bilingual teachers' shortage, curriculums, and apps, etc....)
2. How do you address the pedagogical complexity of bilingual programs that require education in two languages across the curriculum? (Ex: resources availability, proper materials and educational apps, professional development, ) **Ensure clarity in the term "pedagogical complexity" to avoid potential confusion.**
3. In your experience, what are the key tasks and responsibilities that educational leaders in the multicultural department need to handle to support successful bilingual education?
4. How do you ensure that bilingual educators receive the necessary administrative support (ex: intervention, tutors, etc..)?
5. What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to address the lack of resources in bilingual education programs, especially Arabic apps, and curriculums? **Be more specific about the lack of resources being addressed.**
6. How do you support bilingual teachers in addressing teaching-specific concerns and improving classroom instruction for bilingual learners? (Coaching, Tutoring, Bilingual building admin, Arabic Bilingual mentor, Observation)
7. What efforts have you made to attract and retain qualified bilingual/Arabic teachers in the face of teacher shortages?
8. Have you explored alternative strategies, such as the "replacement teacher certification" initiative, to address the shortage of bilingual/Arabic teachers? **Make sure to include both "attract" and "retain" in the question.**
9. How do you ensure that assessments designed for bilingual models accurately capture the learning accomplishments of bilingual students? (Have you ever piloted an Arabic assessment or shared it with the bilingual teachers to see if it was effective and aligned with the required standards.
10. How do you utilize data from assessments (ex: ACCESS Testing) to inform instructional decision-making and improve student outcomes in bilingual education programs?
11. How do you promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual learners?
12. What components do you consider important in effective principal preparation programs, particularly in the context of bilingual education?
13. How do you support ongoing professional development for bilingual teachers to stay current with the latest research and best practices in bilingual education?

### II. Questions for bilingual educators:

- 1- To what extent do you believe that teaching Arabic language is important for the newcomers to the US, especially the students in primary grade levels?
2. How do you incorporate the cultural and historical significance of the Arabic language into your teaching strategies?
- 3- What resources do you currently use in your bilingual classroom to support Arabic language learning and cultural awareness? If you have any, do you think these resources are enough to address bilingual students' needs?
- 4- Do you have a standardized Arabic assessment (state, district, or school level) that help you to assess your students' proficiency level in Arabic? If yes, how do you use the assessment scores and data to regroup your students based on their reading level?
- 5- How do you evaluate the language proficiency of Arabic native speakers and pinpoint elements that could influence their linguistic growth?
- 5- What difficulties do you have as a bilingual educator trying to deliver effective instruction across the curriculum in two languages? (Discussing the program's curriculums and resources for the bilingual learners). **Merge the two similar questions for clarity.**
- 6- What difficulties have you faced as a bilingual Arabic teacher trying to teach students the Arabic language in a bilingual learning environment? (Ex: a shortage of resources, time restraints, and problems communicating with parents and teachers as a bilingual team).
- 7- In bilingual education settings, how do you deal with issues including a shortage of resources, time restraints, and problems communicating with parents and teachers as bilingual team?
- 8- What kind of assistance and chances for professional growth do you think would be beneficial in addressing bilingual educators' concerns about teaching in particular? **Expand the range of options for professional growth.**
- 9- Have you ever run out of Arabic-language apps or adequate educational materials? What do you do to help your bilingual Arabic students?
- 10- How do you see school-wide leadership playing a role in advancing bilingual teacher education and enhancing classroom instruction?

### III. Students' Questionnaire

1- How do you feel about learning Arabic in the immersion program that you enrolled in? **Add more diverse emotional options, like "excited," "curious," etc.**

Happy  
Neutral  
Unhappy

2- Are you using educational apps available for learning Arabic in your school or that you use at home?

Yes  
No

3- Is there Arabic curriculum made for your Arabic class? If there is, does it make you excited and interested to learn? **Simplify the question for clarity.**

\_\_\_\_\_

4- Does your school have a standard Arabic test that all students take? Does your school have a standard Arabic test that all students take? Is the test a good fit for what you are learning in your Arabic class?

\_\_\_\_\_

5- How do you feel about the general assessments in the Arabic immersion program?

Satisfied  
Somewhat satisfied  
Dissatisfied  
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

6- What challenges do you face during Arabic class in the Arabic immersion program? **Detail specific challenges for better understanding.**

\_\_\_\_\_

7- Do your Arabic teachers make the lessons interesting and fun for you?

Yes  
No  
Maybe

8- What parts of the book attract your attention for reading?

Fiction text  
Non-Fiction text  
Historical text  
Cultures and traditions related text.  
Scientific Text

9- What parts of the Arabic book do you find challenging?

Reading the text  
Writing a paragraph  
Grammar  
Spelling

10- What parts of the book do you enjoy the most? **Revise this question to encourage more detailed responses.**

Reading the text  
Writing a paragraph  
Grammar  
Spelling

11- Do your Arabic teachers make the lessons interesting and fun for you? How?(explain)

Yes  
No  
Maybe

Explain-----  
-----  
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**12- What teaching methods do you find most helpful for learning Arabic?**

- Apps
- Reading materials
- Grammar-based learning
- Communication-based learning
- In class presentation
- On-hands activities

**13- Do you feel that the amount of time allocated for learning and practicing Arabic in the immersion program is sufficient?**

- Yes
- No

**14- Do you think your Arabic books and learning stuff show your culture and things you like, which helps you learn and enjoy the language?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

**15- How can the teachers help you better with your Arabic language learning?**

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## Appendix I

### Student Questionnaire and Protocol

#### Purposive sampling method and criteria

- 1- Being a bilingual Arabic native speaker
- 2- Being a learner in the bilingual/immersion program (Fourth and fifth grade).
- 3- Enrolled in the program for at least three years.
- 4- Having obtained consent from a parent or guardian to participate in the study.

#### Questionnaire Procedure

- 1- Secure parents' consent before sending the link to the students.
- 2- Request parents to assist in the administration of the questionnaire. This could involve parents supervising their child's completion of the questionnaire at home or in a controlled environment determined by the parents.
- 3- A secure digital copy of the questionnaire will be provided to each participant via the student's google classroom, which is associated with student's school district email.
- 4- The estimated time to fill out the questionnaire could take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

#### Participant Privacy and Confidentiality

1. Participants' names will not be recorded on the questionnaire platform.
2. All questionnaire's responses will be kept strictly confidential and will not be linked to the students' identities.
3. The data collected will be stored securely on a password-protected device and accessible only by the authorized personnel and if required for auditing or review purposes, individuals from the Institutional Review Board.
4. After three years and when data is no longer needed, it will be securely disposed of, and ensure that it cannot be recovered.

#### Ethical Considerations

1. Participants' informed consent will be obtained from their parents or guardians before their involvement in the questionnaire.
2. Participation in the questionnaire will be voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without consequences.
3. The research will be conducted under ethical guidelines and regulations to ensure the well-being and rights of the participants.
4. Minimizing the number of people involved in the study to protect the students' identities.
5. Students who will approve to participate must know what they are being asked to do, by whom, and for what purpose. Parents and their children must know whom to contact for information if they have problems with the research process. This not only includes contact information for the researcher but also contact information for the research chair.

