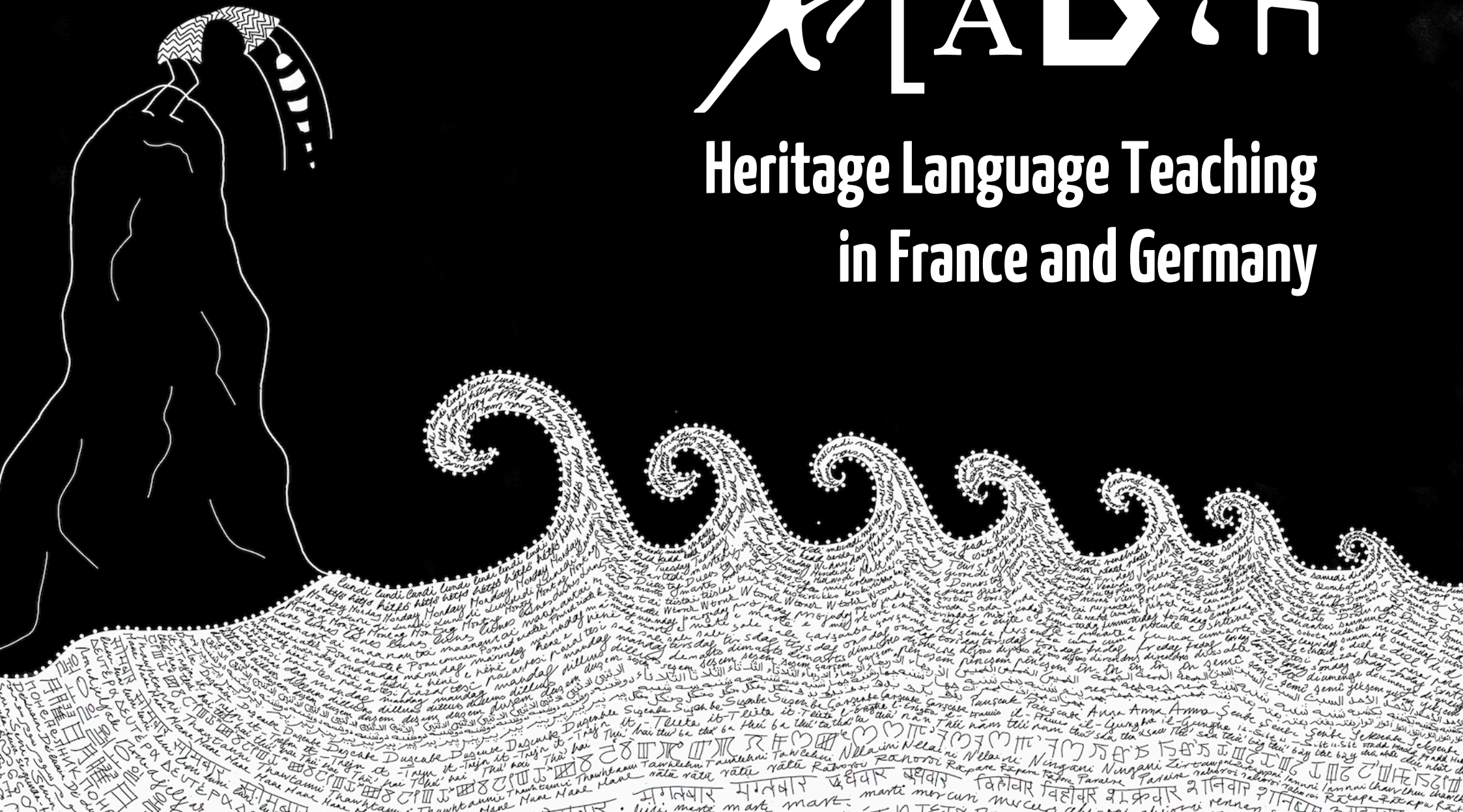
ALADIN

Heritage Language Teaching in France and Germany



HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

The term heritage language (HL) appears to have been first used in Canada to refer to any language other than English and French, that is languages spoken by indigenous (First Nation) people or by immigrants, and later in Australia, where it designated all languages other than English (LOTE) before being introduced in the United States by researchers and policy-makers (King & Ennser-Kananen 2012). In time this led to the emergence of a new field of applied linguistics, Heritage Language Studies (HLS), as well as language and educational policies targeted specifically at heritage speakers, however mostly with a narrower focus on the descendants of recent immigrants who typically acquire the language(s) of one or both of their parents as their first language during early childhood – often in an incomplete way – in the linguistic environment of a majority or dominant language, i.e. English in the United States. Subsequently the term was also adopted in the English-language academic literature on heritage languages in Europe. In Germany, the term Muttersprache ('mother tongue') has now to a large extent been replaced by Erstsprache ('first language' or L1 in linguistic parlance) in more formal and technical language, and by Herkunftssprache, which designates a first language other than German (but see below) and is used as the translation for heritage language. The term Herkunftssprachenunterricht (heritage language instruction) – or in some federal states Muttersprachlicher Unterricht ('mother tongue instruction') – can ambiguously refer to the teaching of or in a Herkunftssprache ('heritage language instruction'). In a similar sense, French until recently used langue d'origine and enseignement de langue (et culture) d'origine.

In the next part we will give a short overview of Heritage Language Studies, followed by a brief presentation of the historical development of Heritage Language Teaching (HLT) in France and Germany. The third part will be dedicated to the present state of HLT in the two countries. In the conclusions we will address the issue of recommendations for HLT.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE STUDIES – A NEW DISCIPLINE

In the next part we will give a short overview of Heritage Language Studies, followed by a brief presentation of the historical development of Heritage Language Teaching (HLT) in France and Germany. The third part will be dedicated to the present state of HLT in the two countries. In the conclusions we will address the issue of recommendations for HLT.

