

Perspectives and Experiences of Emergent Bilingual Parents Concerning Their Engagement with Their Child's Teachers and School

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Overview of content

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Introduction

The aim for this study is to promote teacher engagement with emergent bilingual (EB) parents.

Due to cultural differences and/or language barriers, American teachers, especially dominant English speaking teachers, do not always recognize or have knowledge of EB parents' backgrounds, including the ways they support their students at home. This misunderstanding can create a deficit mindset toward EBs (Protacio & Edwards, 2015).

Research Questions

RQ1

What are the personal experiences and perspectives of Emergent Bilingual parents concerning their engagement with their child's teachers and school?

RQ2

What expectations do Emergent Bilingual parents have about interacting with their child's teachers and school?

Theoretical Framework

**Vygotsky's
Sociocultural
Theory (1986)**

**Friere's
Critical
Theory (1970)**

**Critical
Sociocultural
Theory (C-SCT)
(Moje, 2007)**

Literature Review

- Current research on U.S. parent engagement focuses on what teachers can do to help parents assimilate into the mainstream culture of school.
- Researchers in the EB field call for teachers to learn about EB families' culture and language and then take the initiative to engage with them (Arce, 2019; Shih, 2018).

Literature Review

- Critical pedagogy has implications for teaching multicultural education, particularly for teachers to evaluate their own practice and how they can have more conscientization.
- Studies similar to Arce (2019) have asked parents questions about how they feel about their student's schooling.

Methodology

Qualitative: Discourse
Analysis (Scollon & Scollon,
2006)

- Participants
 - 5 Spanish speaking parents with students enrolled in the same school district
- Data Collection: 1 focus group; 1 Individual interview (member checking)
 - All focus groups and interviews had a native Spanish Speaker as a translator from a similar cultural background as the participants
 - Most participants were in person and some on zoom.

Methodology

Qualitative: Discourse Analysis

- Data Analysis
 - Transcriptions & translations of interviews in Spanish and English
 - Coded via data matrix on Google Sheets directly from the transcripts
 - Coded for RQs and keywords from the literature review, then characteristics, themes, and examples.

