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“(Not) the same as it was”: Parents’ and teachers’ perception of the impact of COVID-19 on a bilingual elementary program

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ABSTRACT

This article examines teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning on the implementation of a Portuguese-English Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) program in an elementary school in the U.S. Drawing on the literature on language orientations and in/equity in DLBE, this study hones in on the results of two surveys, involving 66 parents and 18 teachers, conducted as part of a three-year mixed-methods project. Our analysis points to the contrasting perceptions of parents regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their children’s education. English-speaking parents believed that the benefits of DLBE such as foreign language learning diminished, leading some to withdraw their children from the program. In contrast, Portuguese-speaking parents expressed commitment to the program and vouched for its positive impact on their children’s learning of Portuguese and English during the pandemic. Teachers reported the negative impacts of remote learning on all students’ language learning, but Portuguese-speaking students were perceived as struggling more due to a lack of parental support. This study contributes to research on in/equity in DLBE by showcasing how varying perceptions of parents and teachers during a crisis can accentuate inequitable dynamics for racialized bilingual students and families.

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The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid shifts to emergency remote instruction exacerbated lingering educational and economic disparities that have existed in the United States, impacting students and their parents (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2020; Rivera et al. 2020; Levine et al. 2021). Minoritized students of Latin American descent in the U.S., including Brazilian immigrants, have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 (Rivera et al. 2020; Priebe Rocha et al. 2021). At the same time, Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs have gained popularity among elementary schools across the country. DLBE programming aims to foster students’ bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement, and cross-cultural competency. However,

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empirical studies found that many of these programs reproduce inequities, including by catering to monolingual English-speaking students and families (Oliveira et al. 2020; Dorner and Cervantes-Soon 2020; Hamman-Ortiz 2020; Chávez-Moreno 2021). However, there is limited scholarship on how remote instruction in the 2020–2021 school year affected the implementation of DLBE programming in public schools around the country. In this article, we explore the perception of parents and teachers concerning the impacts of the pandemic on the implementation of a Portuguese-English DLBE program. This program, hosted as a strand in an English-medium K-5 school, was envisioned to better serve the needs of the local Brazilian immigrant population.

To understand educators' and parents' (Brazilian immigrants and non-Brazilians) sensemaking around the impacts of the pandemic on the language program, we draw on previous scholarship on in/equity in DLBE (Cervantes-Soon 2014; Cervantes-Soon et al. 2017; Palmer et al. 2019) and language orientations (Ruíz 1984). Language orientations influence stakeholders' approaches to planning and executing bilingual programming and policy and often manifest in stances toward language as a problem, a resource, or a right (Ruíz 1984). Examining the language orientations at play in the focal DLBE program has the potential to raise awareness about what kind of policy development is needed to establish or maintain equity (Hult and Hornberger 2016). This study draws on two sets of surveys implemented as part of a 3-year mixed-methods study (2018–2021) at one elementary school in Massachusetts. The first survey, geared towards school parents, involved 20 Portuguese-speaking respondents and 44 English-speaking respondents. The second survey, geared toward school teachers, had 18 respondents. This study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1. How do COVID-19, and the shift to remote learning, shape parents' perceptions of their children's education in a Portuguese-English DLBE program?

RQ2. How do COVID-19 and the shift to remote learning, shape teachers' perception of the implementation of a Portuguese-English DLBE program?

Conceptual framework

Orientations to language & in/equity in bilingual education

Ruíz (1984), rooted in the field of language policy and planning, presented main three orientations to language: language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource. First, through language as a problem orientation, speaking a language other than English is seen as an obstacle to overcome. Second, Ruíz explained that with language as a right orientation, language is perceived as a fundamental human right, and thus everyone has the right to speak and use their language(s). Finally, when individuals orient to language as a resource, bilingualism is seen as an asset, and multiple languages are used in schools (Baker 2011). Scholars leveraged Ruíz's proposed language orientations to examine teachers' perceptions of language education (Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al. 2020; Alisaari et al. 2021).

Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al. (2020) employed Ruíz's framework (1984) framework when looking at the teaching of Spanish as a Second Language in Spain. They looked at regular teachers compared to specialist teachers finding that many specialists took on a language-as-resource perspective by expressing their positive framing around every language

that students speak holding value. Alisaari et al. (2021) considered Ruiz's orientation when looking at teachers' beliefs toward students' home language within Finland. They found that participating teachers perceived Ruiz's ideas of language as a right and language as a resource at the individual level, emphasizing the value that language has for individuals rather than the whole society.

While additive bilingualism (García 2009; Bartlett and García 2011) and the language as a resource orientation are often said to undergird the implementation of bilingual programs in the U.S., this is not always the case. Different educational stakeholders—including parents, teachers, and school leaders—also may hold divergent orientations to language, which can generate tensions. Additionally, as pointed out by Baker (2011), language-as-resource orientations run the risk of commodifying language for economic gain and world influence. Prior research shows that this view of language is held by many English-speaking parents who enroll their children in dual-language and bilingual education programs (Craig 1996; Varghese and Park 2010).

On one hand, research has pointed to many positive aspects and opportunities for students who participate in these language programs. For example, Morita-Mullaney et al. (2020) discussed how emergent bilingual students outperform monolingual students in grades and achievement test scores over time. This provides evidence, at some level, towards equal distribution of outcomes if we frame outcomes as short-term scores and grades. Other studies have also demonstrated how DLBE can improve minoritized students' academic achievement (Collier and Thomas 2004; Lindholm-Leary and Block 2010; Block and Vidaurre 2019).