Heritage Language Studies (HLS) are a linguistic discipline that has emerged over the last decades to study the linguistic knowledge and performance of heritage speakers in their language and to develop new pedagogical tools for them. From a linguistic point of view, heritage speakers are fascinating subjects because the acquisition of their first language (or of two or several first languages) during childhood has been interrupted or reduced under the influence of the majority language spoken in their country of residence. Their proficiency varies greatly from one individual to another, ranging from receptive bilingualism to native fluency, or at least very close to it, and they exhibit at the same time characteristics of L1 speakers and of L2 learners, who learn a foreign language. HLS thus has been opening promising perspectives that might help to solve some of the great ongoing debates in linguistics and other disciplines on topics such as language acquisition, language attrition (i.e. the later loss of proficiency due to reduced use or prolonged disuse of a language) and reactivation, bilingualism, language change, psycholinguistics, and cognitive and neural development.

Before entering into more detail, it seems helpful to define some of the key terms used in this overview. Much of modern linguistic research on language acquisition initially focused on monolingual speakers, who acquire their first language, or 'mother tongue', during early childhood and, by virtue of this process, become 'native speakers' (or L1 speakers) of it, as opposed to those who learn the language later in life and who are defined as 'non-native speakers' (or L2 learners). Central underlying assumptions of this distinction, supported by various forms of evidence, are that language acquisition in native speakers takes place at the same time as brain maturation and is therefore 'hard-wired into the brain' and that at least the foundations of a child's native language are rather well-established by age 3, even though its language knowledge continues to expand and consolidate beyond that age. In addition, some scholars have subscribed to the notion of a universal grammar. Here, the language faculty of humans is held to be based on innate biological constraints that determine what a possible human language could be and, more controversially, on presumed common structural properties of natural languages. In this view, children, when receiving linguistic stimuli (or input), adopt specific syntactic rules that conform to universal grammar. While still strongly present in modern linguistics, most of these assumptions have been questioned in later studies.