**Directions for Consent Drop-off**

Parents' consent forms will be distributed to all fourth and fifth-grade students as a printed copy and will be in a sealed envelope.

- Collection Locations: fourth grade classroom:
- Days: Monday and Tuesday
- Time: 8:00 am - 11:00 am
- Location: A locked box within the fourth-grade classroom
- Fifth grade classroom:
- Days: Wednesday and Thursday
- Time: 8:00 am - 11:00 am
- Location: A locked box within the fifth-grade classroom

The box will be retrieved at 11:00 am and proceed to empty it, collecting the submitted informed consent forms.

**Security Measures**

The locked box will be equipped with a secure locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access.

Envelopes: Consent forms, along with any additional documents, should be sealed in an envelope to maintain the confidentiality of the information. An additional envelope will be provided for parental use.

**Protective Measures**

Location: The locked box in the classroom will be positioned in a secure and controlled environment to minimize the risk of tampering or theft.

Limited Access: The designated time frame (8:00 am - 11:00 am) ensures that drop-offs occur within a controlled window, limiting exposure to potential breaches.

**Inclusivity**

Acceptance and Denial: The procedure accommodates both participants who accept and those who decline the research invitation. All students are encouraged to drop off their forms, regardless of their decision to participate. This process will ensure that participants' identity will be protected.

## Appendix J

### Participants Interview Full Transcripts

<b>Participant # 1</b>	
<b>Speaker 1</b>	Good afternoon [REDACTED] This is the time to participate in the research interview. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I will be conducting the interview now. Before we begin I want to make sure that everything is set up properly. Could you please confirm if your computer is fully charged?
<b>Speaker 2</b>	Yes.
<b>Speaker 2</b>	I will be taking notes during the interview, I have a writing pad and pen with me. Are you ready to proceed?
<b>2</b>	Yes,
<b>Speaker 1</b>	Perfect. The first question, to what extent do you believe that teaching the Arabic language is important for the newcomers to the US, especially for the students in primary grade level?
<b>Speaker 2</b>	I believe teaching Arabic language for newcomers is very important, especially if they came from countries that speak Arabic right there so that it keeps their heritage and keeps their own language and especially students at primary grade levels. By supporting them in preserving their heritage and language, you know when we are having them, we ensure that students proceed forward while staying connected to their roots and cultural heritage. And they will be smarter to know two languages in the future. Like knowing their Arabic and knowing English in the future. To be honest, their parents also want them to learn Arabic as well, it is important for them to be on the same page. So, there'll be areas where I can communicate with them. So, to keep that communication valid going forward.
<b>Speaker 1</b>	Do you incorporate the cultural and historical significance of the Arabic language in your teaching strategies?
<b>Speaker 2</b>	I incorporate a lot of cultural and historical significance in my teaching as far as talking about ...you know, different cultural and different historical aspects, you know, in my class in showing pictures, and showing a lot of cultural things, through big trends and through videos and through YouTube. And so, celebrating, you know, some cultural events during school time or you know, when we have time for as well as we celebrate other cultural things. We celebrate Middle Eastern cultural things as well.
<b>Speaker 1</b>	What resources do you currently use in your bilingual classroom to support Arabic language learning and cultural awareness? Do you think these resources are enough to address your students' needs?
<b>Speaker 2</b>	Actually, as far as resources are concerned, if you need a tangible resource, like a physical copy of resources, oh, yes, yeah. I don't have a lot of physical resources like a lot of books and material, you know, crafts and stuff. I don't have a lot of that, you know, maybe I print pictures that I get from the internet to show the kids, and I share some videos from YouTube. So, it's mainly video.
<b>Speaker 1</b>	

Do you have a standardized Arabic assessment, state, or district level, which helps you to assess your students' proficiency level? If yes, how do you use the assessment scores and data to regroup your students based on their reading level to plan or organize your reading instruction?

**Speaker 2**

Actually, I don't, I don't have...no. I do my own assessment.

I tried to create my own...you know how teacher assessments are, they're not adaptive like the standardized testing those like the computerized one, like the map does or the start testing that they gradually go with a student's level of adaptive testing. Mine are not...they're not adaptive testing. If a student is high in something, you know, it's higher with a student level. I tried to make all three levels of assessment for the weak students, the average students, and the high-achieving students.

**Speaker 1**

Then, how do you evaluate the language proficiency of native speakers and pinpoint elements that could influence their linguistic growth?

**Speaker 2**

I conduct assessments at the beginning of the year, then in September and January to track progress and address my students' needs, which is so hard when it's not adaptive assessment and digital one.

**Speaker 1**

What difficulties do you have within dealing with delivering effective instruction across the curriculum in two languages?

**Speaker 2**

In delivering effective instruction in the two languages, well, one of the difficulties is the time, when I don't have enough time to cover all the material that I need to cover as far as English and as far as Arabic. Other difficulties are lack of resources and lack of material, I would say lack of assessment, too. Other difficulties lack of specialist who can help some weak or some average students now, you know, I would like you know, to prepare more stuff for my students, but there is no time I have, for example, difficulties when I'm doing testing, you know, when I'm doing testing some students need one on one help to do this and more time to work with them, coping with my students is an issue. Another difficulty is the size of the class,, you know, it's very hard to go above all this number.

**Speaker 1**

What difficulties have you faced as a bilingual Arabic teacher trying to teach students the Arabic language in a bilingual learning environment? Let's start with a shortage of resources, then time restraints, and Problems communicating with parents and teachers as a bilingual team.

**Speaker 2**

Well, I was just talking about it, so I have difficulty with time. We barely have time to come up with instructions for both languages. And we have a change, getting a new curriculum this year for English that we have to adopt, and I have no problem lack of resources as far as we have specialists or tutors or interventionists to help my students, you know, they would pull out some weak or average students to do work on some areas. So, like, a very big class, which is what I always do but this year, I have a much bigger class. I have 26 bilingual students, this is not an ideal number without additional support, so even when I do center time, I feel like I'm stretching too. When I am a bilingual teacher and I have students that need to be proficient in Arabic and English, it's hard to cover all the material and all the things they have to cover with this class size. For parents' communication, no, I have no problem in communicating with them, I usually contact them when needed.

**Speaker 1**

What kind of assistance and chance for professional growth do you think would be beneficial in addressing bilingual educators' concerns about teaching in particular? For example, professional development, workshops, mentorship programs.

**Speaker 2**

Oh, no, we don't have a lot of PDs for bilingual teachers actually. We do the same Gen Ed's training and PDs Yeah.

**Speaker 1**

Have you experienced shortage of supplies or educational materials?

**Speaker 2**

Speaker 2

Um, we don't have that many. Actually, I would see the problem as we don't have someone who orders the material and knows how it looks. There are, you know, some people who are responsible for ordering materials.

**Speaker 1**

How do you see school wide leadership playing a role in advancing bilingual teaching education and enhancing classroom instruction?

