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To cite this article: Esra Akgul, Yekta Kosan & Ridvan Elmas (15 Oct 2025): Pedagogical bridges to heritage: teacher attitudes and practices in heritage language maintenance, International Journal of Multilingualism, DOI: [10.1080/14790718.2025.2573023](https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2025.2573023)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2025.2573023>



Published online: 15 Oct 2025.



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Pedagogical bridges to heritage: teacher attitudes and practices in heritage language maintenance

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perspectives of teachers in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Cameroon on maintaining students' heritage languages and how these attitudes are reflected in classroom practices. The research highlights teachers' attitudes toward heritage languages maintenance and their impact on cultural and cognitive development. The study utilised a mixed-methods approach and involved a diverse cohort of 358 teachers from Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Cameroon, encompassing various demographic characteristics in three countries. Data were gathered via the Teachers' Attitudes Towards Students' Heritage Language Maintenance Survey, which included 35 Likert-type items and three open-ended interview questions. Quantitative findings indicate that demographic factors such as professional experience and language proficiency do not significantly impact teachers' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. Qualitative data reveal that teachers emphasise cultural maintenance and cognitive development as reasons for supporting heritage language maintenance. Significant barriers identified include educational challenges and social integration issues. The research underscores the critical role of collaboration between teachers and parents in sustaining heritage languages. These findings indicate that academic policies and teacher-parent partnerships could play a role as important as individual teacher characteristics in encouraging educational institutions to develop more inclusive policies, promote linguistic diversity, and build effective partnerships to create more inclusive educational environments.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 May 2024
Accepted 2 October 2025

KEYWORDS

Heritage language maintenance; teacher attitudes; classroom practices

Introduction

Multilingualism plays a pivotal role in today's educational landscape due to its facilitation of interdisciplinary learning (Dubinina, 2023), enhancement of language awareness and literacy (Hélot, 2012), and support for the development of linguistic and cultural resources (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2017). Its significance is further underscored by its ability to increase the effectiveness of addressing global issues; multilingualism serves as a critical component in teachers' professional development (Semec & Jazbec, 2018) and raises

pertinent social issues related to language ideologies and identity construction (Fuller, 2009). Thus, educational institutions must create a supportive and inclusive environment that embraces and utilises the benefits of multilingualism. The importance of multilingualism is particularly evident in its potential to broaden perspectives and contribute to academic development in children (Potts & Moran, 2013). Students who grow up multilingual are offered significant cognitive and social benefits. Research indicates that bilingual children possess enhanced communication skills (Lieberman et al., 2017), advanced metalinguistic abilities (Diaz & Klingler, 1991), and a greater capacity for attention and task-switching (Marian & Shook, 2012). Moreover, multilingual children often outperform their monolingual peers in tasks requiring high levels of cognitive control (Kovács, 2007). Multilingualism also facilitates the development of a common lingua franca, enhances intercultural communication, and promotes cultural awareness (Okal, 2014). The benefits of multilingual upbringing are extensive for both the individual child and society.

The concept of multilingualism also brings to the forefront the preservation of heritage languages (HL), highlighted by approaches such as the Language Ecology Theory. As proposed by Einar Haugen, Language Ecology is a holistic and dynamic approach that emphasises the interaction between language and its environment (Garner, 2005; Rasheed, 2023). It challenges traditional linguistic theories by viewing language as a patterned behaviour arising from human social needs. It incorporates an interdisciplinary approach that considers the history, economic, and political circumstances, and legal status of speech communities (Głuszkowski, 2018). Moreover, the practical implications of this theory in language learning underscore the creation of ecologically valid contexts and relationships (Liera, 2020). Language Ecology Theory examines how language functions and evolves within societal, economic, political, and cultural contexts, advocating for the promotion of language use, support for language education, and emphasising the cultural significance of language. Driven by the need to preserve HL, research emphasises the importance of HL for children's psychological, cognitive, linguistic, social, and academic success (Vallance, 2015). Parents of children with cultural and linguistic diversity view the learning of their HL to continue their cultural and religious heritage, strengthen family bonds, and enhance bilingual skills (Yan, 2002). Immigrant mothers see the maintenance of their children's HL as a bridge connecting intergenerational families and an asset for future opportunities (Kwon, 2017). HL development strengthens ethnic identity and family relationships, buffers discrimination, and reduces acculturation conflicts (Chhuon, 2011). However, the lack of support for HL poses a challenge for parents in sustaining their children's mother tongues (Li, 2006). HL programmes and micro-level language policies are crucial in recognising children's HL and cultures (Seals & Peyton, 2017). The attitudes of peers and teachers from the same ethnic group influence children's attitudes toward their HL (Lee, 2013).