Growing interest in bilingualism led to the emergence of bilingual studies, which at first took over many of the assumptions mentioned above. Early findings similarly distinguished bilinguals who acquire their second language during the critical period of childhood from those who learned it later in life. In the first case, a child acquires two (or more) languages independently along the same developmental lines as monolingual children. Contrary to common beliefs, bilingual children are therefore not confused by being simultaneously exposed early in their life to two languages despite occasional mixing of them and this double exposure does not inhibit normal language acquisition. Bilingual children were expected to become in time fully bilingual adult speakers, distinct from L2 learners who will find it difficult, if not impossible, to attain native proficiency. Many arguments about the benefits of a bilingual education stem from this view. (**1**) In real life, one of the languages generally tends to become stronger and the other weaker over time, as when, for example, a bilingual French-German speaker at first lives in Germany where they use more frequently and intensively the majority language, but then moves to France where proficiency in French will be strengthened at the expense of German. For this and other reasons, contemporary linguists now often speak of a 'bilingual continuum' and define bilinguals as people who have at least a rudimentary command in two languages or, more radically, with some form of attachment to one of two languages (e.g. an indigenous minority language no longer spoken).

Heritage speakers can thus be understood either as bilingual children whose acquisition of a first language, i.e. the heritage language, has been interrupted or considerably impeded through reduced linguistic input at an early age, typically (but not exclusively) through increased exposure to a second language, often the majority language spoken in the country of residence, and therefore remained incomplete or adolescents and adults who have learned the language of one or both of their parents (or of other ascendants) later as L2 learners. In line with the goals of the ALADIN project, we will focus here more particularly on second-generation immigrant children or children of immigrants who have acquired the heritage language and the majority language simultaneously after birth (simultaneous bilingualism) or who were exposed to the heritage

(1) Some critics have pointed to a potential inherent bias in early empirical studies of bilingual children, which have often focused on children from middle class or professional families and the simultaneous acquisition of standard variants of two prestigious languages. This may explain why many parents with a less privileged socio-economic background remain sceptical of the benefits of a bilingual education.

language as a first language (early sequential bilingualism) before experiencing, in both cases, reduced exposure and use of it in late childhood and adolescence. Their parents are first-generation immigrants who moved to their present country of residence in adulthood, grew up in a monolingual or multilingual environment and who speak standard and non-standard versions as their first language (Montrul 2022).

Children practising writing skills in Romanian by playing with little objects in Koopkultur's workshop (BERLIN, 2024)

While adult immigrants may experience L1 attrition over time that affects their vocabulary (lexical retrieval) or speed of language processing but not their grammar, their children show significant changes in structural aspects of the language in specific areas of their grammars, linked to a shift in language dominance with the onset of schooling in the majority language, if not earlier. Examples for such changes are the incorrect use of plural suffixes in broken plurals (e.g. Arabic), omission and simplification in case for heritage languages with overt case and, the more frequent use of the word order SVO (subject-verb-object) for languages that also have VSO, such as Arabic, Russian, Polish and Spanish. Overall tendencies towards reduction, simplification and overgeneralisation of morphology may affect syntax and long-distance dependencies (e.g. pronouns and reflexive pronouns). These effects are not arbitrary but systematic and result from normal and natural processes of language acquisition and change in a bilingual situation. Contrary to widespread ideas, heritage speakers should therefore not be considered as 'incomplete' speakers. The role of the majority language in this is still poorly understood, as is that of various socio-political factors, such as socio-economic status, the vitality of a language or its prestige. The most crucial factor in heritage language acquisition is, however, restricted input and use of the language throughout childhood and adolescence, that is quantity and quality of input (i.e. exposure to the language), as well as its timing.(**2**)

Unlike monolinguals, bi- or multilinguals spend their time in two (or more) languages and therefore receive less exposure to each of them. This refers to the amount of time spent in each language (listening, speaking, interacting, etc.), as well as the frequency and continuity of exposure (e.g. every day, on school days, on weekends, occasionally during holidays or visits to the home country). at a given time (current exposure) or over time (cumulative exposure). A child may, thus, be exposed 100% of the time to the heritage language up to age 3, then 50% up to age 6 and only 20% beyond. International adoptees are a particularly interesting case. In real life, actual language configurations vary significantly. Parents may, for example, speak more than one or two languages, shared or not, as is more frequently the case with parents of African or Asian origin, and not teach

(2) For the collection of data, researchers mainly rely on parental reports and estimates for younger children and on self-assessments and retrospective reports for older heritage speakers.

all of them to their child or children, who in turn will manifest their own preferred patterns of use depending on social context. This should be borne in mind when, for simplicity's sake, we'll speak of bilingual situations in the following. Heritage speakers who are sequential bilinguals have been associated with stronger skills in the heritage language, especially if both parents speak it.

