

“It’s Not My Job”: K–12 Teacher Attitudes Toward Students’ Heritage Language Maintenance

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Abstract

This paper examines teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ heritage language maintenance and their engagement in classroom practices that may or may not affirm the value of maintaining and developing heritage languages among students. Through surveys and interviews with K–12 teachers in California public schools, the data show that the nature of teacher training and personal experience with languages other than English significantly affect teacher attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and bilingualism. Teachers who did not receive training as language educators expressed negative or indifferent attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and did not see a role for themselves and schools in heritage language maintenance efforts. This study highlights the need for all educators to better understand the critical role and functions of heritage languages in the personal, academic, and social trajectories of linguistic minority students.

“Do you speak a language other than English at home?”

So proudly, I checked the box that said YES, feeling a sense of accomplishment that I was able to maintain ties with our ethnic heritage for my child through the use of Arabic at home. As a foreign language instructor and a trained linguist, I was very informed and involved in my child’s language development in both English and Arabic. My child had no problems in English when he entered kindergarten. Little did I know . . . the minute I checked the box, my son was labeled as an ESL student. Soon after, his teachers were noticing “problems” with his English that weren’t there before I checked the box. I received a letter from his teacher asking me to speak only English at home for the sake of my child’s English language development and to practice the

word “little” with him, because he says “yittle,” which to my ears were the last remnants of his sweet baby talk. I couldn’t believe how even the educators in our society were so close-minded towards the knowing of another language. What kinds of messages were such actions sending to my child and others about the knowledge of another language? (L. Farhat, personal communication, November 30, 2002)

Stories like this resonate among many families who speak languages other than English at home. Well-intentioned teachers, counselors and school administrators often advise parents to speak only English at home due to the permeation of popular myths that have associated bilingualism with linguistic delay and confusion (Cummins, 1981; Hakuta, 1986; Krashen, 1998; McLaughlin, 1992; Wong-Fillmore, 1991, 2000). Such messages reinforce societal perceptions that frame English as an “either/or” choice over the heritage language as opposed to a language that can be learned additively to the heritage language. Faced with imminent pressures for linguistic and cultural conformity from peers, teachers, and society, children from linguistic minority homes are losing their heritage languages more rapidly than ever before (Fishman, 2001; López, 1996; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). In some cases, even first generation immigrant children are showing evidence of heritage language attrition in spite of the three-generational language shift pattern that has been commonly documented in immigrant groups (López, 1996; Veltman, 1983).

The rich diversity of heritage languages is a powerful linguistic and cultural resource that needs to be maximized as opportunities rather than problematized as barriers to academic achievement and social and cultural integration (Brecht & Ingold, 2002). This study highlights the reasons and the need for all educators to better understand the role of heritage languages in the personal, social, and academic trajectories of their students. Toward this end, this paper examines teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ heritage language maintenance and their engagement in classroom practices that may or may not affirm the value of maintaining and developing heritage languages among students as a first step in illuminating the potential impact that teachers can have in the heritage language maintenance process.

Heritage Language Maintenance in the Lives of Linguistic Minority Students

What is the role of the heritage language in the lives of linguistic minority children? Research has documented that heritage language maintenance in the form of additive bilingualism leads to academic and personal benefits for linguistic minority students. Proficiency in the heritage language not only facilitates English acquisition (Cummins, 1983, 1992; García-Vázquez, Vázquez, López, & Ward, 1997; Krashen, 1998) and leads to higher academic achievement

(Dolson, 1985; García-Vázquez et al., 1997; Kennedy & Park, 1994; S. Lee, 2002; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Slavin & Cheung, 2003), but also results in greater cognitive flexibility including an enhanced ability to deal with abstract concepts (Cummins, 1986; Hakuta, 1986; Hakuta & Díaz, 1985; Peal & Lambert, 1962). Furthermore, proficiency in the heritage language has been identified to play a central role in one's ethnic identification (Fishman, 2002; J. S. Lee, 2002; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Tse, 1998). In other words, heritage language proficiency instills a stronger sense of ethnic identity and connection to the cultural group, which in turn leads to greater and more positive self-esteem (S. Lee, 2002; Stalikas & Gavaki, 1995; Vadas, 1995). By maintaining one's heritage language, individuals are also able to participate in an enriched environment of experiences stemming from two cultures (Grosjean, 1982). Conversely, the loss of proficiency in the heritage language not only diminishes the potential to experience and see the world from different perspectives, but also leads to breakdowns in communication with family members, alienation from ethnic community networks, and lower self-esteem (Snodgrass, 1991; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Rumbaut (1995) found that students who do not have the opportunity to fully develop in both languages are significantly more likely to drop out of schools than those fluent in both languages. Thus, for linguistic minority children, losing proficiency in their heritage language is more than just a loss of a linguistic system; it is a separation from their roots, a denial of their ethnic identity, and a dismissal of their potential as a bilingual and bicultural member of society.