**Speaker 2**

Yes, I would say, we don't have a liaison or a coordinator between us and the bilingual department. We didn't have those other positions. We don't have a person that is responsible for finding materials for us or for seeing, you know, or overseeing the problem that we have, or to be coaching. You know. We don't have a supervisor that will evaluate or direct I would say, yeah

**Speaker 1**

This is the end of my questions before we leave. Is there anything you have not covered, or you believe you would like to talk about it?

Oh, I think I'm fine. Thank you for your time.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you, [REDACTED] for your valuable time and insights during the interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate and share your expertise. If there are any additional points or thoughts please call me or send me an email to add what you find helpful.

**Speaker 2**

Sure, Thank you.

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### Participant # 2

**Speaker 1**

Good afternoon, [REDACTED] This is the time to participate in this interview. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I will be conducting the interview now. Before we begin, I want to make sure that everything is set up properly. Could you please confirm if your computer, fully charged? I will be taking notes during the interview, so I have a writing pad and pen with me. Are you ready to proceed?

**Speaker 2**

Yes, please.

**Speaker 1**

My first question to you, to what extent do you believe that teaching the Arabic language is important for the newcomers to the US, especially the students in primary grade levels?

**Speaker 2**

Teaching Arabic to a newcomer is crucial, as you know, it helps them to integrate into the community and retain their cultural identity and also improve their communication skills. It also encourages fostering empathy in the future and understanding among students of different backgrounds. Transitioning to a new community while still maintaining their heritage culture is important for them to know. Also, students from diverse linguistic backgrounds require targeted interventions to ensure proficiency in both languages and equitable learning outcomes.

**Speaker 1**

How do you incorporate the cultural and historical significance of the Arabic language into your teaching strategies?

**Speaker 2**

I try to incorporate cultural and historical content into language teaching to help students understand and appreciate the Arabic-speaking world. This is especially impactful when bilingual teachers share their own background, allowing them to invest more in providing relevant cultural context. I always encourage students to share their experiences with others, fostering discussions that highlight the diversity among our students from different countries. By comparing and contrasting their experiences, students gain vivid memories that enrich their learning journey.

Most of what I have is a teacher's creative material. I most I have been. I actually look for all search resources and the difficulty is even when I find a resource the next step is to modify it to contribute so it can be integrated within a classroom setting or appropriate to their age. Recently, I encountered a challenge while searching for an appropriate children's dictionary, which took about three or four months. Unable to find one, so I had to use AI and other resources to create content myself. This involved multiple layers of difficulty, including developing content that students could easily understand and engage with.

**Speaker 1**

Do you have a standardized Arabic assessment that helps you to assess your students' proficiency level? If yes, how do you use the assessment scores and data to regroup your students based on their reading level to plan or organize your reading instruction?

**Speaker2**

I don't have any, I haven't found any testing protocol adopted by any company, whether it's the district, the state, or other states. Even if I do find one, it might not be appropriate for our specific needs and could require district and state approvals. 10 or 20 years ago, paper-based tests may have been suitable for assessment design. Nowadays, most testing, regardless of grade level, from elementary to high school and even college, is conducted online. This shift has its advantages, such as providing immediate feedback and facilitating the assessment process. However, it also requires a different set of skills from educators to ensure fair and accurate results. Additionally, there isn't a standardized curriculum in place that aligns with these online assessments, which adds complexity to the process.

**Speaker1**

Then, how do you evaluate the language proficiency of native speakers, especially newcomers, and pinpoint elements that could influence their linguistic growth?

**Speaker2**

What I am trying to do is to find a balance in our transitional bilingual program, where I can create resources that help students comprehend both Arabic and English. Unfortunately, there are a few components that still require research and attention, and it seems that there hasn't been enough investment in this area. Firstly, we need to define the specific requirements and quality standards for the resources we aim to develop. Arabic is well known for its complexity and richness, presenting a challenge in selecting suitable materials. Secondly, we need to address the needs of newcomers or individuals unfamiliar with the language, especially considering the diversity of dialects spoken by Arabic speakers from different countries. This adds another layer of complexity to the task. It appears that there hasn't been sufficient funding or collaboration with researchers or individuals interested in exploring these challenges further.

**Speaker 1**

What difficulties do you have with delivering effective instruction across the curriculum in two languages?

**Speaker 2**

The allocation of time for Arabic instruction is currently modeled after the Spanish program, yet there hasn't been any research or testing specifically tailored to the Arabic program. I've been searching for any studies or evidence supporting the use of this time allocation model for Arabic language instruction, but

unfortunately, none have been found. Therefore, it's uncertain whether this allocation is suitable for Arabic instruction, and it needs to be revised. It could be hurting not helping  
It's also challenging to find suitable resources for my classroom. Often, I have to spend twice the time required to locate, adapt, and prepare these materials for my students. Unlike educational institutions or companies that provide ready-to-use materials for monolingual classrooms, I have to create or heavily modify what I find to meet my students' needs. While my colleagues may have access to a broader range of materials, I must often innovate with what I have, tailoring content to support bilingual learning effectively. The quality and relevance of the materials I use are crucial, so much of what I use is self-created or adapted.

**Speaker 1**

What difficulties have you faced as a bilingual Arabic teacher trying to teach students the Arabic language in a bilingual learning environment?

**Speaker 2**

Definitely, the process starts by examining the accommodation and services our students receive, including funding, in comparison to their peers. This evaluation covers not only Arabic but other language programs as well. A common issue across these programs is the tendency to attribute challenges solely to language deficits without thorough investigation. In terms of support, the resources are minimal. As a teacher, I'm often the sole provider of specialized services. We lack professionals in areas like Arabic speech therapy and special education. Mentoring and coaching are also limited to what I can offer. This situation extends to educational materials as well. We face a significant shortage of essential teaching aids like posters and flashcards, which are staples in ESL and monolingual classrooms. This scarcity places an unreasonable burden on teachers and hampers our ability to achieve educational goals effectively.

Creating these materials single-handedly, without the necessary support or resources, is an unrealistic expectation. Our school library, with just one shelf of relevant materials, underscores the severe lack of resources. The absence of adequate funding further complicates the ability to produce or acquire the necessary teaching aids. Without these resources, enhancing our teaching methods becomes a formidable challenge.

**Speaker 1**

Can you elaborate on staff shortage and support?

**Speaker 2**

Ultimately if you don't have support, this is another issue. Typically, there are other languages with significant populations, but they lack staff with the appropriate degrees to become teachers. Even when individuals possess the necessary qualifications, they may be unwilling to take on the job due to many factors such as pay or other X factors. Ultimately, this poses significant challenges. With fewer qualified individuals available, maintaining quality becomes increasingly difficult. This could ultimately jeopardize the continuity of the program.

**Speaker 1**

What kind of assistance and chance for professional growth do you think would be beneficial in addressing bilingual educators' concerns about teaching in particular?

**Speaker 2**

Honestly, over the last couple of years, I've seen many institutions establishing teacher unions across many states like Georgia, Florida, California, New Jersey, and New York. However, the challenge lies in communication. We lack a cohesive means of communication among us, especially in terms of seeking approval and advocacy from administrators to participate in conferences or workshops that could further our professional development.