Quality of input designates the kind of language exposure, its richness and variety. Activities in the heritage language can range from watching TV, playing games and reading, to meaningful interaction with interlocutors, such as musical lessons, participation in a play group or gatherings of families during the weekend. The higher the quality of the input and the greater the number and variety of contact persons, the better the learning outcomes for the child. This pertains in particular to academic input throughout the school-age period in the form of lessons in a heritage language classroom or a bilingual school. Exposure to written productions (literacy) helps increasing the vocabulary, knowledge about rarer language structures and different language registers, and leads to greater familiarity with the pragmatic functions of language in different contexts and for different purposes. A few studies have attributed specific features of heritage speaker's grammars to input received from parents who are said to exhibit the same or similar features due to language attrition or change but this has not been confirmed by others (see also above for the effects of attrition in adult immigrants). However, it raises the question whether the linguistic performance of some heritage speakers should be measured against that of native speakers of the same age and with similar social characteristics in the home country where the heritage language is spoken as a majority language, as is often the case, or against that of adult immigrants in the host country who are often dialect speakers from remote rural areas (e.g. Turkish) or who may have never been fully literate (e.g. Arabic).

While the relationship between input and heritage speakers' language knowledge and proficiency seems obvious and trivial, it is hardly straightforward (i.e. linear). Timing is of importance, too, in particular when language acquisition is interrupted or input reduced at an early age. Some structural properties are indeed acquired at a later age, and authors of bilingual studies have identified several sensitive periods in this respect. As Montrul notes:

> Phonology (the ability to discriminate and categorize sounds) is one of the earliest areas of grammar to develop and remains intact in heritage speakers even when input in later childhood and adolescence is suboptimal (...); studies of speech production show that heritage speakers are more native-like than L2 learners are but that they do not always match the articulations of native speakers (...). Some areas of morphology require little exposure to be acquired robustly; others, much more. Learning regular forms requires a few sufficient exposures, since the learner can extract a rule based on a few exemplars (high type frequency), whereas learning irregular forms requires many more exposures because they are handled by memory(...).Like young L1 learners, heritage speakers with small vocabularies maximize productive rules ... (**3**)

(3) Elisions in the quote are bibliographical references.

Scholars are still uncertain whether there are input thresholds (i.e. a critical mass of exposure at certain ages) for certain linguistic properties of the heritage language and what these are but have offered evidence that reduced quantitative and qualitative input during childhood can affect linguistic representations because heritage speakers show extensive grammatical variability in production, comprehension, linguistic judgments, and processing. Generally speaking, the younger a bilingual is when exposure starts, the higher the linguistic proficiency attained by the learner will be. Inversely, the lower the age at which exposure is reduced or interrupted, the higher the loss will be. Studies have suggested that the age range of 9 to 12 is critical for susceptibility to L1 loss and an inability to learn L2 at native levels. On the one hand, according to one hypothesis from bilingual studies (Meisel 2013), simultaneous bilinguals can attain native ability in their two languages because both are learned through Universal Grammar and age affects language acquisition (especially of morphosyntax) as early as age 4 to 6 and up to 15 years of age in sequential bilingual children. Heritage speakers, on the other hand, manifest a vast variety of competence levels, that reminds of L2 acquisition by non-native speakers, such as language transfer from L1, patterns typical of language development in general (e.g. overgeneralisation of regular morphology) and other patterns that can be caused by instruction, where applicable. The possible link between heritage language and L2 acquisition and the cognitive and linguistic processes that set heritage and L2 learners apart is still being investigated.