The impact of multilingualism on children's social, cognitive, and linguistic development further highlights the need for adequate support (Bialystok, 2007). Contrary to common beliefs that HL can easily be maintained at home if parents speak to them, as Lee and Oxelson (2006) mention, home language use alone is insufficient for acquiring high-level language competencies, especially in professional domains. According to the Langeloo et al. (2019), ensuring equal learning opportunities for multilingual children is crucial, and as Bailey (2016) affirms, educators play an increasingly prominent role in

promoting multilingualism. The importance of home language education and the role of teachers in this context are emphasised by Lee and Bang (2011) and Wu et al. (2011). Teachers play a critical role in preserving children's HL (Lee, 2006; Vallance, 2015). Lee and Oxelson (2006) examined teachers' attitudes toward primary language use in the classroom to aid English language acquisition and stated that a deeper understanding of these attitudes is crucial for promoting practical bilingualism. Empirical studies by Goriot et al. (2016) and Karademir and Yilmaz (2023) show that bilingual students are more inclined to engage when teachers feel favourable toward students' HLs, fostering an environment conducive to language preservation. In this context, the influence of teachers' personal experiences with languages other than English reveals a nuanced understanding and appreciation of linguistic diversity and the importance of preserving the HL (Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014). While Briceño et al. (2018) highlighted the challenges bilingual educators face due to sociolinguistic dynamics and regulatory frameworks, Larson (2018) noted the crucial role of bilingual and bicultural teachers in leveraging students' linguistic and cultural assets to create an inclusive educational environment. In creating an inclusive educational environment, teachers navigate various influencing factors, including gender, experience, and qualifications (Ogott & Odera, 2012), and their views on integration policies (Monsen & Frederickson, 2004). Other factors include children's speaking styles and gender roles (Kedar-Voivodas, 1983; Seligman et al., 1972) and teachers' experiences and emotions (Levins et al., 2005).

A positive classroom climate and teacher support are essential in strengthening the communication skills of children with another heritage language in a multicultural environment (Yüncü & Akgül, 2023). Teachers' attitudes toward children with different HLs significantly affect the classroom environment and students' self-esteem and identities (Brinkmann, 2024). Often influenced by psychological insecurity and political conservatism, negative attitudes hinder the preservation of HLs (Byrnes et al., 1996; Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Conversely, positive attitudes, more common among teachers with experience working with language minority children, and formal education in second language learning, promote a more inclusive and supportive environment (Byrnes et al., 1997). The school's cultural diversity influences these attitudes; studies show that teacher candidates with experience in culturally diverse schools exhibit less negative attitudes (Glock & Böhmer, 2018). Regardless of whether teachers are proficient in students' HLs, their positive attitudes toward these languages, and their willingness to value them openly in the school environment can reinforce students' desires to maintain their HLs (Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Overall, teachers' attitudes significantly shape the classroom experiences and outcomes for children who speak heritage languages.

The context of multiculturalism and multilingualism in educational settings in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Cameroon

The intricate interaction of language and cultural variety in Djibouti's educational system creates opportunities and challenges. The language landscape of Djibouti, where French was the sole official language until 1992, has changed due to the country's independence, the influx of displaced people, and the changes brought about by wars in the Horn of Africa in recent years (Dirie, 2020). These days, national languages like Afar and Somali are being utilised increasingly in every situation. In contrast, English, which rules the

national labour market and worldwide scientific domains, is challenging French. Arabic is the language of the state religion. Regional tongues like Oromo and Amharic have flourished because of Ethiopia's and Djibouti's growing economic interdependence. In Djibouti, there is a dominance and rivalry between the seven commonly spoken languages (Dirie, 2020). Tsehaye (2014) and Tsehaye (2013) highlight the management of cultural conflicts and the impact of different educational models on school dropouts and failure.

