

# Attitudes of school teachers towards Heritage Language Maintenance in the UK

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## Background

- Growing ethnic and linguistic diversity in school population in the UK
- Little provision in the curriculum that encourages ethnic minority children to practice or even understand the value of maintaining their HL.
- There is no appreciation or encouragement for them to maintain the language of their heritage culture.
- This often contribute towards language shift.

## Rationale

- Teaching minority languages may be practically difficult in many mainstream schools.
- Teachers can still use their influence and provide moral support to the children in maintaining their HL.
- An action research project will be carried out in Manchester to examine whether active encouragement by teachers in maintaining HL contributes towards language maintenance of primary school children.
- This study is phase 1 of that research to understand the attitudes of school leaders and teachers towards minority languages.

## Research design: Phase 1 Language Attitude Study

- Investigating schoolteachers' attitudes towards ethnic minority languages
- Qualitative questionnaire to understand the perceptions and understanding of school leaders and teachers about the role they could play in supporting children's HL maintenance.
- This will build a platform for conducting the action research project in Phase 2.
- The study will be conducted in four primary schools in Manchester with significant percentage of ethnic minority children.

## Research design: Phase 2 Ethnographic Action Research

1. Initial meetings with schools leaders and concerned teachers on the aims and objectives of the study
2. Teachers try to know the languages spoken in children's homes and how fluent they are in their heritage languages.
3. Parents-teachers meeting to inform parents what the school wants to do to support HL maintenance
4. Regular encouragement by teachers to remind children why they should maintain their HL
5. Different activities involving parents and grandparents to encourage HL maintenance

## Literature Review

- HL have a low status in society having a detrimental effect on children's attitudes towards their HL (Weekly 2018:2)
- The mainstream education sector's limited provision for HL has left complementary schools to provide a context for children to develop their multicultural identities (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Creese et al., 2006).
- Responsibility for HL maintenance is usually placed on parents and families (Anderson, 2008; Guardado, 2002; Hinton, 1999).
- Greater coordination needed between schools, parents and local communities to reinforce HL in mainstream education. (Cummins, 1991 2005; Tse, 2001).

## Some Sample Questions

- Do you think multilingualism is a positive thing that should be encouraged in schools?
- Do you think it is important for children to maintain their HL in the UK? Why?
- Should the national curriculum have provisions to support HL maintenance?
- Do you think it is only the responsibility of parents to ensure HL maintenance?
- Have you ever said or done anything to encourage children to maintain their HL?
- What could you do as a school or a teacher to support children's HL maintenance?
- What should the national curriculum do to support HL maintenance?