However, studies that center equity in the everyday implementation of DLBE programs suggest that English-dominant, white students and families are often prioritized over racialized bilingual students in these settings (Cervantes-Soon 2014; Valdez et al. 2016; Cervantes-Soon et al. 2017; Palmer et al. 2019; Oliveira et al. 2020; Chávez-Moreno 2021). These programs have been described as a way to 'privilege the already privileged' (Valdez et al. 2016). Students of Latin American descent also run the risk of being positioned as 'white property,' indicating that DLBE programs are often set up to only benefit these students when resources are available to and welcomed by white students and families (Chávez-Moreno 2021). For example, Chávez-Moreno (2021) noted that the focal DBLE program in her study 'deflected any stigma from being with EL/Latinx students by promoting itself for White students rather than for Latinx equity' (Chávez-Moreno 2021, p. 1124). In other bilingual programs, the minoritized language has been viewed as an 'othering trait' (Martinez Negrette 2022), calling into question the equity of such programs in terms of language use and who can benefit. This study focuses on analyzing how teachers and parents view a particular Portuguese-English DLBE program, including through the lens of their language orientations, during a time of crises engendered by the global pandemic. This framework enhances our understanding of how differing perceptions among parents and teachers may impact the continuity of DLBE implementation.

Literature review

Parents' perception and approaches in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Parents and families are key stakeholders affected by the shift to online learning with the COVID-19 pandemic. In a study in Portugal, it was found that many parents struggled to

balance work and support their children's learning at home while coping with the emotional toll of quarantine (Ribeiro et al. 2021). In a study in Canada, it was found that some parents lacked confidence in their pedagogical skills to provide effective at-home learning (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk 2021). Additionally, parents of various racial backgrounds with over 50% of Black were concerned about too much focus on technology, detracting from the teaching-learning process itself (Cowen Institute 2020).

The extent of parents' involvement in supporting their children's learning varied in different contexts. Some parents of children in Portugal noted that they mainly monitored their children's attention in classes and made sure they completed tasks (Ribeiro et al. 2021). However, parents of elementary students in a French language program in Canada reported a significant increase in their involvement in their children's education during remote learning (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk 2021). Both French and non-French speaking parents were concerned about over-reliance on them to implement the curriculum at home and less exposure to the French language. Some parents, who were not native French speakers, were unable to support their children's French language development at home, leading to worries about their children's declining interest and skills in French.

Among families of bilingual learners in California whose home languages were Spanish (85%), Cantonese (8%), Mandarin (4%), and Vietnamese (3%), the three most common challenges faced during COVID-19 were found to be decreased household income, food insecurity, and having a family member who developed a serious illness (Holtzman et al. 2022). When looking specifically at im/migrant families in the U.S., many of them explained that their reasons for migrating were to provide better financial and educational opportunities for their children (Oliveira & Segel 2022). These families, as well as Latina immigrant mothers in the U.S. Northeast, faced challenges caring for their children during remote instruction as some had to work outside the house, which led some of them to resign from work (Bruhn 2022; Oliveira & Segel 2022). For families who had been detained or separated at the U.S.-Mexico border, the traumas of COVID-19 were further exacerbated. Some Latina mothers discussed the difficulties due to the language barrier with English instruction, as well as not feeling prepared to take on the role of a teacher (Bruhn 2022). Together, these findings indicate the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on different stakeholders in local communities. For language-minoritized parents in the U.S., there were also added hurdles that shaped how they were able to support their children's education.

COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on schools and teachers

The COVID-19 pandemic has led education scholars and practitioners to rethink what it means to enact culturally relevant pedagogies. Ladson-Billings (2021) called on educators to use the pandemic as a reset to evaluate how we can proactively engage in a culturally centered pedagogy. Borrero et al. (2022) provided examples of pedagogical activities promoting cultural responsiveness such as fourth graders writing about their lived experiences during the global pandemic, and high schoolers participating in podcasts to explore their cultural identities. When thinking about bilingual children specifically, Ortiz et al. (2022) emphasized the need to reflect students' race, ethnicity, culture, and language in curricula, and to connect them with support services such as counselors or social workers.

With the shift to remote learning, teachers experienced profound changes in their roles, as highlighted by Kim and Asbury (2020) and Pryor et al. (2020). They had to restructure

their schedules while learning how to use new technologies, blurring the lines between work and personal life. To keep students engaged, teachers had to be flexible with their pedagogical practices over virtual meeting platforms, such as Zoom or Google Meet, to keep students motivated (Pryor et al. 2020; Miller 2021). They also prioritized students' social-emotional development (Pauley 2020; Miller 2021).

Teachers working with emergent bilingual learners (English Language [EL] teachers) provided additional instruction through phone calls with students and online platforms (Cushing-Leubner et al. 2021). These teachers expressed greater concern about the ability of bilingual learners to effectively use virtual communication tools compared to their English-dominant peers (Research for Action 2020). Teachers working with emergent bilinguals shifted their focus to providing services to families, including Internet access and creating translated materials for families (Cushing-Leubner et al. 2021). Their priority shifted from maintaining bilingualism to supporting students' understanding of general education content (Cushing-Leubner et al. 2021).