As the population of linguistically and culturally diverse students continues to grow, it is becoming even more imperative to understand and affirm home cultures and to bridge the resources, knowledge, and practices of the home and schools. Thus, heritage language maintenance is a matter worth serious consideration and investment from educators and the wider society. However, heritage language maintenance continues to remain the sole responsibility of individuals and families (Wiley & Valdés, 2000), although repeated patterns of language shift have shown that individual families and heritage language communities alone are insufficient in fighting the assimilative forces of English (Fishman, 2001; Veltman, 1983). What educators need to realize is that heritage language maintenance is not only an individual process, but also a societal process that is influenced by multiple factors at the personal, educational, and societal levels. In light of the substantial influence that teachers and schools have on children, it is surprising that little attention has been paid to the connection between teachers and schools and children's heritage language maintenance efforts.

Teacher Attitudes

Students spend a large portion of their day at school where they have direct contact with teachers. Teachers can play an influential role in shaping students' attitudes towards the maintenance of their heritage language (Corson, 2001; Macías, 2004; Nieto, 2002). Previous research has shown that teacher attitudes significantly affect student attitudes as well as their teaching practices (Clark, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1986; Flores, 2001; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Stern & Keislar, 1977; Wood & Floden, 1990). Ball and Lardner (1997) argued that effective instruction of linguistically diverse students relates directly to teachers' dispositions towards their students and their backgrounds. They observed that a lack of respect for the home language of students leads to "negative attitudes toward the children who spoke it, that in effect, their attitudes constituted a language barrier impeding students' educational progress" (p. 472). Moreover, Lanehart (1998) found that when teachers communicate that only English is appropriate for school, students infer that their home language and culture are less important. In response to a sociocultural environment that does not appear to value their home language and culture, linguistic minority students are likely to reject and abandon their heritage language (Wong-Fillmore, 2000).

A common misunderstanding among teachers is that only teachers who are proficient in the students' heritage language can support students' heritage language maintenance. To the contrary, studies have shown that positive effects are also found when teachers express interest in the heritage language and treat it as a resource (Franquiz & de la Luz Reyes, 1998). Regardless of whether or not the teachers have proficiency in the students' heritage language, their positive attitudes toward the heritage language and willingness to value it publicly in the school space can reinforce students' desire to maintain their heritage language. Thus, teachers must recognize the importance of heritage language proficiency in the lives of their students and also become aware of their own personal stance and beliefs toward students' heritage languages and its maintenance.

Although studies have been conducted on teachers' attitudes toward primary language use in the classroom to facilitate English language acquisition and access to academic content (Cummins, 1981; Ramos, 2001; Shin & Krashen, 1996), there has been little, if any, research conducted on teachers' attitudes toward students' heritage language maintenance for the purpose of promoting additive bilingualism. Heritage language learners and their needs, for the most part, have been invisible in schools. By examining K-12 teachers' assumptions and beliefs about heritage language maintenance through surveys and interviews, this study hopes to bring to light the teachers' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and the relevance and status of heritage languages in schools.

Method

Informants

Given that 85% of California's teachers work with students from non-English speaking homes (Gandara & Orfield, 2005), we targeted teachers in California who are most likely to face daily decisions regarding their students' language use and language learning processes. K–12 public school teachers from four different school districts, two in Northern California and two in Southern California, were identified as our target population. In order to get a broader representation of teachers throughout California, we contacted teachers from the northern and southern regions through our personal contacts. Through referrals from the initial contacts, we were able to recruit teachers from seven schools in four different school districts to participate in the study.

A total of 69 teachers (14 males, 55 females) participated in the survey and 10 teachers took part in an in-depth interview about their attitudes toward students' heritage language maintenance. The years of teaching experience ranged from 1–40 years with a mean of 15.5 years. Twenty-five (36.8%) informants reported to be fluent in a language other than English—the majority claiming proficiency in Spanish—and 43 (63.2%) declared to be monolingual English speakers.

There were 38 (55.1%) elementary school teachers and 31 (44.9%) middle/high school teachers. Of the sample group, 31 teachers reported having an English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching credential, which includes 13 teachers who also had a Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) credential; however, at the time of the study none of the teachers were currently working in a bilingual classroom. The analysis of the survey data revealed similar response patterns between teachers with only ESL training and those with bilingual education training and thus, they were pooled into one group in the analysis of the data.