It's quite interesting because I recently had a conversation with a director from another district, and she mentioned that typically every embassy for every nation or country has some sort of references that they use. It was the first time I had heard about this, and it got me thinking. However, I'm not sure if some of

those countries lack representation or if they have embassies or consulates on the west or east side of the state or in major cities. This is all beyond my expertise, and I feel like we should have someone dedicated to exploring this. Unfortunately, in my five years here, honestly, I haven't come across any relevant professional development related to Arabic, not even remotely.

**Speaker 1**

Have you experienced shortages of supplies or educational materials? How did you overcome this to assist your students?

**Speaker 2**

I mean, you have no idea, I invest almost double, almost double my time that I'm required to do because it's all I try to find these appropriate resources, tweak them, change them to make them appropriate for my students. And then, you know, either printed as how I can get a copy of it or something like that. But with all of that, it's still a primary step because what I'm gathering that information is not from the educational institute or from companies who have long term versus the monolingual classroom. They already have that ready for them. In many occasions, I see a difference in the resources provided to me compared to my colleagues in General Education, they have access to more apps and materials, and while I understand that they cover more of content, having access to such resources would give me some insights or ideas that I can use to make it fit for my students, but I'm not, what I have in my classroom is mine.

**Speaker 1**

Do you think the bilingual students have the same equitable and inclusive learning environment to help them show progress in both languages?

**Speaker 2**

My understanding is that all students should have equal opportunities to learn. But again, not enough staff support like interventionists is something I'm not sure about, as I don't have a clear answer or specific reason. It might be more like an administrative position, something I'm uncertain about. We never even have the Illinois 228 code, which references the accommodations for bilingual students and their needs. Code 228 Mandates that school districts in Illinois must address the educational needs by providing bilingual learners with the necessary resources and support. This is the reason for having a multicultural department in our school district. I can definitely tell there's a lack in this aspect. For sure, the fact that we don't have much involvement or intervention when students are in need is evident.

**Speaker 1**

How do you see school wide leadership playing a role, advancing bilingual teacher education, and enhancing classroom instruction?

**Speaker 2**

We're aware there might be some disconnection or miscommunication on many occasions, and part of it could be attributed to a lack of communication. When I started this program, I remember there was a principal at a different school, [REDACTED], who spoke Arabic. She recently retired, and it's surprising why her expertise isn't utilized for this school. Allocating the right people can be helpful; having principals or assistant principals with a degree in bilingual education or proficiency in a second language would aid in understanding these practices better and ensuring a fair treatment of students. Unfortunately, we don't have that opportunity. Mrs. [REDACTED] our school principal, has certainly gone above and beyond in her efforts.. It's unfortunate that we rank lower in the search process and may not have as much chance to advocate, but it's unclear who's advocating or not, and that's a question we need to address..

**Speaker 1**

This is the end of my questions. Before we leave, is there anything we have not covered or anything you would like to add?

**Speaker 2**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate...

**Speaker 1**



Thank you, [REDACTED] for your valuable time and insights during this interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate and share your expertise. If there are any additional points or thoughts you would like to add, please feel free to do so. Once again, I highly appreciate your cooperation, and I look forward to analyzing the data and incorporating your perspectives into the final outcomes. Have a wonderful day!.....Let me stop the recording

### Participant # 3

Good morning [REDACTED] This is the time to participate in this interview. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I will be conducting the interview now. Before we begin I want to make sure that everything is set up properly. Could you please confirm if your computer is fully charged?

Speaker 2

Yes it is.

Speaker 1

I will be taking notes during the interview, so I have a writing pad and pen with me. Are you ready?

Speaker 2

Yes, go ahead.

Speaker 1

The first question can you please describe the leadership challenges you have encountered in managing bilingual education programs within your school building?

Speaker 2

The leadership challenge is kind of coordinating the support here in the building with our district bilingual department.

And so, what that looks like is you know, there's different directives for other languages and the district but when it comes to Arabic, it's like things are not exactly secure. So, things like assessments, curriculum materials.

Speaker 1

How do you address the pedagogical complexity of bilingual programs that require education in two languages across the curriculum?

Speaker2

We need to just make sure first of all, understanding of culture and the language so that we can take that into consideration prior to accessing some of those things like the resources and the materials. So, I think, especially as a new principal coming into this program, it would have been nice, just to have additional support from the bilingual department to kind of give me a rundown on what it is like in the Arabic program and cultural things as that was new to me. I feel like I've been learning on the fly and just knowing that you're entering into special programs such as the elementary Arabic program, there should be some more onboarding for administrators taking over roles such as that.

Speaker1

In your experience. What are the specific responsibilities administrators need to undertake to run the program effectively?

Speaker 2

We need to have.... It's going to be the same thing as me running you know, agenda classroom. We need to make sure that there's a curriculum for their learning standards being followed. There is formal and informal feedback given to teachers within the program, but also, outside of just kind of general, Adams needs to be established at different checkpoints throughout the career. So, within the program, what would it look like at kindergarten, versus maybe third grade and fifth grade? What are the key skills that students need to have as a bilingual learner in the program that needs to be outlined and we need to be tracking and monitoring progress towards those specific program goals

Speaker 1

Okay, so how do you ensure that bilingual educators receive the necessary administrative support? I believe finding bilingual staff, coaches, admins, interventionists, and tutors who speak the students language is the biggest challenge the district faces.

**Speaker 2**

You're right and we need it more at the district level to build the amount of people within the program because right now, it's just our teachers who are being pressured to complete the work within the program. And they're kind of I feel like you guys are left to figure it all out. on your own without any additional support. So yes, right. Now, the way that we're ensuring this as we've developed a kind of Arabic liaison position so that there's somebody that can kind of bridge that gap between the school and the district. So that's the first step but we also need to build the amount of Arabic administrators and leaders within the district bilingual departments.

**Speaker 1**

What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to address the lack of resources, especially Arabic curriculums that address students' culture and background?

**Speaker 2**

One of the strategies is just kind of connecting with other Arabic programs throughout the country. I've reached out to other districts and charter schools that have Arabic programs to try to find out what resources they're using. But some of the ones that I've gotten, we've had been blocked as a district based on the content within the curriculum or the materials and kind of like our SOPPA guidelines, making sure that online privacy is protected, whereas the other school districts may not have those kinds of policies and procedures in place. So that, you know, maybe we need to reevaluate those kinds of policies that our district has to help us have better access to those material references. I also reached out to ISBE to have them kind of start reading some resources, as well as finding things I send them to them, and they check to see if they would be appropriate to use or not. And so, we're trying to reach out to at the state level to help us find resources as

**Speaker 1**

well. Okay. So, how do you support bilingual teachers in addressing teaching specific concerns? And improving classroom instruction for bilingual learners?

**Speaker 2**

That's actually a really good question, because we are starting to build that into our CIP plan for the next three years because we need to improve that for not just in the self-contained bilingual program through Arabic but also helping bilingual learners in the gen ed classroom. We need to be working with the ESL teachers and providing professional development to all staff strategies for assisting bilingual learners. So, we may need to identify some key best practices or strategies for instruction. And you know whether we have three top three things that we're going to be trying to do and implement consistently, we can do that within our own

**Speaker 1**

program. Okay. What efforts have you made to attract and retain qualified bilingual teachers?