The educational landscape in Ethiopia is marked by a rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic diversity, which is reflected in the country's multicultural education policies (Dereje, 2019; Mebratu, 2011). However, implementing these policies faces challenges, particularly in the tension between globalised discourses and local language planning (Heugh, 2010). The need for a transformational diversity management approach is highlighted to address identity-based mistrust and hostility among students (Mergo, 2008). Despite the constitutional commitment to language rights, the role of Amharic as a means of national communication remains a point of contention (Fessha, 2022). Promoting positive identity and understanding diversity is underscored, particularly in Alternative Basic Education centres (Kenea, 2010). The effectiveness of multilingual education in enhancing student achievement is demonstrated, with a decentralised approach showing promise (Heugh, 2014). However, the need for greater cultural inclusion and consideration of immigrant students' needs in the curriculum and pedagogical practices is emphasised (Bitew & Ferguson, 2012).

The educational system in Cameroon is marked by significant cultural and linguistic diversity stemming from its colonial history and the presence of over 250 languages. This diversity is reflected in the country's bilingual education policy, which has led to challenges in harmonising public examinations (Hyasinth, 2018). The need for a common vision in the provision of educational values has been identified as a key issue, with the need for a culture that is typically Cameroonian (Ngalim, 2014). Efforts to promote local languages in education have been met with resistance, leading to the proposal of a community response framework for language planning (Chiatoh, 2014). Introducing national languages and cultures into school curricula has been seen as a way to promote harmonious cohabitation (Fomekong et al., 2023). Overall, the need for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational system in Cameroon is evident.

This research examines the complex dynamics between teachers' attitudes toward students' HLs and their participation in classroom practices that either support or hinder language maintenance efforts. In line with this objective, we sought answers to the following research questions:

1. How do teachers' personal characteristics and experiences of cultural and linguistic diversity shape their attitudes toward maintaining students' HLs?
2. How are teachers' awareness of heritage languages' cognitive and cultural benefits reflected in their efforts to maintain them?

Methodology

Mixed methods, as Jogulu and Pansiri (2011) state, are valuable as they facilitate a nuanced examination of social phenomena by combining the strength of numerical data with rich contextual insights. The framework for mixed methods research highlights

the synergy between different methodological approaches and aligns them with theoretical and practical research objectives (Turner et al., 2017).

In this study, the initial phase utilises the descriptive survey model, a quantitative method. The descriptive survey model is ideal for investigating current phenomena and is focused on exploring existing conditions, practices, beliefs, and relationships. This choice is guided by its ability to provide a snapshot of the present by employing various descriptive data collection tools such as surveys, case reports, and cross-sectional studies (Grimes & Schulz, 2002). We chose this model because it aligns with our objective to quantify and delineate specific aspects of our research questions, offering a clear baseline from which qualitative analysis can draw deeper insights (Salaria, 2012). Our research design adheres to rigorous academic standards by strategically combining these methodologies. It is tailored to yield actionable insights into the studied phenomena, ensuring a balanced interpretation of both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth.

Participants

This study consists of 358 participants with various demographic characteristics. The participants are teachers in various educational levels and subjects in three different African countries, where children have distinct home and school medium languages. One of the authors' presences as a trainer in professional development programmes of private school teachers in these regions was influential in determining the participants. Although the participant teachers engaged in the research's qualitative and quantitative components, some only responded to a subset of the qualitative questions. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Hasan Kalyoncu University's Institute of Education Sciences (Date: 05.10.2023; Decision: E-97105791-050.01.01-43882). In addition, participants were fully informed about the study, and participating teachers signed consent forms. Demographic information about the participants is presented in [Table 1](#).

Data collection instrument

In this study, researchers used the 'Teachers' Attitudes Towards Students' Heritage Language Maintenance Survey' developed by Lee and Oxelson (2006). The survey consists of 42 items, including 35 Likert-type items assessing teachers' attitudes toward the

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants.

Variables	N	Percentage (%)	
Country	Djibouti	23	6.42%
	Ethiopia	207	57.82%
	Cameroon	128	35.75%
Gender	Female	182	50.84%
	Male	176	49.16%
Working as a Bilingual Teacher	No	195	54.47%
	Yes	163	45.53%
Fluency in Languages Other Than English/French	No	100	27.93%
	Yes	258	72.07%
Years of Working Experience	1–5 years	110	30.73%
	6–10 years	106	29.61%
	10–15 years	89	24.86%
	16+ years	53	14.80%

preservation of heritage language, four demographic information questions, and three open-ended questions. Each statement of Likert-type items was evaluated on a survey from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha value for the scores from the survey in this study was calculated as .83.