In a survey conducted with heritage speakers of Hindi, Spanish and Romanian, respondents were asked whether they considered the heritage language as a second or foreign language, almost two thirds of the Hindi heritage speakers answered that Hindi felt like a second language. Among the Spanish and Romanian speakers, however, more simultaneous than sequential bilingual heritage speakers said the heritage language felt like a second language (53.2% for the Spanish and 60.9% for the Romanian heritage speakers, while more sequential bilinguals considered the heritage language their native language (62.5% for Spanish and 64.7% for Romanian heritage speakers).

Alphabetisation workshop in Arabic workshop held by Sinidane (Marseille, 2024)

Earlier findings on age effects for language loss had indeed suggested that the heritage language tends to be weaker in simultaneous bilingual than in sequential bilingual heritage speakers, contrary to evidence from research on child bilingualism (see above). So what are the age affects on L2 acquisition? Many scholars still maintain that L2 learners cannot attain native-like knowledge of L2 once L2 acquisition starts past childhood, while substantial research shows that with maximum exposure and use of the second language, speakers with advanced L2 proficiency can also become indistinguishable from native speakers on crucial aspects of language processing, phonetics-phonology and morphosyntax. Although L2 learners and heritage speakers differ in the timing of acquisition (early in heritage speakers and late in L2 learners), exposure to the target

language (L1 in heritage speakers and L2 in L2 learners) for both is limited and restricted to specific contexts. This may allow through a comparison to better understand the role of early timing of input versus amount and quality of input in language learning. Even if the heritage language becomes the weaker language, does early acquisition confer an advantage for heritage speakers over L2 learners in their overall linguistic knowledge and when trying to reactivate or relearn the heritage language later in life? Heritage speakers have distinct advantages over L2 learners in phonological perception and production and in morphological and sentence processing; the evidence is less clear when it comes to morphosyntax. Heritage speakers performed, for instance better than L2 learners for verbs of motion in Russian without matching native speakers and with heritage and L2 speakers experiencing different kinds of difficulties. Ergativity in Samoan where heritage speakers initially were no better than L2 learners but outperformed them after instruction. In addition to showing higher incidence of native ability in linguistic areas that are extremely hard for L2 learners to master at native level, heritage speakers show advantages over L2 learners in structures that are frequent in spoken language, in tasks that minimise metalinguistic knowledge and in oral and auditory tasks. These effects relate to how the input was experienced differently in the two groups.

The inclusion of heritage speakers has allowed to test the theoretical distinction between language acquisition and language learning, the first taking place when L2 learners 'acquire' the language through immersion in a naturalistic environment, exposure to comprehensible input and engagement in meaningful interaction, the second when they 'learn' via a conscious study and attention to form and error correction, most typical in a formal language classroom. The distinction was subsequently reframed as one between implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge and empirically confirmed through comparisons between heritage speakers and L2 learners for specific grammatical areas. Several studies have found that heritage speakers have implicit knowledge of the heritage language that they cannot verbalise, similar to fully fluent native speakers; L2 learners have explicit knowledge of the L2 and know how to memorise pedagogical rules (Bowles 2011, Montruletal. 2014, Mua¯gututi'a 2018). They know the language differently (Zyzik 2016). Muāgututi'a's (2018) studies suggest that there is residual implicit knowledge acquired during the critical period. Early exposure to a language sets the roots of the language and the impact of this exposure is long lasting, even when participants cannot explicitly recall such knowledge.

Reversal among adult heritage speakers? If linguistic ability is still malleable and nimble post-puberty, then target-like acquisition of the heritage language will occur after full reimmersion in the heritage language, regardless of the age of return to the homeland (i.e., before or after puberty). However, if heritage language attainment is constrained by maturational factors, and full immersion in adulthood is less effective, then the observed variability in heritage language grammars may persist even upon return to the homeland after puberty. Example of adolescent and adult returnees to Turkey. Studies of Turkish-German returnees (Antonova-Unlu et al. 2021; Kaya-Soykan et al. 2020; Treffers-Daller et al. 2007, 2015) have shown age effects. Those who returned to Turkey after puberty were often perceived as native speakers of Turkish (based on their accents) and showed native-level performance in their production of relative clauses 8 years after their arrival to Turkey. However, the grammaticality judgments and production of evidentiality and accusative case mark- ing were not target-like even after 20 years of length of residence in Turkey, suggesting that certain domains of grammar remain vulnerable and continue to vary even after years of expo- sure to sustained input in the now majority language. The studies of Portuguese returnees from Germany (Flores 2020) have also shown that age of return (before or after puberty) plays a role in degree of attainment in the former heritage language (Portuguese) and

degree of attrition or loss of the former majority language (German). In sum, we do not know the extent to which aspects of the native grammar that have been partially acquired or lost during childhood could be regained.