**Speaker 2**

We just discussed this with our district with the recruitment department to help identify....it also was based on the allocation. So as of right now, we don't have any openings in the elementary program because all six teaching positions are filled. So, it'd be something that we would have to discuss with bilingual and our allocations department to advocate for additional allocations for tutors. Because right now, we're not going to post any positions because they're not available right now. There's no earnings.

**Speaker 1**

Have you ever piloted an Arabic assessment or shared it with the bilingual teachers to see if it was effective and aligned with each grade level standards? If not, is there any future plan to find a standardized Arabic assessment?

**Speaker 2**

I myself have not had experience with a standardized Arabic assessment. That is something that you know, through our talks with our bilingual department, which is kind of part of the role of that Arabic liaison is to help identify and search for those Arabic assessments, so that we can start reviewing those to see if there's a standardized one that we can use.

**Speaker 1**

What professional development opportunities do you provide to bilingual teachers to enhance the teaching skills and assessment practices?

**Speaker 2**

It's the same kind of professional development opportunities that we will provide all teachers because good teaching is good teaching, whether it's a bilingual or monolingual classroom so we're looking at just kind of best practices using the science of reading. But we could probably do a better job at building in some more ESL strategies and actual language and language development strategies as well.

**Speaker 1**

How do you utilize data from ELLs assessments, ex: ACCESS Testing, to inform instructional decision-making and improve student outcomes in bilingual education programs?

**Speaker 2**

So, we have the access data, but we could use that to probably do some better, like skill based groupings. We can use that to help students work on the latest standards with, speaking, listening, reading, writing, all of that we could probably develop groups within based on the data from that test.

**Speaker 1**

Teachers receive the ACCESS scores so late. Students leaving the school or experiencing level changes without timely ACCESS score data can be unhelpful for teachers.

Top of Form

**Speaker 2**

It's kind of there needs to be something more frequent so that we can use that data more timely, and adjust throughout the school year versus the year.

**Speaker 1**

Okay, how do you promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual learners?

**Speaker 2**

We want to make sure that, you know, all students feel welcome when they feel a sense of belonging in their classroom. So, in order to do that, we want to make sure that they feel represented throughout the building and throughout their classrooms. And that comes from making sure that we have displays and student work that is displayed within both languages, both English and Arabic. We've done a good job of trying to increase the amount of signage that we have around the school that is for both English and Arabic. But we need to make sure that it feels like wherever the kids are in the school, that they are represented within the building. So that makes it a little bit more inclusive.

**Speaker 1**

What components do you consider important in effective principal preparation programs, particularly in the context of bilingual education?

**Speaker 2**

Principal preparation programs need to be sure to include coursework in understanding diverse cultures, strategies for supporting bilingual students, and supporting family relationships. Principal programs should also have coursework designed to evaluate effective bilingual curriculums, materials, and assessments. It would be nice to have a rubric to help determine if the programs meet necessary requirements for an effective bilingual program. This could help administrators determine what areas of support may be needed within the program. We need to build partnerships with various universities to determine how they support bilingual education.

**Speaker 1**

Do you feel that you really need an assistant principal who is bilingual so he can help you or he can help in running this program in your school building?

**Speaker 2**

Yeah, I would say yes. That would be beneficial. When there is an instruction, it could just be an instructional coach or it could be a dean or an administrator, somebody that is outside of the classroom that can help oversee the program. More specifically

**Speaker 1**

How do you support ongoing professional development for bilingual teachers to stay current with the latest research and best practices in bilingual education or bilingual classrooms?

**Speaker 2**

I think that is really important for teachers to network within the Arabic community with different colleges and organizations, professional organizations that support you know, Arabic or bilingual education so, you know, networking, connecting with professionals, providing conferences opportunities to train teachers to go to conferences or professional development sessions like that to help them stay current. I have reached out to them and again, we are lacking somebody and the bilingual department that could provide that. If there's nobody that speaks the language knows the language knows the skills

**Speaker 1**

Not necessary to be an Arabic. It could be teaching strategies, English language learners resources, connecting with bilingual students and their families.

**Speaker 2**

Yes. Outside of just specifically Arabic. Yes. I kind of mentioned that to the talent development department. I actually met with them and discussed it with the executive director [REDACTED] when they were designing the essential learning institute, and they did try to develop some courses to support bilingual education within there.

**Speaker 1**

Now we have reached the end of my questions. Before we leave, is there anything we have not covered or anything you'd like to add?

**Speaker 2**

I just would like to add that, you know, I see the pride that our Arabic teachers take within the bilingual program, and I want to better support, you know, all of you guys as teachers and our students and families. I do hope that we can have better administrative support to help kind of guide our work because I feel like right now, we're kind of being left out there to figure it out ourselves. But right now, the teachers you guys are the ones that are doing the heavy left, and I just appreciate that. And I see the struggles that we have, but it's not due to any fault of your own. It's I think it needs to come from higher up and admiration

**Speaker 1**

Thank you [REDACTED] for your valuable time and insights during this interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate and share your expertise. If you have any additional points or thoughts you would like to add please feel free to do so. Okay, all right. That's all. Thank you. Let me stop the recording.

#### Participant # 4

**Speaker 1**

Good afternoon, [REDACTED] This is the time to participate in this interview. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I will be conducting the interview now. Before we begin, I want to make sure that everything is set up properly. Could you please confirm if your computer, fully charged? I will be taking notes during the interview, so I have a writing pad and pen with me. Are you ready to proceed?

**Speaker 2**

Okay.

**Speaker 1**

Describe the leadership challenges you have encountered in managing bilingual education programs within your school building?

**Speaker 2**

Yes. One of the challenges we're facing is indeed the rapid population growth, focusing on accommodating the rising numbers of bilingual students and we employ strategic measures to help us, and we also advocate for additional resources and utilize flexible programs like dual language to manage the influx actively recruiting candidates because we have experience in building our teacher shortage like the rest of the country, and we're trying to grow our own certified staff. We also try to offer competitive salaries and benefits and support educators through mentorship and professional development. We, like everybody else, have funding limitations. This is an ongoing program, and we use grant money to proactively seek grants to find resources to secure materials and technology.

**Speaker 1**

What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to address the lack of resources, especially Arabic curriculums that address students' culture and background in bilingual education programs?

**Speaker 2**

We are still identifying the gaps in our resources and our curriculums, and to secure culturally around the materials as well as technology tools we make available we try to make available a variety of multilingual resources and partner with publishers. We also ensure that our curricula address both languages, heritage language and integrate cultural context.

**Speaker 1**

I like what you're trying to confirm, but the bilingual Arabic students were working on the REACH curriculum, which was originally Spanish folklore and culture.

**Speaker 2**

Well, we are always on the lookout for resources when we adopted REACH we didn't have our Arabic program. We are actually going to switch it by creating a CLT where we will put something different. You know, it's extremely, extremely difficult to find Arabic materials here and we are working with our parents, with our community members and teachers to help us with change and of course, to help us find the appropriate material.

**Speaker 1**

In your experience, what are the specific responsibilities administrators need to undertake to run the program effectively?