Dual language program teachers faced unique challenges during the pandemic. In a Spanish-English kindergarten classroom in the Midwest, virtual teaching limited opportunities for students to practice bilingualism as students were often times muted (Kim 2022). Teaching strategies such as language partners, which involved having a native English speaker and a native Spanish speaker working together during literacy time, became impractical during remote instruction. To support students during the pandemic, DLBE teachers used translanguaging practices and emphasized their role of caring (Oliveira & Kentor 2023). For example, Brazilian immigrant teachers working in a Portuguese-English DLBE program reported concerns about their student's well-being and began caring for them from a distance by staying in contact with families and making sure students were supported. In the current study, we examine how the teachers in our sample perceived the pandemic's impact on the implementation of a dual language program in their school.

Methodology

Research context: Portuguese-English DLBE program in MA during COVID-19

This study is part of a three-year mixed-methods research project that started along with the launch of the first Portuguese and English DLBE program in the school district. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, Massachusetts had passed new legislation allowing schools to choose language education models and programs to serve students learning English, officially ending more than a decade of English-only legislation (2002–2017). Auburn School District (pseudonym) is located in a city with the largest Brazilian immigrant population in Massachusetts (Granberry and Valentino 2020). In response to the rise of Brazilian immigration, the school district took immediate action after this legislating change, launching its first Portuguese-English DLBE program.

Initially, our large research project examined the impact of a new language program and rising Brazilian immigration on stakeholders' experiences (community members, educators, parents, and children) in the Auburn School District. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent nationwide school closures in March 2020, we also investigated how remote instruction affected the ways that various stakeholders navigated and experienced the focal bilingual program. Data collected as part of the larger

mixed-methods research project between March 2020 and March 2021 included: biweekly participant observations (~100 h), two online quantitative surveys (18 parents and 66 teachers), and qualitative semi-structured interviews with 6 teachers and 19 parents. This article focuses on the results of two online quantitative surveys with parents and teachers.

Research site

The research site of this study, Kellogg Elementary School (pseudonym), is a public school in the Auburn School District. In the 2018–2019 year, Kellogg Elementary School launched a Portuguese-English DLBE as a bilingual strand in an English-medium school involving two kindergartens and two first-grade classrooms. Among the 84 students enrolled in the DLBE program in 2018–2019, 79% of students ($n=66$) had a recent Brazilian immigrant background. They were either first-generation immigrants, who were born in Brazil and then migrated to the U.S., or second-generation immigrants, who were born in the U.S. and have at least one parent who migrated from Brazil. At the time of data collection, the DLBE program at Kellogg adopted an 80–20 language allocation model in Kindergarten, which means students spend 80% of their day in Portuguese and 20% in English. This language allocation changed to a 50–50 model in the third grade as the program expanded. School closures due to COVID-19 in March 2020 led to changes at Kellogg Elementary like many other U.S. public schools (Education Week 2020), including remote instruction, technology resource provisions, and meal plans for students and families (Malkus 2020).

Instrument

The two focal online surveys, one for parents and one for teachers were developed to measure parents' and teachers' perceptions of the educational practices and resources available during the COVID-19 pandemic. The surveys were distributed in the fall semester of 2020 (October through December) to all parents and teachers at Kellogg. The teacher survey was made available only in English whereas the parent survey was available in English and Portuguese, allowing parents to choose their preferred language when participating in the survey.

We chose ten survey items from the parent survey and four items from the teacher survey to address the research questions in this article (For a list of survey items see Table 1). The survey items for parents had two multiple-choice items and eight open-ended items about the impact of COVID-19 on their children's learning, their roles during the pandemic, and resources provided by the school. Furthermore, the survey items for teachers had one multiple-choice item and three open-ended items about their perceptions of parents and families and changes in their (teachers') roles.

Study sample

The study sample consisted of 18 teachers and 66 parents ($n=84$). Demographic data are reported in Table 2. Given the study's emphasis on the Portuguese-English DLBE program and the characteristics of the sample, we note the respondents' language preferences and the country of origin of the research participants.

Table 1. Survey items.*Parent Survey**Impact of COVID-19 on Learning*

Q1. To the best of your ability please share what your thoughts are on the impacts of COVID-19 on (1) students' use of Portuguese [Q1-1], and (2) students' use of English [Q1-2] (Multiple-choice item). Response options: (a) impact was noticeably negative, (b) there was no noticeable impact, and (c) impact was noticeably positive.)

Domain 1. Students' use of Portuguese; Domain 2. Students' use of English

Q2. Please describe in more detail how the Two way/Dual language program has been changed as a result of COVID-19. (Open-ended item)

Parents' Roles

Q3. Please describe in more detail how your role has impacted your child's learning. (Open-ended item)

Q4. Since the start of school this semester, what activities or skills have you focused on in your child's learning? (Open-ended item)

Resources

Q5. What are some resources that you were provided by your school? (Multiple-choice item) Response options: (a) Chromebook, (b) Backpack with pencils and stationery, (c) Meal, (d) Other

Q6. What are the main difficulties you currently have when getting resources from your school? (Open-ended item)

Overall Perceptions

Q7. Most helpful thing that I received from the school was (Open-ended item)

Q8. I appreciate that my child's school has been [blank] (Open-ended item)

Q9. I wish my child's school would have done [blank] (Open-ended item)

Q10. Moving forward, it would help a lot if my child's school would [blank] (Open-ended item)

*Teacher Survey**Teacher Perception about Parents*

Q1. How well do you feel you, students, and parents have adjusted to the changes brought by COVID-19 on a scale Not Well, Well, Very Well? (Multiple-choice item)

Q2. Please describe in more detail that COVID-19 has impacted students' learning. (Open-ended item)

Q3. Please describe in more detail how the Two way/Dual language program has been changed as a result of COVID-19. (Open-ended item)

Teachers' Roles

Q4. Please describe in more detail how your role has changed (or not) as a result of COVID-19. (Open-ended item)

Table 2. Study sample.