The schools from which the teachers were recruited differed greatly in the percentage of students who were from non-English speaking homes, ranging from less than 5% to nearly 100%. Twenty teachers reported having less than 30% of students from linguistic minority homes, 29 teachers claimed to have about 30–70% linguistic minority students, and 17 teachers indicated that they had over 70% linguistic minority children in their schools.

Of the 10 teachers interviewed (3 males; 7 females), 3 taught high school or middle school and 7 taught K–6 grades. The teachers had 1–21 years of teaching experience in public schools and all had experience teaching students whose primary language at home was not English. Only 2 of the 10 teachers had their BCLAD credential, but at the the time of the study, they were not teaching in bilingual classrooms where maintenance of the heritage language was a stated goal.

Procedures

The instrument consisted of 42 items: seven items on demographics, 11 items on practices regarding heritage language affirmation and maintenance, and 24 items on perceptions of bilingualism and attitudes toward students' heritage language. Each statement was assessed on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale. There were also three open-ended questions asking for respondents' opinions about heritage language maintenance (see Appendix). The survey instrument was piloted with a small group of K–12 teachers and revised for clarity before the actual administration.

Teachers serving as points of contact at the seven schools were asked to distribute the questionnaires to their colleagues at their schools toward the end of the school year. Two hundred and ninety questionnaires were sent to the seven schools based on the number of teachers in each of the schools as was reported by the contact teacher. The participants were asked to voluntarily complete the 4-page survey at their leisure and return it to the contact teacher, who then returned the anonymously-completed teacher surveys in a pre-stamped envelope. Each contact teacher was emailed a \$25 gift certificate for their assistance in the data collection.

The return rate of the surveys was fairly low at 24%; however, this was expected since the surveys were asked to be completed on a voluntary basis during a busy time of the school year for teachers. However, the low response rate may have also been confounded with a lack of interest of teachers about heritage language maintenance issues. In other words, the topic of the survey may not have been a priority issue that the teachers felt a need or desire to respond to.

A subsample of 10 teachers from the survey, who indicated willingness to be interviewed in regards to their perceived role and attitudes toward students' heritage language maintenance, were contacted. The semi-structured 40-minute interviews targeted teachers' attitudes toward bilingualism, beliefs about the impact of heritage language maintenance on their students, the role of teachers in relation to their students' heritage language maintenance, and the practices they employed towards these ends. Four interviews were done in person and six interviews were done over the phone. Each interview was audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewees and transcribed.

Analysis

A Varimax Principal Component Factor Analysis was conducted to identify the underlying constructs that were being assessed through the various items of the questionnaire (see Table 1). First, questionnaire items 15 and 16 were reverse coded because of the negative wording of the items. Five items were deleted from the factor analysis (13, 14, 20, 24, and 30) because they had factor loadings below .400.

Table 1

Factor Loadings for Varimax Principal Component Analysis

Questionnaire item (item number)	Constructs							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Benefits of HL for schooling	Personal benefits of HL	Teacher practices	Attitudes toward bilingualism	Importance of English - only	School-level policy	Role of schools	Role of parents
Academic progress (3)	0.79	0.15	0.02	0.30	0.15	-0.07	0.15	-0.12
Social development (4)	0.85	0.25	0.07	0.13	0.13	-.07	0.04	0.04
PL beneficial for ELD (12)	0.77	-0.01	0.14	0.04	0.28	0.15	-0.14	0.02
Identity development (5)	0.36	0.73	0.26	0.08	-0.01	0.08	0.04	-0.10
Family ties (6)	-0.06	0.89	0.14	0.09	-0.03	0.13	-0.01	-0.15
Communication parents (7)	0.37	0.70	0.06	0.27	-0.01	-0.123	-0.02	0.03
Children value (11)	-0.13	0.55	0.23	-0.06	0.30	-0.44	0.10	0.02
Multilingual valuable (18)	0.36	0.43	0.13	0.38	-0.05	-0.50	0.22	0.06
Teacher encourage (10)	0.31	0.32	0.53	0.34	0.09	-0.09	-0.15	-0.16
Talk about importance (26)	0.03	0.29	0.78	0.18	0.08	0.13	-0.04	-0.06
Share language and culture in class (27)	0.12	0.15	0.74	-0.07	0.28	0.15	0.19	0.01
Visit home to learn about language and culture (29)	0.02	-0.15	0.46	-0.34	0.19	0.39	0.38	0.28
Praise students who know another language (32)	0.26	0.25	0.47	0.18	-0.28	-0.26	0.34	0.00
Attempt to learn students HL (34)	0.23	-0.01	0.43	0.02	0.09	-0.08	0.18	-0.08
HLM better chance of succeeding (21)	0.29	0.11	0.03	0.81	0.09	0.08	0.18	-0.08
Important literate and proficient in HL and English (22)	0.13	0.12	0.06	0.83	0.01	-0.19	0.05	0.01

Table 1, cont.