**Speaker 2**

First of all, program oversight and affiliation are crucial. We oversee program implementations, analyze data, and provide ongoing support and feedback. Another important aspect is the policies and leadership supporting well-being and allocation. Our policies encompass budgeting, proposals, and community engagement. We collaborate with families, community organizations, and universities to leverage resources and expertise. Additionally, we prioritize professional learning, which requires securing funds annually and organizing opportunities for bilingual and ESL teachers. We work across departments to ensure funds so it's more of the financial department. And we have the professional development department managers and of course it's all about money and we are cutting money right now. We are not stopping our effort to make sure that to the extent we could provide support.

**Speaker 1**

Isn't the time to start advocating for changing some of these policies which restrict program improvement and to facilitate the resources finding protocols? As an admin, can you take these challenges to the state level to discuss some codes and policies which really need to be revised?

**Speaker 2**

Yes, absolutely. I agree with you, and I know that we are working with ISBE on advising them on our policy actually. It was a policy on the newcomers. I know they actually use recommendations. So now you're right, but it's.... You know, when the tech dictates that that's what we need to do and it's at the state level and federal level. It takes time.

**Speaker 1**

How do you manage the allocation of resources, such as staffing, and instructional materials, to meet the needs of bilingual education programs?

**Speaker 2**

We use a data driven approach, we allocate resources based on student needs and program enrollment and data analysis. Academic performance of our students also has the key factor here, equity and fairness. We try to equitable distribution of resources across grade levels and languages. And we consider student characteristics and demographics and language proficiency as well as single wielding on teachers, allocating our resources and we have discussions and ensure that we are in English and transparent, transparent decision making.

**Speaker 1**

How do you support bilingual teachers in addressing teaching-specific concerns and improving classroom instruction for bilingual learners?

**Speaker 2**

We offer workshops and we offer conferences and online courses on best practices from scratch and responsiveness and technology integration. And again, it is based on what we get from the government in terms of grants, and obviously we do budget for that. We advertise the opportunities in the [REDACTED] district news. And we also offer through WIDA and job sites

**Speaker 1**

What efforts have you made to attract and retain qualified bilingual/Arabic teachers in the face of teacher shortages?

**Speaker 2**

When we go to universities with bilingual education programs, we attend job fairs and actively seek candidates for our positions. Teachers are currently pursuing their degrees while teaching on provisional certificates. This process is faster and allows them to receive benefits and competitive salaries, which we also offer. It takes time to change licensing policies, but yes, we are making it clear that we need more teachers, and we need other venues to be able to bring them to our discipline.

**Speaker 1**

Have you ever piloted an Arabic assessment or shared it with the bilingual teachers to see if it was effective and aligned with each grade level standards? If not, is there any future plan to find a standardized Arabic assessment?

**Speaker 2**

We are aware that we need an Arabic Assessment. In the past, we used the foundational skills assessment, which was developed by our teachers. However, I'm not sure what happened to it. We now recognize the importance of having a culturally appropriate assessment in place. Practices where we offer the same learning opportunities for Arabic teachers, we offer other multilingual teachers in language acquisition assessment, and data analysis.

**Speaker 1**

How do you utilize data from ELLs assessments, like ACCESS Testing, to inform instructional decision making and improve student outcomes in bilingual education programs? Noticing that we usually receive this data so late.

**Speaker 2**

I can tell you that we send them to school as soon as we receive them. I know it's late and that's one of the biggest complaints to the state that it's late. It doesn't help us place students. It doesn't help us. You know,

in time, but we do look at the performance of students each year and that helps us make instructional decision making and resource allocation and professional development.

**Speaker 1**

How do you promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual learners?

**Speaker 2**

While we've stressed the importance of fostering a welcoming supportive atmosphere and buildings, principals, and staff the client and receivers could feel valued and respected, regardless of their language, background, the proficiency level, we implement culturally responsive teaching practices and as well as provide access to resources and support services that cater to the unique needs of our learners.

**Speaker 1**

Can we discuss the classroom size for English language learners or bilingual learners, which might be behind the less effective classroom instructions provided to bilingual learners?

**Speaker 2**

We are still within the law and what it tells us, so we start with 90% of what the rest of the classroom is, and then it can go to search, according to our contract agreement with teachers in this district. Start over and that's the word we follow. Oh, I agree with you. It's too much, especially given the use of our bilingual students, but other than that, it's just, you know, if we don't have money, then that's what it is. The state does not give us money for nine students in the class. So that's what it is.

**Speaker 1**

What components do you consider important in effective principal progression programs, particularly in the context of bilingual education school?

**Speaker 2**

They need to understand bilingual education policies and practices and research based instructional strategies. They also need to know a little bit about language acquisition and culturally responsive pedagogy. So, they need to have good skills and foster collaboration across the English faculty and staff. So that they could have partnerships with diverse teachers, parents, students, community members, and honestly, they need to be solid proficient into a bunch budgeting and staffing

**Speaker 1**

Okay. Before we leave, is there anything we have not covered or anything you would like to add? Thank you, Dr. Harnish, for your valuable time and insights during this interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate and share your expertise. If there are any additional points or thoughts you would like to add, please feel free to do so. Once again, I highly appreciate your cooperation, and I look forward to analyzing the data and incorporating your perspectives into the final outcomes. Have a wonderful day.....Let me stop the recording

#### **Participant # 5**

Good afternoon, [REDACTED] this is the time to participate in this interview. My name is Rihan Abuhamdan, and I will be conducting the interview now. Before we begin, I want you to make sure that everything is set up properly. Please confirm if your computer is fully charged. I will be taking notes during the interview, so I have a writing bad and pen with me. Are you ready to proceed?

**Speaker 2**

Yes, I am ready to proceed.

**Speaker 1**

Okay, there might be some sub questions if I need more clarification.

**Speaker 2**

Okay

**Speaker 1**

The first question, can you please describe the leadership challenges you have encountered in managing bilingual education programs within your school district?

**Speaker 2**

Great question. I think one of the problems we face leading to bilingual education is the sheer number of languages that we need to serve. In [REDACTED] Schools we serve over 40 languages or over 50 languages, excuse me. We often have a hard time matching instructors who speak the language or support staff who speak the language providing support for the students. Another challenge I think we face is that often when we're providing language support to students, even in languages that are very commonly spoken or district like Arabic and like Spanish, you often have students who come to our country that have not had a lot of educational experience in their own country. So that is where we're working on building out an idea for a newcomer center because language can be part of the problem. But just the sheer need to support families and students in being successful in a school setting is also part of the problem. The third issue that we see as challenges with all the staffing programs is making sure that we have enough teachers that either speak language, or have the training they need to fully meet the needs of our bilingual learners, those are the three biggest should.

**Speaker 1**

How do you address the pedagogical complexity of bilingual programs that require education in two languages across the curriculum?