	Parent respondents (n = 63)		Teacher respondents (n = 18)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Language of the survey that a respondent chose				
Portuguese	24	38%	0*	0%
English	39	62%	18	100%
Two-way bilingual program participation				
In the program	32	%	5	28%
Outside the program	31	%	13	72%

*A teacher survey was developed only in English

Parents

Of the 66 parent respondents, 20 of them preferred to take the survey in Portuguese (Portuguese-speaking parents) while 44 chose the English-version survey. The 20 Portuguese-speaking parents immigrated from Brazil between 1987 to 2019 and had at least one child in the DLBE program. All of them qualified for free or reduced-price lunch¹. The other 44 English-speaking parents were mainly white women born in the United States, with two exceptions (one from Ghana and one from Nepal). None qualified for free or reduced lunch at school.

Teachers

Of the 18 teacher respondents, five were in the DLBE program, including four Brazilian immigrants who speak Portuguese at home but are fluent in both languages. One U.S.-born teacher was English monolingual. The DLBE teachers' ages ranged from the 30s to 50s, and their racial identities were identified as one white, one black, one mixed, and two Brazilian. The remaining 13 teacher respondents were not in the DLBE program. However, they had knowledge of it through teacher meetings, professional development sessions, and informal conversations. All of them were fluent in English, but only two of them were fluent in Portuguese. Their ages ranged from their 20s to over 60s. We collected survey responses from teachers in both DLBE and non-DLBE programs. First, the non-DLBE program also had a significant number of Brazilian Portuguese-speaking students. Second, the perceptions of Kellogg Elementary's non-DLBE teachers played a significant role in the implementation of the DLBE program (Oliveira et al. 2020).

Data analysis

The survey administered to both parents and teachers was mixed methods in nature to provide a holistic understanding of respondents' perceptions. Our purpose was to expand upon the closed or/and open-ended data and welcome instances of divergence (Fetters et al. 2013) in our results. We looked for points of alignment and dissonance between the multiple-choice items and open-ended items. While we initially analyzed the multiple-choice items and open-ended items independently, we later integrated and drew on the results from both survey item formats to answer our research questions for this article.

We used descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and percentages, for the multiple-choice items. We disaggregated our data from open-ended items to examine differences between parent and teacher groups. We analyzed the data by the language of the survey (Portuguese or English), verifying this information on race/ethnicity and country of origin. Additionally, we disaggregated the data by dual language enrollment (Enrolled vs. Not Enrolled) for both parents and teachers (Table 3).

We used both deductive and inductive coding to analyze open-ended survey responses from parents and teachers. Deductive coding was based on specific constructs from the surveys. For the parent survey, we coded their perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on learning, parental roles, and resources and support. For the teacher survey, we coded teachers' perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on student learning and educators' roles. Second, we engaged in inductive coding by attuning to novel themes and patterns that emerged from the data. For example, inductive codes that emerged related to DLBE teachers' perceptions of parental engagement were 'immigrant background,' and 'home environment.' We then compared our codes, searching for both patterns and anomalies. We organized the codes under broader categories that were informed by the relevant literature, which included ideas about language orientations, in/equity in DLBE, and research on the impact of the pandemic on parents and teachers.

Findings

Our analysis reveals that the Portuguese-speaking and English-speaking parent groups showed strikingly different views on the impact of COVID-19 on their children's education,

Table 3. The number of responses from parents per survey item.

	Q1-1	Q1-2	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
G1. Portuguese speaking parents in the DLBE ($n=23$)	19	19	13	19	14	19	11	16	12	9	9
G2. Portuguese speaking parents outside the program ($n=1$)	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
G3. English speaking parents in the DLBE ($n=9$)	9	9	7	5	8	8	6	7	7	4	5
G4. English speaking parents outside the DLBE program ($n=30$)	24	26	0	16	23	28	17	23	19	17	15
Total ($n=63$)	53	55	20	40	46	56	34	46	39	31	29

'P' indicates a parent survey and 'G' indicates 'Group.'

particularly concerning English and Portuguese learning. Specifically, most English-speaking parent respondents reported COVID-19's negative impact on their children's Portuguese learning and a decrease in the program's benefits. In contrast, Portuguese-speaking parents reported more positive views on their children's learning of both English and Portuguese during remote learning. These different views among parent groups are indicative of divergent language orientations at stake in the focal DLBE program. Additionally, while the teachers in this study reported the negative impacts of COVID-19 on all of their students' language learning, they also framed Portuguese-speaking students as struggling more to engage in their virtual classrooms due to a perceived lack of adequate parental support.