Factor Loadings for Varimax Principal Component Analysis

Questionnaire item (item number)	Constructs							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Benefits of HL for schooling	Personal benefits of HL	Teacher practices	Attitudes toward bilingualism	Importance of English - only	School-level policy	Role of schools	Role of parents
Learn English and maintain HL (23)	0.10	0.19	0.40	0.61	0.43	0.17	-0.14	0.09
Deters English learning (2)	-0.30	0.10	-0.08	-0.09	0.73	0.07	-0.004	0.04
HL important, but English at school (25)	-0.15	0.00	-0.07	0.18	0.62	-0.17	-0.40	0.20
Parents speak English at home (31)	-0.11	-0.13	-0.27	-0.27	0.72	0.08	-0.06	0.17
Credit for Saturday school (19)	0.09	0.27	-0.09	0.20	0.15	0.70	-0.15	-0.21
Allow HL in assignments (33)	0.08	-0.16	0.14	0.01	0.13	0.77	0.22	0.05
Equal importance on English and HL (35)	-0.02	-0.01	0.39	0.22	0.01	0.45	0.26	0.24
Schools help HLM (8)	0.32	0.46	0.13	0.13	0.32	0.01	0.51	0.28
Schools provide HL instruction (9)	0.49	0.06	0.24	0.16	0.35	0.05	0.54	0.18
Talk to parents (28)	-0.07	0.07	0.21	-0.10	-0.08	0.20	0.80	0.03
Parental responsibility (1)	-0.22	-0.29	0.08	-0.04	-0.43	-0.17	-0.24	0.49
Heritage schools (17)	0.14	0.17	0.07	0.04	0.08	-0.10	0.12	0.85
Parents do enough (15)	0.24	-0.05	-0.08	-0.22	0.15	-0.04	0.28	0.73
Parents care (16)	0.06	0.04	0.15	0.29	0.09	0.07	0.10	0.86
Scale means (SD)	15.88 (4.19)	29.13 (4.75)	28.72 (7.37)	16.45 (3.78)	9.84 (4.83)	13.26 (4.50)	10.83 (4.62)	20.09 (2.83)
Item means (variance)	5.29 (0.43)	5.83 (0.17)	4.79 (1.38)	5.48 (0.10)	3.28 (0.62)	4.42 (0.03)	3.61 (0.09)	2.82 (0.03)
Cronbach's Alpha	0.85	0.79	0.79	0.76	0.72	0.53	0.76	0.51
Eigenvalue	1.67							
Total variance explained	74.96%							

Note. The factor loadings pertinent to each factor are in bold. Abbreviations used in the tables are as follows: HL = heritage language; PL = primary language; HLM = heritage language maintenance; and ELD = English language development.

The constructs had relatively high reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha with the exception of construct 6 and construct 8. Because of their low reliability coefficients, these two constructs were also deleted from the remainder of the analysis. Years of teaching experience, type of teacher training (BCLAD/ESL or non-BCLAD/ESL), and fluency in a language other than English were selected as the independent variables in order to identify whether certain characteristics of teachers significantly affect their attitudes and practices regarding students' heritage language affirmation and maintenance. The dependent variables were the six remaining constructs (see Table 1). *T*-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test for significant differences in the response patterns. The informants' interview responses were analyzed for common themes, which were used to support and elucidate the quantitative findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Findings

The analysis revealed that the attitudes of teachers who have had BCLAD and/or ESL training were significantly different from their colleagues who have not received such training (see Table 2).

BCLAD/ESL teachers strongly agreed with the idea that the maintenance and proficiency in the heritage language positively affect linguistic minority students' academic endeavors. Moreover, BCLAD/ESL teachers displayed more favorable attitudes toward statements that promoted schools' need to play an active role in encouraging and supporting the maintenance of the heritage language by talking with parents and offering heritage language classes whenever possible. BCLAD/ESL teachers also reported implementing more practices in the classroom that affirm the students' home culture and language such as sharing the language and culture in class, visiting the home to learn about the language and culture, publicly praising students who know other languages, and explicitly encouraging the maintenance of the home language, whereas non-BCLAD/ESL teachers rarely reported engaging in such practices. BCLAD/ESL teachers felt that addressing the language maintenance of their students was part of connecting with and educating the "whole child" as is reflected in the following quote from an ESL teacher: "If the school is going to help each student reach their greatest potential, maintaining their home language is part of that. It is part of teaching the whole student."