Data analysis

Analysis of quantitative data

The study analysed the data collected from a survey on teachers' attitudes toward the preservation of heritage languages (HLs) in general, particularly those of their students and the broader linguistic communities, using SPSS. Initially, the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the score sequences obtained from the variables of the study and their sub-categories were examined. It was determined that the kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the score sequences did not fall within the range of -1 to $+1$, indicating that they did not conform to a normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric tests (The Kruskal–Wallis H and the Mann–Whitney U tests) were used to analyse the quantitative data (Büyüköztürk, 2011; Can, 2014). The mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness values of the attitude scores toward preserving HL among teachers were also calculated.

Analysis of qualitative data

The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis (Haggarty, 2022). The data obtained from qualitative interview forms were transcribed, coded, and then analysed to develop common themes to support and deepen the quantitative findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Results

The research calculated the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness coefficients of the participants' attitudes toward preserving their HL. The results are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the arithmetic mean of the attitude scores is 3.02 out of 4.00 (sd. = 0.36). It has been determined that the skewness of the attitude scores falls within the range of -1 to $+1$, but the kurtosis does not fall within this range.

The Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to reveal if there was a significant difference in the attitude scores toward the HL maintenance among participants based on gender, second language teacher experience, and talking in another language fluently. Furthermore, a Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in attitude scores toward the HL maintenance among participants based on their professional seniority. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows no statistically significant difference in the scores for attitudes toward maintaining the HL according to gender, second language teacher experience, talking

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for participants' attitude scores towards the HL maintenance.

	N	Mean	Sd.	Skewness	Kurtosis
\bar{x}	358	3.02	0.36	−0.74	2.13

in another language fluently, and professional seniority. This indicates that gender, working as a second language teacher in another language, fluency in a second language, and professional seniority do not significantly influence the participants' attitudes toward the HL maintenance in this study.

Qualitative results

The results of content analyses of interview forms filled out by participants reveal that teachers' views on maintaining the HL are shared. The reasons provided by participants who answered 'Yes' to the question, 'Do you think it is important to maintain the HL for children from linguistically diverse backgrounds?' The findings are presented in Table 4.

In Table 4, teachers have presented five fundamental reasons for maintaining the HL. These reasons include developmental reasons, reasons for cultural maintenance, communication reasons, pragmatic reasons, and rights-based reasons.

Explanations of teachers who answered 'No' to the question 'Do you think it is important to maintain the HL for children from linguistically diverse backgrounds?' are analysed. The findings are presented in Table 5.

As seen in Table 5, teachers presented three main reasons why the HL maintenance is considered unimportant. These problems are educational, beliefs about it being a waste of energy, and social integration problems. Teachers also reported their opinions on their role in maintaining the HL, and results are shared in Table 6.

The roles identified in this table emphasise teachers' multifaceted approach to encouraging the learning and use of the HLs. From direct instructional strategies to broader community engagement, these roles highlight educators' potential impact on reinforcing their students' cultural and linguistic identity. The diversity in roles also underscores the complexity of the HL maintenance, requiring active and varied strategies that align with the unique needs of multilingual students.

As seen in Table 7, teachers suggested improving the maintenance of the HLs within educational and community settings. The suggestions span various aspects of engagement and strategy, including family involvement, educational strategies, community engagement, and students' personal efforts.

Table 3. Statistical analysis of attitude scores toward heritage language maintenance based on gender, second language teacher experience, fluency in another language, and professional seniority.

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
Female	182	178.15	32424.00	15771.00	0.80
Male	176	180.89	31837.00		
Second Language Teacher Experience	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
No	195	173.82	33894.50	14784.50	0.26
Yes	163	186.30	30366.50		
Talking in Another Language Fluently	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
No	100	174.54	17454.00	12404.00	0.57
Yes	258	181.42	46807.00		
Professional Seniority	N	Mean Rank	df	x2	p
1–5 years	110	173.43	3	2.82	0.42
6–10 years	106	191.12			
10–15 years	89	181.88			
16–16 + years	53	164.87			

Table 4. Reasons why the HL maintenance is important.