English-Speaking parents' views on COVID-19 and schooling: a resource under threat

Kellogg Elementary's DLBE continued to provide Portuguese-English DLBE during COVID-19. When asked how COVID-19 influenced their children's use of Portuguese, 63% of English-speaking parents ($n=5$) in the DLBE program said that the impact of COVID-19 was negative, followed by 38% ($n=3$) responding 'no impact'. No English-speaking parent in reported a 'positive impact' on the children's use of Portuguese. Regarding the development of their children's English, the dominant view among English-speaking parents in the DLBE program was that there was no impact of COVID-19 (89%, $n=8$). Thus, no English-speaking parents believed that there was a positive impact of COVID-19 on their children's use of English either. These results imply that English-speaking parents saw learning English as barely affected by remote learning during the pandemic whereas their children's Portuguese learning was negatively affected.

We further asked the parents to 'describe in more detail how the DLBE program has been changed as a result of COVID-19.' Most English-speaking parents in a DLBE program ($n=6/7$) mentioned that during the pandemic, the benefits of dual language for their children decreased. For example, an English-speaking parent responded that 'the two-way aspect [of the focal program] has gone. - P9²', a sentiment echoed by another parent, who shared that the focal DLBE program 'became similar to standard track [non-DLBE program]. -P18' One of the benefits that English-speaking parents felt faded during COVID-19, was second language acquisition. One parent mentioned that there was less opportunity to practice Portuguese, saying '[There is] no physical school, so no more practice on dual

language. -P22' English-speaking parents also observed their children got a harder hard time learning Portuguese and became emotionally upset or frustrated: '[Participation in DLBE is] harder, without the in-person interaction, especially if my son gets upset. -P42' Another parent elaborated that remoted instruction had her daughter lose motivation in learning Portuguese:

My child is also frustrated with learning Portuguese as she is having a hard time understanding and is resistant to asking the teacher for help. She's losing her enthusiasm for Portuguese.: - (I do see that she is peppering her everyday speech at home with Portuguese more this Fall, and she's proud to be able to say things in two languages, but the passion she had is fading. -P9

While English-speaking parents saw fewer benefits of the DLBE during the pandemic, there were also growing concerns about 'falling behind' in schooling during remote instruction (n = 6/7). These parents' responses from survey item Q4 '*Please describe in more detail how your role has impacted your child's learning (Q4)*' showed that they were feeling 'helpless' to support their children's acquisition of Portuguese. As one parent said, 'No one at home knows Portuguese. So, she (my daughter) doesn't have a communication partner to practice Portuguese at home. -P22' Similarly, another parent said, 'I find it very difficult to help my child if she is struggling as I do not speak Portuguese. -P9' One parent shared her concern regarding this matter:

Covid and the shift to remote learning really highlighted our son's concerns with not being able to speak and understand the language as quickly as the other children whose primary language is Portuguese. The Zoom calls and many chatting [on Zoom] were overwhelming and made him feel as though the other kids were making fun of him in the target language because he didn't understand as fast as they did. -P18

These concerns, along with the perceived loss of benefits from DLBE programming during remote learning, led three parents to pull their kids out of the program. One parent explained their rationale: 'She (my child) is not in an immersion program anymore. It's like here some time on a computer and here are a million breaks but in all reality, she's not getting much Portuguese during school. Too much going on in the Google Meet video call. -P27' Another parent shared a similar explanation: 'Our child started in the two-way program, and finished first grade in it. But we had to pull him out because we felt he was falling behind his friends. He is now excelling in the English-only class, reading on his own, and spending his free time writing stories. Night and day from where we were a year ago. -P52'

Along these lines, another parent expressed: 'My son had to be removed from the dual language program this year because it was too difficult remotely. -P40' It is important to note that during remote instruction, all parents struggled to keep up with new ways of schooling. However, English-speaking parents expressed a negative view of the DLBE program overall, perceiving it as falling short of providing promised 'resources' to their children, such as exposure to the Portuguese language. As a result, some parents opted to pull out their kids from the DLBE program, putting the program's survival at risk in a time of crisis. This reveals these parents' commitment to bilingual education persists only when it can provide additive bilingualism to their children.

Despite demonstrated worries about the DLBE program, English-speaking parents still expressed gratitude toward their children's schools more broadly. They indicated that the school had provided them with Chromebooks, backpacks with pencils and stationery, and

meals. They also listed ‘the most helpful thing that I [they] received from the school (Parent survey item Q6)’ as Chromebook ($n = 4$), educational materials ($n = 2$), communication and email ($n = 2$) and ‘everything she (my child) needs ($n = 1$).’ With the school’s provision of ‘a detailed schedule of our sons’, one parent (P18) was able to ‘help him with tactics to take his breaks and be back on time.’ Some of the English-speaking parents in the DLBE program (3 out of 6) said they had no difficulty accessing support from school when needed. One parent said, ‘Kellogg has been great about distributing resources. -P31’ One English-speaking parent highlighted that information spoked of receiving too much information, to the point that it was hard to keep up. English-speaking parents also reported having access to information provided by the school and the district during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Portuguese-speaking parents’ views on COVID-19 and schooling: DLBE as a right

None of the Portuguese-speaking parents showed any intention to discontinue their child’s involvement in the DLBE program in the survey. In contrast to the perceptions of English-speaking respondents, 42% of Portuguese-speaking parents ($n = 8$) reported observing positive growth in their children’s Portuguese skills during remote learning, followed by 42% ($n = 8$) who reported that the pandemic had ‘no impact’ on their children’s Portuguese development and 16% ($n = 3$) who reported a negative impact. Additionally, 42% of Portuguese-speaking parents ($n = 8$) also expressed a positive outlook on their children’s use of English during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by 32% of them who reported no impact ($n = 6$), and 26% of them who reported having negative view ($n = 5$). These responses show that Portuguese-speaking parents had more positive views of the DLBE program implementation and their children’s continued development across Portuguese and English during the pandemic.