Both the BCLAD/ESL and non-BCLAD/ESL teachers agreed that heritage language maintenance will lead to many personal benefits such as a strong sense of ethnic identity and strong family values; however, they differed in their perspectives of the practicality and feasibility of promoting additive bilingualism in students. Non-BCLAD/ESL teachers believed that the primary role of schools is to teach English and that the school, parents, and communities must all place English as the foremost priority. For example, 6 of the 10 teachers

Table 2

Comparison Between BCLAD/ESL and Non-BCLAD/ESL Teachers' Attitudes Toward Heritage Language Maintenance

Factors	BCLAD/ ESL training (n)	M (SD)	t	df
Attitudes toward benefit of HL for schooling	Yes (31)	17.32 (3.89)	2.71**	67
	No (38)	14.68 (4.11)		
Attitudes toward personal benefits of HL for students	Yes (31)	30.19 (3.85)	1.69	67
	No (38)	28.26 (5.28)		
Teacher practices	Yes (29)	32.79 (6.61)	4.56***	64
	No (37)	25.44 (6.34)		
Attitudes toward bilingualism	Yes (29)	17.69 (3.49)	2.43***	65
	No (38)	15.49 (3.77)		
Attitudes toward English-only	Yes (30)	7.63 (4.28)	-3.75***	64
	No (36)	11.74 (4.51)		
Attitudes toward the role of schools in students HLM	Yes (30)	12.70 (4.51)	3.17***	66
	No (38)	9.32 (4.18)		

Note. For each item, the number of participants may differ, because some participants did not answer all the questions. HL = heritage language; HLM = heritage language maintenance.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

interviewed, who were non-BCLAD/ESL certified, stated that English was the main priority as shown in the following quote: “My primary concern is getting them ready to participate in this society and to do that they need English. I don’t know whose job it [heritage language maintenance] is, but...not mine!”

In addition, the dominant understanding of language learning for most teachers without BCLAD/ESL training was that more time and greater exposure to English lead to faster and better English language acquisition. For instance, one elementary, non-BCLAD/ESL teacher advised, “They lose so much time over the summer when they don’t speak English. I think parents, if they can, should try to speak English at home. The more the better.” Such views undermine current research on language development that shows that children need to be in a language-rich environment whether it be at school or at home. Teachers’ advice to parents to speak only English at home not only contributes

to heritage language loss, but also is likely to lead to a less enriched language environment with fewer opportunities for interactions about interesting topics incorporating sophisticated vocabulary, ideas, and concepts given that many immigrant parents have limited English proficiency. A consistent theme that ran through the interviews was the dominant belief about language learning to be an “either/or” choice rather than a “both/and” alternative that can lead to additive bilingualism. The following quote from a teacher captures the tension that many teachers faced amidst the pressures for their students to acquire English:

Oh, gosh . . . well, yikes. I don't know. I don't really know what I would say. I want, I really want the kids to keep their native language, so that they can hand it down to their children, I think that's awesome, but I also, I come I come from a probably awfully very realistic point of view that they are living in the United States and I'm concerned that they need to speak English, and they need to be able to speak it fluently, they need to be able to write it, appropriately, . . . I guess in many ways, shoot, I guess I would want them to speak English.

Furthermore, the views of some non-BCLAD/ESL teachers reduced the function of heritage languages to a “cultural thing;” that is, a cultural artifact that should be showcased during Multicultural Week or on International Day as is implied in the following quote:

I think it should be expressed as a cultural thing but understand in school, because we're all trying to be on the same page, that they should emphasize English, otherwise you get into social problems and you also get into challenges where a couple students who speak the same language may have conversations among themselves about or whatever and that could be distracting to the class.

Such comments resonate with prevalent societal attitudes that view multilingualism to be divisive and a source of “social problems,” and are especially disturbing when it comes from educators who are potentially in a strong position to promote a society that respects, embraces, and affirms diversity. Issues of linguistic and cultural diversity and language learning are no longer the concerns and challenges of language specialist teachers, but a critical educational matter that involves all teachers regardless of content area.

One-way ANOVAs with the independent variables of years of teaching experience (i.e., early, mid, and advanced career teachers) and percentage of students from non-English-speaking homes (i.e., low, mid, and high) revealed no significant differences in the means of the responses of the informants on the six dependent measures. Thus, the findings suggest that it is not the years of teaching experience nor the composition of the student population that

affects teachers' attitudes toward issues of heritage language affirmation and maintenance, but rather the nature of preparation for teachers that makes a significant difference in teacher understandings and attitudes toward students' heritage language maintenance. These findings align with previous research which shows that teacher attitudes are influenced by professional development (Dickens-Smith, 1995; Gilman, 1988) as well as teacher education programs (Huber & Kline, 1993; Lacefield & Mahan, 1980). For example, Lacefield and Mahan (1980) found teacher education programs to have more influence on attitude formation than teaching experience.