Methodology

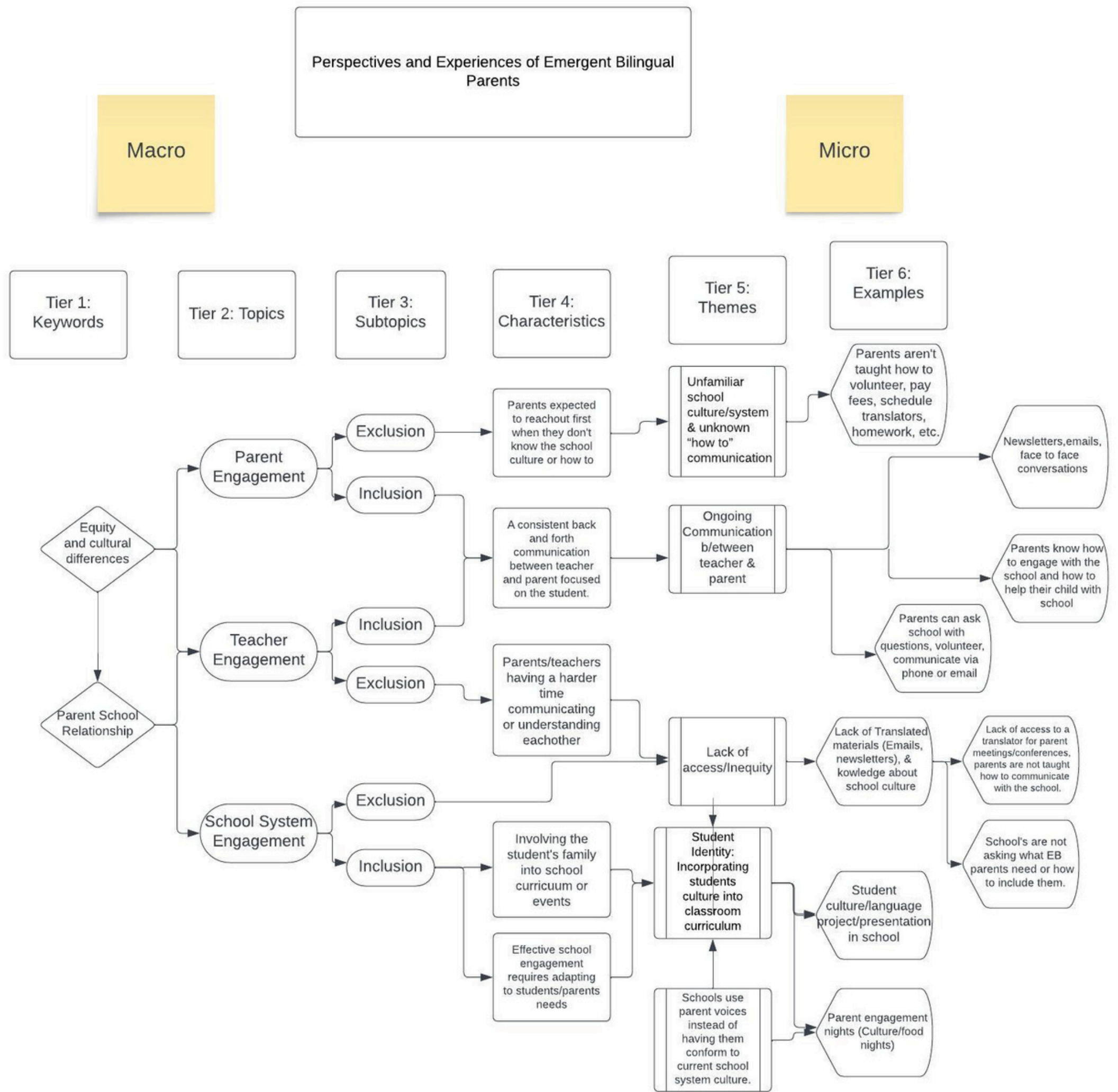
Qualitative: Discourse Analysis

- Emergent Themes
 - Lack of access/Inequity
 - EB parents are at first unfamiliar school culture/system & unknown “how to” communication. Parents are not taught how to engage with the school and how to help their child with school

Methodology

Qualitative: Discourse Analysis

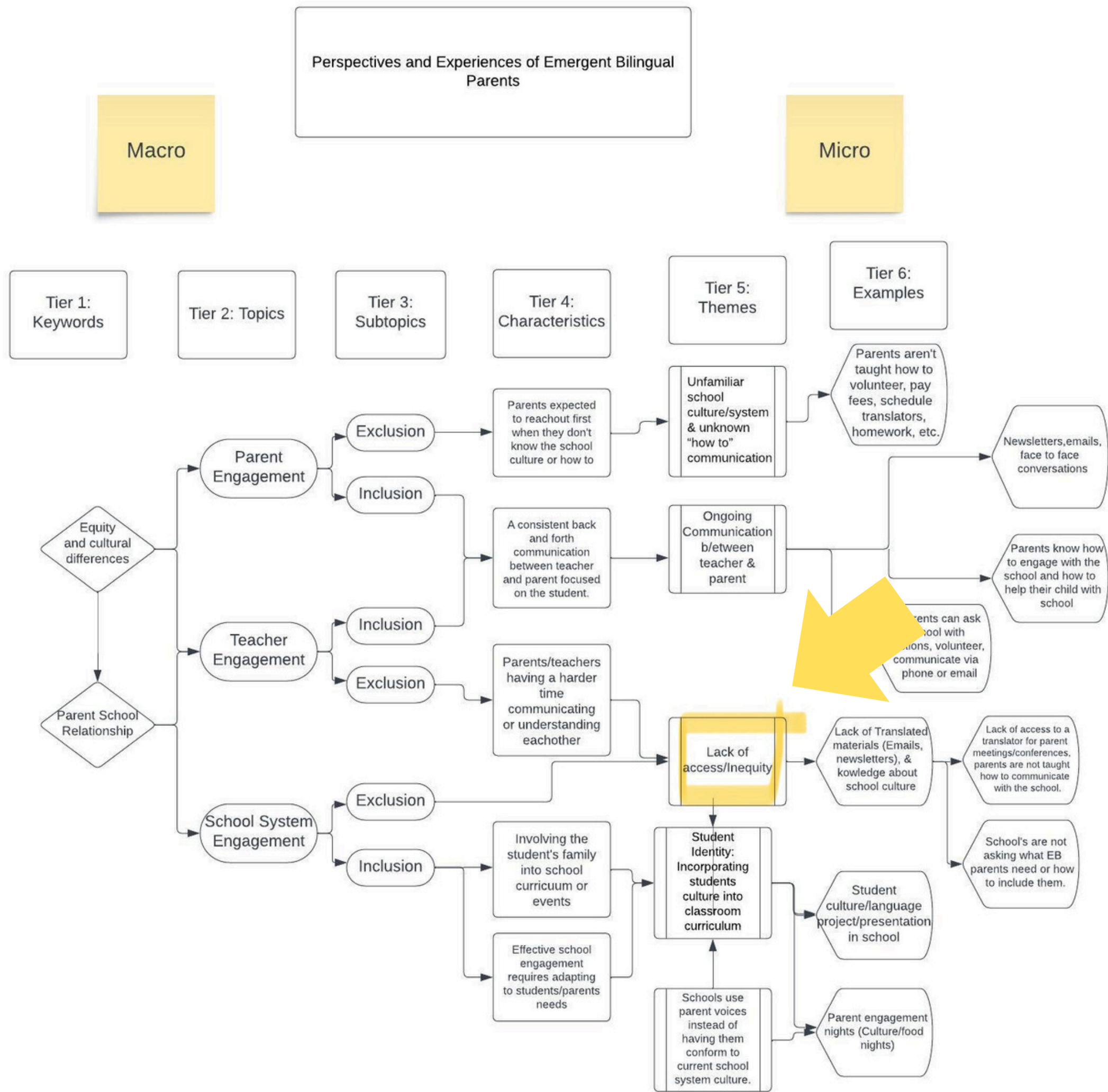
- Emergent Themes
 - Consistent and ongoing communication between teacher & parent is most effective
 - Schools can use parent voices instead of having them conform to current school system culture.
 - *Student Identity: Incorporating students culture into classroom curriculum.*