Theme	Category	Code
Developmental Reasons	Language Development	Facilitates learning another foreign language Enhances vocabulary Improves grammar skills Supports language skills Contributes to the maintenance of the heritage language
	Cognitive Development	Enhances problem-solving skills Contributes to creativity Supports multi-dimensional thinking ability Improves comprehension skills Supports the ability to interpret
	Academic Development	Increases academic success An effective tool for learning new things
	Intellectual Development	Learns new languages Gains more knowledge about national languages and cultures Develops a sense of appreciation for new cultural norms and lifestyles
Cultural Maintenance	Cultural Identity	Recognising one's own identity Maintaining one's identity Connecting with cultural identity Facilitating intercultural harmony
	Promotion of Cultural Diversity	Promotes cultural diversity Provides motivation to recognise and learn about different cultures Facilitates adaptation to new cultures Maintains language diversity Makes respect for diversity visible
Transmission to Future Generations		Transfers cultural heritage to the next generation Prevents identity crises Affects social harmony through cultural identity
Communication Reasons	Family Communication	Communicates with family members Facilitates easy interaction with family members Better understanding of the family Knowing the values of the family
	Social Communication	Socializing Developing relationships with all sectors of society
	Intercultural Communication	Familiarity with culture Recognising other cultures Inclination to recognise another culture Easily learning other cultures
	Personal Communication Skills	Self-confidence Easy initiation of communication
Pragmatic Reasons	Economic Benefits	Having broader opportunities in the labour market Global benefits of being multilingual The option to convert to economic gain Diversity of career opportunities
	Social Benefits Educational Benefits	Provides privacy against others Useful in dangerous situations due to having an alternative communication Enhances socio-cultural integration Better integration into social life Facilitates teaching another language Strengthens the bond between teacher and student
Rights-Based Reasons	Human Rights	Living in peace and harmony
	Community Rights	Keeping the right to choose the language one wishes Ensuring the sustainability of cultures Preventing the disappearance of cultures

Table 5. Reasons why the HL maintenance is important.

Theme	Category	Code
Educational Problems Administrative Problems	Academic Barrier	If they use their own languages, they will not develop the language of education such as English or French. It will not be easy for them to master. Because registration will be difficult. Because it is difficult to manage
Waste of Energy	Ineffective Effort Unsustainability	Because they already know the home language very well Because it will be difficult to maintain all these languages, especially in countries like Ethiopia that have numerous HLs.
Social Integration Problems	Child's Exclusion	It bothers others. Social communication barrier because they cannot understand each other. Because the maintenance of the home language prevents children from learning and communicating with others. Because the main problem in our country is language prejudice. People treat you according to the language you speak. If you do not speak the language of the ruling party, you are under great pressure.
	Indecision in Language Choice	They do not know which language to speak. Can lead to confusion. Distracting.

Table 6. Teachers' role in the HL maintenance.

Themes	Category	Code
Encouragement and Motivation	Advocacy for Home Language	Encouraging learning and speaking of home language Promoting the importance and benefits of home language Motivating children to learn and love their home language
	Parental Engagement and Community	Advising and encouraging parents regarding dialogue in the home language Communicating the importance of home language to parents
Educational Support and Guidance	Instructional Role	Guiding and showing the value of home language Teaching the correct use of the home language Integrating home language into educational activities Using home language to aid comprehension Planning events celebrating linguistic diversity
	Resource Provision	Providing resources in the home language Creating opportunities for language use in class Facilitating learning through assignments
Cultural and Identity Affirmation	Cultural Promotion	Promoting pride in linguistic heritage Linking language learning with cultural identity Recognising language as a key component of self-identity
Limitations and Constraints	Perceived Role Limitations	Having limited influence Challenges posed by policies or lack of resources See no role in language maintenance

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that demographic variables such as gender, professional experience, and linguistic proficiency do not significantly influence teachers' attitudes toward maintaining heritage languages (HLs). This aligns with Lee and Oxelson (2006), who found that personal and demographic factors might be less influential than the broader educational environment and policy context. However, as highlighted by Lee and Bang (2011), HL attitudes are shaped by an individual's previous

Table 7. Teachers' suggestions on HLs maintenance.

Theme	Category	Code
Family Involvement and Responsibility	Providing Opportunity	Encouraging parents to speak their home language Parents should teach home language Engaging in home language conversations at home
	Engaging with Language School Programs	Using home language exclusively at home Being a role model Integrating home language with the curriculum Organizing cultural activities and events Creating plip classrooms
Educational Strategies and School Involvement	Teacher Engagement	Encouraging home language use Developing home language resources and materials
	Cultural Exposure	Participating in cultural/community events Visiting home villages or communities Enrolling in home language classes or centres Attending special language learning events
Community Engagement and Cultural Immersion	Language Usage	Speaking home language regularly at home Practicing home language with siblings and relatives
		Media and Materials
Students' Personal Efforts		

educational and personal experiences. Contrary to the expectations that individual teacher characteristics such as gender, fluency in other languages, and experience might determine attitudes toward language maintenance, our results suggest these factors are negligible. This corroborates the findings of Monsen and Frederickson (2004), who also reported minimal impact of similar demographic variables on educational outcomes. This discrepancy may suggest that teacher attitudes are shaped more by educational and policy frameworks than by personal linguistic capabilities, as emphasised by Wu et al. (2011), who underscored the role of institutional support over individual attributes.