Significant differences in teacher practices and attitudes toward the role of schools in heritage language maintenance were also found between teachers who reported having fluency in a language other than English and those that did not. Of the informants that responded to the question, teachers with fluency in another language other than English ($N = 24$, $M = 31.25$, $SD = 8.42$) were significantly more likely to implement practices that encouraged and affirmed students' home language and cultures in the classrooms than monolingual English speaking teachers ($N = 40$, $M = 27.05$, $SD = 6.32$), $t(62) = 2.11$, $p < .05$. Furthermore, teachers who reported having proficiency in another language ($N = 24$, $M = 12.46$, $SD = 5.44$) felt more strongly that schools should take an active role in supporting heritage language maintenance among linguistic minority students than monolingual teachers ($N = 42$, $M = 9.83$, $SD = 3.86$), $t(64) = 2.08$, $p < .05$. Thus, teachers that have personally experienced the benefits and enriched experiences afforded through the knowledge of two or more languages appear to be more sensitive towards issues of heritage language maintenance and much more supportive of assisting and encouraging heritage language maintenance.

Finally, *t*-tests were conducted to compare the means of a few selective items that directly addressed the informants' attitudes toward their students' heritage language maintenance (see Table 3). We were interested in examining how BCLAD/ESL teachers differed from non-BCLAD/ESL teachers in their perspectives on the responsibility of heritage language maintenance, heritage language schools, and the relationship between heritage language maintenance and acculturation.

As shown in Table 3, the non-BCLAD/ESL teachers strongly believed that heritage language maintenance was the sole responsibility of the parents, whereas BCLAD/ESL teachers perceived heritage language maintenance to be the responsibility of both parents and teachers, $p < .05$. The interview data also supported this finding. Six of the 10 teachers, who were not BCLAD/ESL certified, did not think that being concerned with heritage language maintenance was a part of their responsibility or even a task they were equipped to support. As an example, one monolingual English teacher stated

I see it as the family's responsibility. I guess what I think is if I move to France, first of all I'd have to learn French because I would want to function and look for a job and function as a member of that society and culture and I certainly wouldn't expect the French people to help me maintain English, you know what I mean?

The three main reasons provided by teachers as to why they are not concerned with heritage language maintenance were: (a) They saw it as a personal or family activity; (b) They did not have time in class to address the issues; and (c) They did not know how to support heritage language maintenance. It was clear in the interviews that heritage language maintenance did not figure into the decisions many participants made about teaching. Even the 4 teachers who were in favor of teachers playing a role in students' heritage language maintenance were uncertain about how to effectively support heritage language maintenance and directed attention to the lack of training that teachers receive on heritage language-related issues. Thus, the status and relevance of heritage language maintenance in the personal and academic lives of linguistic minority children must be made more salient in terms of raising the awareness of teachers and providing teachers with explicit strategies for them to be able to enhance the potential for their students to develop and sustain the will and motivation to achieve additive bilingualism.

T-test analysis also showed that BCLAD/ESL teachers perceived heritage language schools to be an effective method of heritage language maintenance, whereas non-BCLAD/ESL teachers had little knowledge of whether such schools existed in their communities. In addition, in comparison to BCLAD/

Table 3

Comparison Between BCLAD/ESL and Non-BCLAD/ESL Teachers' Attitudes About Selective Questionnaire Items

Questionnaire item (item number)	BCLAD/ESL training (n)	M (SD)	t	df
HL parents' responsibility (1)	Yes (31)	5.35 (1.78)	-2.33*	67
	No (38)	6.21 (1.11)		
HL schools great idea (17)	Yes (30)	5.60 (1.52)	2.65**	66
	No (38)	4.55 (1.69)		
Encouraging HLM prevents acculturation (20)	Yes (31)	1.74 (1.03)	-2.94***	67
	No (38)	2.63 (1.40)		

Note. HL = heritage language; HLM = heritage language maintenance.

ESL teachers, the non-BCLAD/ESL teachers agreed more with the statement that encouraging heritage language maintenance will prevent children from fully acculturating into this society. They saw the heritage language to be a barrier in becoming a full member of the society, rather than a resource to benefit the overall quality of life as a member of the society. Both the survey and interview data showed a clear divide in teacher attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, which seem to be driven by teachers' personal experiences and beliefs about language.