We asked the parents to elaborate on how the DLBE program has changed as a result of COVID-19. Portuguese-speaking parents in the DLBE program ($n = 13/13$) perceived that the nature of the bilingual program, like its mission to promote bilingualism and biliteracy, had not changed as one parent said, ‘*Não existe*. [The change] does not exist. -P39’ However, they believed the everyday implementation of the program had changed. For example, one parent explained their rationale: ‘*Só mudou a forma de eles estudarem, mas continuam aprendendo o inglês e o português com bastante êxito*’ (It only changed the way they [children] study, but they continue to learn English and Portuguese quite successfully -P23). Similarly, another parent expressed: ‘*Acredito que o programa em si não mudou, somente a forma como está sendo executado. Mas as professoras são ótimas*’ (I believe that the program itself has not changed, only the way it is executed. But the teachers are great -P33).

Another parent echoed this view: ‘*O programa tem se adequado cada vez mais para que os alunos tenha uma vida acadêmica regular, e aos poucos tem feito bastante diferença no dia a dia das crianças*’ (The program has become more and more adapted [to remote learning] for students to have a regular academic life, and day by day it has made a big difference in the children’s daily lives -P20). Thus, Portuguese-speaking parent respondents understood that the program had to change its implementation tactics in light of COVID-19. However, the program itself—in its core values, mission, and commitments—had not changed for these parents.

While reaffirming the value of the DLBE program, Portuguese-speaking parents felt the online class model in general was not optimal for their children. For example, one parent

said: *‘Infelizmente o modelo de aula online para uma criança de 7 anos não é tão eficiente quanto as aulas presenciais. A exposição a tela do computador e a rotina do aluno prejudicou muito o aprendizado’* (Unfortunately, the online class model for a 7-year-old is not as efficient as face-to-face classes. Exposure to the computer screen and the student’s routine greatly hindered learning -P16). Along these lines, another parent stated, *‘As aulas online são menos produtivas’* (Online classes are less productive -P30).

As a response, several Portuguese-speaking parents reported having to make substantial changes in their daily routines to support their children’s learning. For example, a parent expressed: *‘Agora eu tenho que observá-los, ver se não estão brincando, se estão participando, tem a diferença de horários de almoço e tenho que ajudar minha kindergartener a achar links, materiais, etc.’* (Now I have to watch them, see if they’re not playing or if they’re participating. There’s a difference in lunch times and I have to help my kindergartener find links, materials, etc. -P5). Another caregiver explained: *‘Hoje eu fico mais ativa com o que meu filho faz nas aulas. Ele fica em casa comigo, então eu participo mais. Consigo ter mais diálogo também com a professora.’* (Today I get more active with what my son does in class. He stays at home with me, so I participate more. I can also have more dialogue with the teacher -P33). This is also echoed in the words of other parents, including a parent who stated: *‘Eu continuo a colaborar com o aprendizado da minha filha’* (I continue to collaborate with my daughter’s learning. -P24).

Portuguese-speaking parents strived to support their children, but also encountered linguistic and cultural hurdles at times. One parent said, *‘Eu tb estudo não consigo fazer o papel de professora das crianças’* (I also study [English] I can’t play the role of children’s teacher - P39). Another parent also echoed this sentiment: *‘Eu não entendo a língua e por isso tenho dificuldade em ajudá-lo, mas principalmente pela forma diferente de ensino americano’* (I don’t understand the language and that’s why I find it difficult to help you, but mainly because of the different American way of teaching -P37). These concerns were also captured by the surveyed responses from survey item Q7: *‘What are the main difficulties you currently have when getting resources from your school?’* (Q7). One parent simply said, *‘O Inglês’* (English - P37) The same parent also wanted to have access to translators, *‘Reuniões com tradutor’* (Meetings with translators. -P37). Unlike English-speaking parents, this data shows that some Portuguese-speaking parents felt they sometimes could not access information due to language barriers.

Despite facing challenges, Portuguese-speaking parents expressed great gratitude for the school and its teachers during the pandemic. In response to an open-ended survey item asking *‘I appreciate that my child’s school has been [blank].* (Parent survey item 8)’ all of the surveyed Portuguese-speaking parents ($n = 12$) expressed gratitude using various terms such as ‘excellent,’ ‘communicative,’ ‘very helpful as always,’ ‘very concerned about student learning and their health,’ ‘provided support with materials and computer for my son,’ and ‘generous.’ Like English-speaking parents, Portuguese-speaking parents also denoted various resources from Kellogg Elementary, including Chromebooks, backpacks with pencils and stationery, and meals. When the Portuguese-speaking parents in the DLBE program were asked what was the most helpful thing that they received from the school, 9 out of 16 parents mentioned technology support such as the internet, computers, and Google Chromebooks. These parents also used this space in the survey to further express their gratitude. Parents, for example, expressed: *‘Tudo que a escola ofereceu foi útil’* (Everything the school offered was useful -P17); *‘Todos os materiais, nunca tive tanto apoio assim’* (Everything. I’ve never

had so much support. -P24); and *‘Pode ser o Chromebook e artigos de papelaria. Mais muito mais que isso ela tem recebido da escola que é o respeito, carinho, atenção e cuidado de todos’* (it can be the Chromebook and stationery. Much more than that she has received from the school, which is respect, affection, attention and care from everyone -P4).