**Speaker 2**

Addressing the complexity of that is at the core of the work because we frankly don't always have the outcomes that we want to have as a school district with students who speak English. And when you add the complexity of making sure we have the right curriculum materials, make sure we have the right staff training for all students in English. Then you have the complexity of needing to have materials, staff, and training for staff and students in all of those languages. Administrators have to be trained in multiple areas. It really does add to the complexity so what we're attempting to do is to invest in recruiting efforts to ensure that we do have enough teachers, both cultural and language speaking backgrounds to connect with our students. We are trying to invest in training, whether it's for English speaking teachers, who only speak English to make sure that they have at least bilingual certification. We've had a partnership, and then the larger issue of making sure we're continuing to find ways to attract and retain teachers who speak Arabic, Spanish, as well as many other languages as possible and other plus languages.

**Speaker 1**

In your experience, what are the specific responsibilities administrators need to undertake to run the program effectively?

**Speaker 2**

I think it starts with being when you think about what administrators need me as leader or whether it's a district administrator or whether it's a principal or a teacher leader. I think we have to start with being really great listeners. I think we have to listen more effectively than we do sometimes. I think this is something we need to improve in our district. We need to listen to families. And make sure we are hearing what they need and what students need. Whether that's academic in nature, whether it's language support, tied to academics, or whether basic needs are being met to make sure we can find the right community partner. So, listening to families and to students is doing that in a really thorough way. We also have to listen to the teachers and then the staff support these families and students. I think far too often their voice is not heard enough in our district. And sometimes that can be a language barrier. Sometimes that can be due to just how busy everyone is. But we have to do a better job of not only making sure we listen to families and students, but that we also listen to the staff I think whether it's a principal needing to listen to families, students, and staff, or whether it's district leadership, and I think that has been our biggest opportunity for improvement.

**Speaker 1**



How do you ensure that bilingual Arabic educators receive the necessary administrative support, for example intervention, tutoring, mentor?

**Speaker 2**

What we attempt to do with our budgeting model. We'll start with just pure money to have staff in place assuming we can find the staff that is needed, which is always as I said is part of the problem depending on the language need that could be difficult to find staff but let's assume that we can find them, what we do with our budgeting model in the [REDACTED] is schools that serve a higher population of students who have need whether it's low income, language, or socio economic challenges, we try to make sure that those schools have additional money in their budgets to just positions to support those things. So, we try to make sure that every school doesn't get equal resources. We may have a school that supports lots of languages, we may have a school that only supports largely English speaking. We can't give them all the same thing. We need to make sure that the schools that have greater need and the student population or language services or social emotional support or any of those things, additional budget dollars to do so.

**Speaker 1**

What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to address the lack of resources, especially Arabic curriculums that address students' culture and background in bilingual education programs?

**Speaker 2**

Arabic-speaking students are one of our, if not our, fastest-growing, and is among our fastest demographics, and we need to, as a school district, do more. I want to first say that what we are doing needs to be better. But in terms of things we have done, I mentioned trying to make sure we have additional resources for schools that serve students that have higher socio economic needs, but also in my language as I mentioned, our school budgeting formula tends to drive resources, schools that have greater need. And number two, I think we really have to do a better job and are trying to do a better job on the recording front. We have to make sure that we are in places that have tutoring resources, the teaching resources, the administrative resources we need to support Arabic students. And I would say our biggest opportunities for improvement already continue to get better at recruiting and retention and also making sure we continue to invest additional resources in schools like [REDACTED] school for example.

**Speaker 1**

Could you please elaborate on the payment methods protocols? It's always a challenge for teachers when discussing with the bilingual department leaders, or with their school principal about resources, apps, and curriculum availability; the ongoing issue always seems to revolve around protocols, strategies, and most notably, policies, particularly payment policies. Why haven't we begun advocating for facilitating the process and making it more accessible for school principals to have the autonomy to select additional resources for their students' benefit?

**Speaker 2**

To your point, I think there are two levels that this work needs to happen, and you in your question really laid out where we need to go from my perspective. One, I think our state far too often still functions and I think our district far too often functions in a way that reflects the vast majority of our students are still speaking English and therefore in our curriculum, processes and our future recruitment and retention processes often be updated and improved. And I think there's problems at both the state and local level. Let me start with a state level, I would really appreciate it if at least for the languages like Spanish and Arabic that have huge populations in the state of Illinois, I would at least like us to have some kind of a curriculum clearinghouse at the state level, so that we don't have to each district figure out what can and can't be approved and I'd like to have a stronger curation system for the state of Illinois. I think that would go a long way. Two, as a local district, we have to do a better job of making sure our bilingual department does a better job. of ensuring that we have our own set of curated resources that teachers can be adequate for what teachers need, because when I talk to teachers like you across the district and staff across the district that serve bilingual students, I often hear the problem that we don't have enough. We haven't

mended enough and then when teachers tried to take it upon themselves to get more, then they ran into roadblocks because there is an approval process because we do have the best things to make sure they're okay. So, I think the two things we need to do is one expect that the state would do a better job of having four districts into the district. Getting that support from the state and in addition hopefully needs to have a stronger pool of resources in our core languages that we support and at [REDACTED] that's at a minimum need to be in Spanish and Arabic.

#### Speaker 1

How do you support bilingual teachers in addressing teaching-specific concerns and improving classroom instruction for bilingual learners? In this point, we have to talk more about bilingual coaches, additional tutors, interventionists, bilingual admins for observation, Arabic bilingual mentors, none of these staff members are available in the immersion program.

#### Speaker 2

You have a recruiting problem and a retention problem we need to address so number one, in the target languages that we need to support at scale, we need to make investments in teacher training infrastructure, which means more opportunities for instructional coaching in other resources that we have are readily available for English speaking teachers. Number two, we need to find the recruitment pools of people who can serve as tutors as social workers and psychologists, we need to have a stronger group of people who can play all the roles that are needed to support a child's education in all of the languages and that is a training challenge. It's also a recruitment and retention challenge and ideally, we will know we are doing the best we can do when we get to a place where whether it is resource allocation, whether it is teaching or support staff resources across tutoring or social worker, etc. Ideally, at least in languages where we already have a lot of students, we should have teacher and staff populations that increasingly reflect the student population. And far too often, we lack that diversity of life experience of language documents in Arabic, Spanish and some of the other languages that we support. So that has to continue to be our work is how do we get the people in place that can support our teachers, and how do we make sure that those people have the training they need, whether it's our teachers or people like instructional coaches. That's going to take time and districts all across our country are struggling to catch up. But we have to find a way to do that. That's our job. We have to find a way to have enough teachers and support staff to reflect the diversity of our student population. And unfortunately, what typically happens is our students and family populations change faster than our staff population. And so that means we often are short in particular with support staff but at times, tutors and then teachers. And so, I really think that's an excellent question, it really highlights where we need to go next.

#### Speaker 1

What efforts have you made to attract and retain qualified bilingual/Arabic teachers in the face of teacher shortages? This question focuses more on staffing procedures. So, is this the district's responsibility or one of the State Board of Education role levels?