Discussion

The initial findings of this exploratory study raise questions that warrant more in-depth investigation. Despite supporting evidence that suggests that teacher education programs can influence teacher attitudes, the extent to which teacher training shapes the attitudes of teachers remains unclear. For example, is it the case that teacher preparation programs have a significant impact on the shaping of the BCLAD/ESL teachers' attitudes or is the finding confounded by the tendency for individuals who possess positive attitudes toward bilingualism and heritage languages to enter into the field of bilingual or ESL education? In other words, to what extent are positive attitudes toward bilingualism and heritage languages dependent upon an individual's own ethnic and linguistic background and experiences or can such positive attitudes develop through teacher training? In order to explicate this potential confounding variable, further research that examines how teacher education or professional development programs may affect teachers' attitudinal changes is needed. In addition, the findings show a significant relationship between teacher attitudes and beliefs and teacher practices. The data suggest that unless teachers believe in the benefits of bilingualism and understand the adverse effects of heritage language loss, it is unlikely that the needs of heritage language speakers will enter into the interest span of teachers. Policies and programs that highlight the advantages of heritage language maintenance are needed to raise teachers' awareness of the critical role of heritage languages and cultures in the lives of our increasingly diverse student population. In order to promote teaching practices that affirm heritage language maintenance, a fundamental change in attitudes and beliefs regarding heritage languages needs to occur in conjunction with more research that elucidates how attitudinal changes translate to teaching practices.

Secondly, the findings show that teachers with proficiency in a language other than English were more sensitive to issues of diversity and were more interested in dealing with the linguistic needs that extend beyond English-language acquisition. This finding lends support to the value of foreign language education for all citizens and the need to promote mandatory and systematic foreign language education as a core component of general

education (Tucker, 1999). If the learning of different languages and cultures were an expectation and requirement for all children, it could potentially be a powerful means of building a society that can appreciate and promote linguistic and cultural diversity. We need to not only work to better educate our current teachers on language-based issues of linguistic minority children, but also work towards recruiting and retaining a teaching workforce of individuals who have the experiences that enable them to embrace the value of heritage language maintenance (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Thirdly, teachers reported that the pressures of educational policies and the punitive nature of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001(2002) make it difficult for them to address the needs of their students that are not directly related to standardized testing measures. Many teachers explained that they felt there was not much they could do to offer support for heritage language maintenance efforts because they “. . . just don’t have time to do anything about it. We [Teachers] have to get them ready for that test. And that test is in English!” Because English acquisition is the standard by which they and their students will be held accountable, teachers are being forced to restrict their energies to English-language acquisition. Instead of providing an infrastructure that enables teachers to capture opportunities to assist linguistic minority children to develop bilingualism, current policies such as NCLB, which some professionals have humorously referred to as “No Child Left Bilingual,” and Proposition 227: English for the Children have created even higher obstacles to overcome to achieve additive bilingualism for linguistic minority children.

Furthermore, the strong attitudes expressed by non-BCLAD/ESL teachers that heritage language maintenance is the responsibility of the parents and is not within the scope of their responsibilities are disconcerting. One high school teacher stated, “I think it’s great [if students maintain their heritage language], but I can’t do it. My job is to teach them English and get them ready to graduate.” Heritage language maintenance is not solely an individual process, but a societal process that involves participation from all sectors of society including schools and teachers. We need better synergy and orchestrated efforts among parents, teachers, and schools to support linguistic minority individuals to develop the will to maintain their heritage language. For example, academic credit can be awarded to students for attending heritage language schools, which could boost students’ motivational levels to invest time and effort in such programs. That is, interest, encouragement, and acknowledgement from teachers and schools would give legitimacy and validity to students’ efforts in studying their heritage language and also demonstrate to the students that their heritage language and culture are important.

We are not suggesting that all teachers and schools take up the actual practice of heritage language instruction. Rather, we are emphasizing the importance of accepting and promoting an ideology that views linguistic

diversity as a resource (Nieto, 2002). As highlighted in comments made by the BCLAD/ESL teachers, the most valuable practice teachers can take up in encouraging the maintenance of heritage languages is to let their students know that they value their language through verbal comments expressing interest in students' heritage languages or by showcasing their heritage languages in the classroom (Cummins, 1996; Nieto, 2002). This idea is embodied in the following teacher's statement: "Just asking them to share some things in their language, letting them use it. Then they don't have to hide that part of themselves. It's part of who they are. They can be proud." Knowledge of such strategies may ease the tension felt particularly by secondary teachers in our study, who seem to believe that the best way they can help their students is by encouraging students to use English as much as possible, and ideally English only. To rectify the common misconceptions surrounding language learning and bilingualism, research demonstrating that additive knowledge of two languages promotes academic achievement and acquisition of English needs to be better disseminated in forms that are more widely accessible and utilized by practitioners and the general public (Cummins, 1981, 1992; García-Vázquez et al., 1997; Krashen, 1998).