Portuguese-speaking parents showed solidarity with the DLBE program specifically and Kellogg Elementary more broadly. For them, COVID-19 was not something that could alter their support for their children’s bilingual education as well as their support for their local school. As explained by one parent, the following representative view was echoed across Portuguese-speaking parent respondents, *‘A escola está fazendo o seu melhor, assim como os professores. Está sendo muito difícil para todos’* (The school is doing its best, as are the teachers. It’s been very difficult for everyone -P17).

Teachers’ views on parental engagement during COVID-19

Kellogg school teachers were aware that the COVID-19 pandemic-imposed challenges on all students and parents. When asked about their perceived impact of COVID-19 on student learning, teachers ($n=15$ out 18 in total) did not believe that there was a positive impact on students’ Portuguese and/or English learning. Concerning the impact of COVID-19 on students’ use of Portuguese, teachers’ views were quite equally divided between ‘negative impact’ (53%, $n=8$) and ‘no impact’ (47%, $n=7$). Regarding their perception of students’ use of English, ‘no impact’ accounted for more than responses for ‘negative impact’: 60% ($n=9$) versus 40% ($n=6$).

Through an open-ended survey item, we further asked teachers to describe how COVID-19 impacted student learning. All of the teachers who responded, including DLBE teachers ($n=4$) or non-DLBE teachers ($n=8$), described remote learning as decreasing students’ socializing and interactions needed for academic learning and emotional support. One DLBE teacher shared that ‘students are not programmed to sit in front of a computer from 9 am to 3pm (DLBE-T11):’ This stance echoes a common sentiment among teacher respondents, such as ‘Some kindergarteners are doing really well with remote, but others really struggle to be in front of a computer and need personal interaction’ (DLBE-T18). Though two teachers spoke about the resilience of young students who are adapting, DLBE educators expressed concerns about opportunities to learn during remote instruction. For example, one DLBE teacher shared in response to an open-ended item: ‘The dual language program relies heavily on social interaction and oral communication, and being immersed in an environment where the target language is everywhere [...] It has been extremely hard to replicate the social interaction piece with remote learning. (DLBE-T11). Similarly, another DLBE teacher commented:

A strong piece of the DLBE program is the oral language development of the target language. Through play, group work, and routinely spontaneous conversations the students acquire a lot of vocabulary and strengthen their listening and speaking domains. It is very hard, if not impossible at times to reproduce the same kind of learning environment virtually. (DLBE-T17)

Non-DLBE teachers also acknowledged students’ resilience during remote learning while also expressing concerns over providing children with meaningful learning experiences. For example, some non-DLBE teachers compared the availability of learning opportunities in person and online, framing remote instruction as a more precarious setup for student practice and support. One teacher explained: ‘Students have lost opportunities to learn from

peers in small group settings. It is hard to replicate “normal” social experiences through a computer call. Students also lost academic time on learning’ (Non-DLBE-T7). Another non-DLBE teacher added: ‘I worry for all students about their ability to learn and feel successful in the virtual environment. I also worry about their social skills and mental health with not being able to play and be with other children’ (Non-DLBE-T5). Other non-DLBE echoed this sentiment: ‘My students are actually very engaged in remote learning and I am seeing wonderful gains/participation. Unfortunately, opportunities for language practice and support are less readily available and easy to address in a remote setting’ (Non-DLBE-T14).

Surveyed teachers also spoke about the different effects of COVID-19 on families. Teachers shared their understanding of inequitable dynamics around which students and parents were more challenged by the abrupt changes in learning environments due to the pandemic. For example, one DLBE teacher shared their impression: ‘The parents’ and students’ participation has decreased. Teaching piece is not equitable for some families that can’t stay with their children during remote learning.’ (DLBE-T6). A non-DLBE teacher commented: Students, in general, are less engaged in remote learning. Some don’t have the resources at home (internal or external) to support a 6-hour self-motivating effort. (Non-DLBE-T14). Similarly, some teachers expressed:

I noticed that COVID-19 impacted students from working-class families, which most immigrant families are part of. In most cases, parents went back to work as soon as the job market allowed, and children were either home alone or in informal/unlicensed childcare sites. Several homes lack internet connection and even after being provided with Chromebook and hotspots, some students are still feeling challenged to participate in remote learning. The majority of immigrant parents are also undocumented and not eligible for some federal and state financial support, increasing the parents’ need to leave the house for work. (Non-DLBE-T4)

As such, teachers often framed parental (physical) presence as key to academic success during remote learning. This framing highlights one form of parental engagement during the pandemic while rendering other forms invisible. Furthermore, several teachers also framed their concern about students’ language use during the pandemic in connection to students’ learning environments at home. They often expressed feeling bad for students for different reasons. English-speaking students were described as struggling as they listen on a computer all day in a language they don’t speak (DL-T18). On the other hand, Portuguese-speaking students were not described as struggling with language barriers—for the teachers, the problem that Portuguese-speaking students faced was ‘noisy’ and unsafe learning environments at home or in the community. For instance, a DLBE teacher explained her perspective:

Pretty much all of those kids [non-Portuguese Kindergarteners] are safe at home with families with parents helping, or in a ‘covid pod’ at a friend’s house during school hours, while a lot of the Portuguese-speaking kids are at the YMCA or Explorers in a loud noisy room with other kids screaming. They have a much harder time focusing. (DLBE-T18)

Some teachers were concerned that Portuguese-speaking students were having a ‘harder time focusing’ due to their learning environments. While English-speaking parents were described as providing a good learning set-up with resources and being there to support their children, Portuguese-speaking parents were positioned as not offering the same

learning environment. This is further evidenced in the words of another DLBE teacher: 'It's really hard to promote hands-on and developmentally appropriate opportunities since most of my students are not home with an available grown-up to give them support' (DLBE -T11).