#### Speaker 2

Yes, I think both, I think when it comes to expediting I think far too often we have people who are highly educated in another country, speak the target language, we need them to speak. Far too often. I've heard of stories where people have delays in being able to start helping our students and I think our state and our country, the federal level, needs to do more to help us expedite licensure, particularly for people that are highly educated but in another country, and we need to have a state that rise as much as possible in terms of reciprocity, to allow us to bring people into our system faster. I think far too often. There is red tape that slows people down from getting in front of students. I want to let you know that I'm on a committee called Vision 2030 through the State Superintendents Association, and the committee is tied to talent. And one of the issues we are going to be raising for statewide advocacy is that so not only am I talking to you about that, but I can promise you I am all about this this week. I am not alone, and you are not alone in our frustration. The ability of the state to make it easier for highly educated highly talented people who have gotten their education and another country to have reciprocity with Illinois. So many districts

struggle with what we struggle with and share, share the frustration that I share with you. Okay, thank you so much for working on this.

**Speaker 1**

I will focus now on the Arabic assessments. Have you ever piloted an Arabic assessment or shared one with bilingual teachers or multicultural departments or vice versa to see if it's effective?

**Speaker 2**

Yeah, I think the assessment issue is really frustrating me because we talked about this. I believe, Arabic teachers, Spanish teachers who are teaching kids students who speak Spanish or Arabic, minimum, but as many languages as possible, our state is going to expect that we test students in English. I really believe our state needs to do more to best resources. And then when I look at some of the other assessment services that are not state created, whether it's in our case, we are using star and map assessments, ideally, the more we can have assessments that test students in English are able to assess students in Arabic, Spanish, or other languages. We need to increasingly as a state have those resources available, also [REDACTED] school so I don't have a specific plan in place yet.

**Speaker 1**

We used to have an Arabic assessment, our students went through this assessment 2 times during the academic year, in the beginning and at the end of the year. It stopped during the admin's transition.

**Speaker 2**

No, I would not have known that. There was something I can assign on the side of interviews with my chief academic officers that is addressing that issue. That gives me something I can hopefully do to help. I'll try to follow up with this academic project. I would love to be a part of solving that problem because I don't think we can truly meet the needs of our student learners; we will do more in that area.

**Speaker 1**

I appreciate that, thanks. How do you utilize data from assessments, like ACCESS Testing, to inform instructional decision making and improve student outcomes in bilingual education programs? What do you think of a late ACCESS result that bilingual teachers can't locate before at least one year.

**Speaker 2**

That's a problem with all students. And that is another thing the vision 2030 committee is taking on a state assessment. One thing that Illinois is doing a little bit better on but still is problematic is state assessments for all students are not made official until October of the next school year. October is usually around October 31, November 1. So, to your point, we are looking to get results and instead of getting the results for the students we currently are serving and teaching. We are getting results. The months after we have a new group of students is not a good way to run a business and certainly not a good way to run an educational system because by that point, those students may have moved on to another grade level or even to another school. That leads to really, really ineffective use of data. We can use the data when we get it to kind of look globally at our instruction in terms of helping individual students. Its utility is diminished significantly by getting it so late. So that alone I think the top assessment priority is to have state assessments back in the hands of the teacher before the school you're at. That is one of the best things the state of Illinois could do for educators across the state in all languages, because it's true in English, and it's certainly true in the ACCESS test.

**Speaker 1**

Okay, Let's talk about available professional development opportunities. What professional development opportunities do you provide to bilingual Arabic teachers to enhance their teaching skills and assessment practices?

**Speaker 2**

Well, ideally, we have a series of teaching practice opportunities that are available to all of our teachers around our standards of practice, and it is my understanding that the bilingual department annually has budgetary dollars to targeted professional development, but if I'm being candid, I think we have a lot of work to do in providing professional development to bilingual teachers. I think there is much opportunity

for improvement in that area that we should be taking our dollars and ensuring that teachers have a voice in what they need. That we are delivering what they need in the summertime as well as during the school year. Another way we can support professional development for bilingual teachers is stronger and stronger investment in instructional coaches. One of the things I think we know is true about good adult learning is that taking a college course or taking a seminar can be a good way to learn job embedded learning. While I'm doing my job of teaching, having someone coached me is a different type of high quality learning that I think we need to do more and more of, so I think we need to find additional instructional coaching resources, as well as additional summer and before and after school professional development opportunities. I think both of those would help improve our system.

**Speaker 1**

How do you promote inclusive and equitable educational environments that support the language development of bilingual learners?

**Speaker 2**

I think moving forward and what we're doing now, we have to do a better job of number one, increase the amount of newcomer support that we have. I think we ask so much of bilingual teachers and schools and schools that have high bilingual populations, to serve everyone from people who have been in this country for many years, and are increasingly strengthening their English skills and have much deeper cultural connection to the country to hundreds if not 1000s of students, depending on the time of the year, are very new to the country may be very new to formal education and school may be coming for more and have social, emotional, and trauma concerns. And so, I think investing in newcomers' support will help all of our students because when I look at what our teachers have to do, you may be supporting someone who is brand new to the country and has trauma and all of these other issues from potentially coming in as a refugee. All the way to students who are dancing very rapidly academically, and are increasingly comfortable with learning about their native language as well as in English. And I think that's a lot to ask. So, I think all of the things we can do newcomers support would be at the top of my list and it's something we're going to prioritize in our facilities plan. And something I hope to have at least a short term solution for to start next school year. And so, I think that is probably of all of the things we can do better that's at the top of my list.

**Speaker 1**

What components do you consider an important effective principal preparation program, is there any plan in the future to have additional bilingual admins?

**Speaker 2**

At this time as we look at the bilingual budget and also our schools budget, I think that is something we have to put more emphasis on. What is the building level administrative support package needed to look like? I agree with you wholeheartedly that any of the assistant principals and principals we have in place need more training, and supporting bilingual programming number one, and number two, we need to actively recruit administrators from our bilingual teaching population and do everything we can to help them get into programs like our NIU leadership program, which allows [REDACTED] Public school teachers to get a free master's degree and serve as a dean of students. So, I think adding more Spanish and Arabic speaking teachers into our administrative training programs would be a big first step for us. I think far too often don't have enough people that are speaking that are serving bilingual students in those leadership development programs. And that would be a way we could grow our own, because I think that would be one of the best and most sustainable ways to successfully having an administrative group that is more capable of supporting this work is drawing from the very teaching population that does that work. And so that's something I'm going to really challenge my school team to do is to recruit people for our NIU leadership program. From our bilingual population, there are seats available. I think we need more administrators with that teaching background.

**Speaker 1**

How do you support ongoing professional development for bilingual teachers to stay current with the latest research practices and bilingual classrooms?

**Speaker 2**

There are two ways we have to do this well; one is through high quality instructional coaching. The other is through high quality professional development and as we discussed earlier, there are opportunities for improvement in both of those areas. But I do think we have at least some of those resources in place. And frankly, my challenge to my bilingual department in my instruction is going to be to do more of that moving forward.

**Speaker 1**

Okay, [REDACTED] thank you for your valuable time and insights during the interview. I appreciate your willingness to participate and share your expertise. If you have any additional points or thoughts you would like to add, please feel free to do so.

**Speaker 2**

Thank you for all of your excellent work for your advocacy. I'm so thrilled to hear you're working on your doctorate, and I was honored to help in any small way that I could.

**Speaker 1**

Thank you, I will stop the recording.