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine teacher attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, which has not received much attention in the education literature. We argue that teachers' recognition of the importance of heritage languages in the lives of their linguistic minority students is critical to the development and empowerment of the whole child and that heritage language maintenance needs to become more visible in the agendas of educators. One teacher stated:

I guess that sort of goes back to this sort of philosophical question of "What is the purpose of education?" If the school says that they're there for the purpose of education and education is supposed to bring out the best in people . . . to . . . you know, this knowledge should bring out the best in people. I believe, firmly, that maintaining one's wholeness, maintaining one's culture and a large part of maintaining culture is maintaining language, that's a part of bringing out the best in people. So for me the connection is there. If schools believe that, then schools certainly have a role.

The study showed that in general teachers did not see a role for themselves and schools in the heritage language maintenance process of their students. There is much work that needs to be done to educate teachers and the general public about the significant role and function of the heritage language in the personal, academic, and social trajectories of linguistic minority children. With encouragement, enthusiasm, and interest from teachers, we

know that students are more likely to develop positive attitudes about their home language (Gardner, 1985; Hollins & Spencer, 1990). Therefore, teachers' voices of authority need to be better utilized to validate and give wider recognition to the value and importance of heritage language maintenance. However, more importantly, students need to have consistent messages about the importance of heritage language maintenance from parents and teachers. Thus, parents and educators must work closely together to find and build ways of creating optimal environments where linguistic minority children will be motivated to maintain and be proud of the languages and cultures that symbolize and represent their complete identities.

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Appendix

Teacher Survey

Instructions: *Please read the statements carefully and rate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement. If you have any further comments, please feel free to write them on the back. Your responses are strictly anonymous.*

I think that . . .

	strongly disagree				strongly agree		
(1) home language maintenance is the responsibility of the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(2) frequent use of the home language deters students from learning English.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(3) proficiency in the home language helps students in their academic progress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(4) proficiency in the home language helps students in their social development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(5) the maintenance of the home language is important for the student's development of his or her identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(6) the maintenance of the home language is the key to strengthening family ties.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(7) the maintenance of the home language is essential in keeping channels of communication open with parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(8) schools should be invested in helping students maintain their home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(9) ideally schools should provide home language instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(10) teachers should encourage students to maintain their home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(11) children do value their home language and culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(12) home language instruction is beneficial for students' English language development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(13) children should spend their time and energy learning English rather than learning their heritage language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(14) everyone in this country should speak English and only English.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(15) parents are not doing enough to support their children in their home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(16) parents do not seem to care about their children's maintenance of the home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(17) it is a great idea that students go to heritage language schools (i.e. Saturday Language Schools).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(18) it is valuable to be multilingual in our society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(19) schools should give credit to students who are attending Saturday schools.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(20) encouraging the children to maintain their home language will prevent them from fully acculturating into this society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(21) children who maintain their home language have a better chance of succeeding in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(22) it is important that children are highly literate and fluent in both English and their home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(23) teachers, parents, and schools need to work together to help students learn English and maintain their home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(24) heritage language maintenance is too difficult to achieve in our society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Practices

	strongly disagree				strongly agree		
(25) I tell my students that their home language is important and valuable, but at school we must use English.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(26) I talk to my students about how important maintaining their home language is.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(27) In class, I have my students share their home language and culture every chance I get.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(28) I talk with parents to strategize on how we can help their children learn English and maintain their home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(29) I visit students' homes to find out more about their home culture and language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(30) I ask students to leave their home culture and language behind when they step into my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(31) I advise parents to help their children learn to speak English faster by speaking English in the home.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(32) I praise the children for knowing another language and culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(33) I allow students to use their home language in completing class work or assignments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(34) I make an effort to learn my students' home languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(35) In my teaching, I place equal importance and value on knowing both English and the home language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Background

- (36) What is your gender? Male Female
- (37) Are you or have you ever been a bilingual education teacher? Yes No
How many years?___
- (38) Are you or have you ever been an ESL teacher? Yes No
How many years?___
- (39) Are you fluent in any other language than English? Yes No
Which language(s)? _____
- (40) How many years have you been teaching? _____
- (41) What grade level do you teach? _____
- (42) What percentage (on average) of your students is from homes where a language other than English is spoken? _____ %
How many students in class attend a heritage language school?

- Do you know of any specific heritage language schools in your community? Yes No
Which ones?_____

Opinions

- (43) Do you think home language maintenance is important for children from linguistically diverse backgrounds? Why or why not?
- (44) What do you think is the teacher's role in student's home language maintenance?
- (45) Do you have any suggestions for how to help children maintain their home languages?