Discussion

This article examined the perceptions of 66 parents and 18 teachers in one elementary school concerning the implementation of a Portuguese-English DLBE program at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning. Our analysis of parents' and teachers' responses to a schoolwide survey revealed contradictory language orientations among different groups of stakeholders. First, concerning the results of the parents' survey, we located differences in how English-speaking respondents perceived the implementation of the language program during remote learning in comparison to Portuguese-speaking parent respondents. English-speaking parent respondents expressed overall dissatisfaction with the DLBE program during remote learning, arguing that it had lost its appeal and promised benefits for their children, such as consistent exposure to a foreign language (Portuguese) and culture. Guided by this sentiment, some English-speaking parent respondents reported pulling their children out of the DLBE program between March 2020 and March 2021. This stance is indicative of a language-as-resource orientation fueled by a neoliberal ideology (Ruíz 1984; Petrovic 2005; Ricento 2005). That is English-dominant parents oriented to the bilingual program as beneficial and needed only insofar as it provided their children with additive bilingualism. This process was dependent upon and worked to commodify, the linguistic and cultural practices of language-minoritized students and families (Varghese and Park 2010; Cervantes-Soon 2014). With the changes brought about by remote learning, including physical distancing from Portuguese-speaking peers, English-speaking parent respondents did not feel that their children had access to the linguistic and cultural resources they were promised. This orientation suggests that the DLBE program was disposable for these parents; that is, DLBE was seen as a resource worth keeping to the extent that their perceived needs were being met but was also easily disregarded when its expected value decreased during the COVID-19 crisis.

In contrast, Portuguese-speaking parent respondents reported a positive orientation to and perception of the DLBE program during remote learning. Most of these parent respondents expressed that their children had made progress both in their Portuguese and English development during the pandemic. This positive orientation contradicts recent reports on the 'learning loss' for minoritized students during the global pandemic (Dorn et al. 2021). It also is indicative of Portuguese-speaking parent respondents' orientation to language as a right (Ruíz 1984). That is, through positive assessments of the DLBE program in the survey and expressions of gratitude for the school, these parents vouched for their children's bilingual education. Especially in the midst of uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, Portuguese-speaking parent respondents maintained their children in the program and attested to its positive effects, advocating for the children's right to learn and use their home language in their formal schooling as well as learn English (García 2009). In light of English-speaking parent respondents' dissatisfaction with the language program during the pandemic, Portuguese-speaking parents' positive perceptions were key in the maintenance and survival of this program throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Both Portuguese-speaking and English-speaking parent respondents acknowledged the efforts made by teachers during the extenuating circumstances caused by COVID-19 and remote learning. Surveyed teachers, in turn, expressed awareness of the challenges and barriers that the global pandemic imposed on all students and families. While acknowledging these generalized difficulties, DLBE and non-DLBE teachers at Kellogg Elementary perceived English-dominant children to be faring better during remote learning because they received additional support from parents and accessed further resources at home. In turn, teachers perceived Portuguese-speaking, immigrant parents as having to work long hours during the pandemic, and thus being unable to provide academic support, resources, or appropriate spaces for their children to study, which ultimately was perceived as affecting children's ability to focus in class. As such, negative perceptions of immigrant parents as absent from or detrimental to their children's educational lives continued to fuel teachers' narratives and orientations during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing scholarship around in/equity concerns in bilingual education programming by foregrounding parental and teachers' varying perceptions of DBLE implementation and orientations to language at the height of the pandemic. The negative perceptions of English-speaking parents, particularly concerning the impacts of the pandemic on DLBE program implementation and their children's learning, could undermine the survival of the language program, which was meant to better serve the local Brazilian immigrant community. Similarly, educators' negative perceptions of the involvement of Portuguese-speaking immigrant parents in their children's education had the potential to further exacerbate inequitable dynamics for language-minoritized students in DLBE classrooms.

In light of this, this study highlights the importance of schools and districts to go beyond the equitable distribution of resources, including the translation of documents and information, to language-minoritized families during and in the aftermath of the disaster. Educators and school leaders must convey and promote an asset-based framing of immigrant communities (Lowenhaupt and Hopkins 2020) and center their perceptions, contributions, and concerns in decision-making processes around DLBE program implementation. This includes attuning to how minoritized parents vouch for their children's bilingual education as a right (Oliveira et al. 2020).

Notes

1. When our survey data was gathered, a family of four needed to have an annual household income of \$34,060 or less to qualify for free lunch, and an income of \$48,470 or less to qualify for a reduced-price meal (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2021).
2. To anonymize the information of parents, we used "P" and a number (e.g. P9). For teachers, we used "T" and a number (e.g. T1).

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