Supporting our results, Cheng (2012) and Sugiyanta (2020) argue that teacher quality, student motivation, and parental involvement are pivotal in developing and maintaining the HLs. The qualitative aspect of our study revealed that while some teachers are committed to promoting the HL maintenance, they often feel unsupported and unprepared to implement effective strategies with the active participation of parents. Hegediš and Hus (2021) and Cunningham (2019) emphasise the need for teachers to promote cultural heritage and challenge societal ideologies. This aligns with our findings that, although teachers recognise the importance of the HL maintenance, there may be a gap in taking proactive responsibility. This could be attributed to a lack of substantial training or perceived support from educational institutions, highlighting a potential area for intervention. There appears to be a critical need for educational policies that train teachers in effective HL education practices and engage parents in the educational process (Li & Lin, 2025; Seals & Peyton, 2017).

Our study's qualitative findings reveal that teachers recognise the importance of maintaining the HLs primarily for cultural preservation and cognitive development. This is consistent with the Language Ecology Theory, which suggests that language functions and evolves within a complex interplay of social, economic, political, and cultural contexts (Garner, 2005; Rasheed, 2023). The appreciation of HLs as a cultural and cognitive resource aligns with Vallance (2015), who discusses the psychological and social benefits of HL

proficiency for children. However, significant barriers to HL maintenance, such as perceived educational challenges and social integration difficulties, point to a more complex scenario (Chiatoh & Akumbu, 2014). These findings echo Lee and Oxelson (2006), who argue that despite the recognised benefits of bilingualism, the actual support for HLs in educational settings can be limited by practical challenges. Furthermore, Cunningham (2020) and Hegediš and Hus (2021) have highlighted that while teachers may understand the value of cultural heritage, systemic constraints and lack of resources often limit their ability to support HL programmes effectively.

The results also emphasise the crucial role of parental involvement in HL maintenance. This finding supports the research by Kwon (2017) and Yan (2002), who found that positive parental attitudes and active engagement are critical for maintaining HLs at home. In addition to teachers' attitudes, the relationship between teachers and parents significantly influences bilingual students' home language maintenance. Collaborative efforts between teachers and parents are essential for supporting bilingualism and preserving students' home languages (Nyatuka, 2021). Research emphasises the importance of incorporating both parent and teacher observations to understand bilingual children's language use across different contexts (Bedore et al., 2011). Understanding parents' and teachers' attitudes toward bilingual education is crucial for creating a supportive environment that fosters language development (Mangarin & Tagadiad, 2021). Moreover, the lack of communication between parents and teachers can negatively impact students' bilingual learning experiences (Lamme et al., 2006). Educators need to engage with parents to address concerns and promote the maintenance of students' home languages. Studies have highlighted the significance of positive parent-teacher partnerships in supporting emergent bilingual student learning (Mercuri, 2016). Furthermore, the role of teachers is pivotal in raising awareness among families about the advantages of bilingualism and supporting language and cultural maintenance (Commins, 2014). This underscores the need for collaborative efforts between educators and parents to create a supportive multilingual environment, as Mercuri (2016) suggested, who advocates for strong parent-teacher partnerships in supporting bilingual education.

In conclusion, the current study's findings suggest that while individual characteristics such as demographic factors and linguistic proficiency do not significantly impact teachers' attitudes toward HL maintenance, the educational context, including institutional support and parental involvement, plays a crucial role. Enhancing these external factors through comprehensive educational policies and fostering strong collaborations between educators and parents could be among the effective strategies for maintaining HLs in educational settings.

Ethics of experimentation

The research was approved by Ethics Committee of the Hasan Kalyoncu University's Institute of Education Sciences (Date: 05.10.2023; Decision: E-97105791-050.01.01-43882).

Consent

We confirm that any participant in any type of qualitative or quantitative research, has given informed consent to participate in the research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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