Findings– Lack of Access

- Quote #1 and 2 from the focus group transcript when discussing how parents learned information about parent teacher conferences:
 - “ I did not know that when there are parent-teacher conferences they had translators.”
 - “if we as parents do not know that you, the interpreters/translators are available, then we are not going to use your services.”

Lack of Access/ Inequity: Translated materials, Translators



Findings– Lack of Access

- Participants were unfamiliar with the school culture and were not taught how to communicate with the teacher.
- Effective School engagement was described by participants as:
 - Adapting to students or parent needs
 - Schools/Teachers being first to reach out and include the EB families.
 - Being notified of translation services/receiving materials or communication from the school in spanish

Findings– Student Identity

- Quote #3 from the focus group transcript when discussing how some of their children's teachers had included student's culture into the curriculum in the form of a project:
 - “My son was very happy to share his culture and what he knows, um, about his history and culture. But that was the only thing. I don't think teachers have done anything else outside projects and like, stuff like that, class things to engage and involve, um, in our culture.”

Student Identity: Incorporating student's culture into the classroom curriculum



Findings– Student Identity

- Effective communication between the parent and teacher was described as
 - receiving materials “In Spanish and English”
 - consistent communication such as “weekly emails”
- Other examples of significant school engagement included “parent engagement nights” involving culture or food or school based projects where students could present more about their culture or language to their class.

Discussion

- RQ1: What are the experiences and perspectives of EB parents concerning their engagement with their child's teachers and school?
 - Patterns of exclusion in communication with teachers
 - Engagement was often engagement was one-sided, meaning that the communication was only coming from the parents or the teachers.
- RQ2: What expectations do EB parents have about interacting with their child's teachers and school?
 - Schools adapting to students or parent needs and the school being the ones to reach out and include the emergent bilingual families.

Discussion

- There are more patterns of exclusion towards EB parents from schools/teachers
 - EB parents are not part of the “known” school culture
 - Typically, parents are expected to reach out and start any communication with teachers.
 - EB parents are not given a lot of voice or choice as to whether the school system will meet expectations from their perspective until they’ve learned to more fully understand the current system in place.

Conclusion

- There is limited literature on EB parent engagement research that focuses on the voices of EB parents and how they orient towards full participation in U.S. English-dominant school systems
- This study informs teachers on productive ways to engage with EB parents in appreciation of cultural and linguistic differences.
 - Schools listening to parent's voices

Implications

- These findings can give teachers more clarity on how EB parents want to be communicated with and be involved in their child's education whether inside or outside the physical classroom.
- Giving EB parents a voice will help to share power between parents and teachers.
- When educators learn how parents want to communicate it will bring more clarity to teachers on how the parents view participation and improves their relationships with the parents.

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Thank You!

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