CONCLUIONS

How can Heritage Language Studies help practitioners and parents to improve the quality of heritage language teaching, especially for speakers in the age group 6 to 15?

- a better understanding of the challenges facing young heritage speakers. Which aspects of the heritage language they are likely to know and master? What are the potential differences between different kinds of young heritage speakers (e.g. simultaneous vs early sequential bilingual heritage speakers)? How to best assess young heritage speakers' knowledge of and proficiency in the language (diagnostic tools)?

- a better understanding of the tools that may help to overcome these challenges, such as a focus on particular aspects of a heritage language in a particular national context, and of the kind of teaching that young heritage speakers may most benefit from.

- Barriers include the inaccessibility of HSS' results to some practitioners and most parents because of the academic language of the publications, institutional constraints (legally framed HLT, time, budget, professional training in HLT, lack of appropriate teaching materials and methods)

A SHORT HISTORY OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

Heritage speakers have, of course, existed long before the term was invented. In contrast, heritage language teaching (HLT) may have originated in a long-term response to the introduction of compulsory universal education in contemporary nation-states, which, among other things, was aimed at promoting national cohesion ('One Country, One People, One Language') through the acquisition by citizens – and immigrants meant to become future citizens – of a standard language predominantly spoken by the educated middle class and used in education, predominantly in the media and above all, for written productions. In the educational context, the use and teaching of minority languages and dialects were initially at best tolerated but more often the object of hostile attitudes and policies because of being perceived as obstacles.(**4**) Outside higher education institutions, the teaching of foreign languages was confined to a very small number of 'prestigious' languages, such as English, Spanish, French (in Germany) and German (in France), and early bilingualism was widely held to hinder the cognitive development and linguistic faculties of children. Although some forms of heritage language teaching existed in both France and Germany before the early post-war period, none of them were permanent or part of the general education system, with the exception of Danish in Schleswig Holstein, Germany. Today, officially recognised heritage language classes exist for a number of heritage languages in both France and Germany. Both countries' legal administrative systems strongly distinguish between national –'languages of France' or Germany's protected minority languages – and other minority languages and between territorial and non-territorial languages.

(4) For France, see, Jean-François Chanet (1996) L'école républicaine et les petites patries, Paris: Aubier. For Germany, Marianne Krüger-Potratz (2020) 'Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildung. Zur Geschichte des Streits um den „Normalfall" im deutschen Kontext', pp. 342–6 in Gogolin, Ingrid, Hansen, Antje, McMonagle, Sarah and Dominique Rauch (eds) Handbuch Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildung, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, and Christian Hozza (2022) The Impact of German Nationalism on the Willingness to Integrate and Assimilate Foreigners in Germany, Master thesis, Harvard University.

In France, a survey conducted by the National Institute of Demographic Studies in 1999 found that roughly a quarter of the residents in metropolitan France (26%)(**5**) had been transmitted, often together with French, another language by their parents, half of them a regional language and the rest a language linked to immigration(**6**). At the time, the major heritage languages were identified as Arabic dialects (3 to 4m speakers), Creole and Berber languages (almost 2m), Alsatian (548,000), Occitan (526,000), Breton (304,000), Langues d'oïl(**7**) (204,000), Moselle Franconian(**8**) (78,000), Corsican (60,000) and Basque (44,000). However, less than 35% of parents speaking a regional language did transmit them to their children. Instruction in the major national heritage languages has been guaranteed since the Loi Deixonne (1951) and reinforced in 2013 as a policy of strengthening the role of regional languages and cultures in the educational systems. It takes the form of language teaching, bilingual education that gives equal time to both languages or immersive teaching provided by associations, such as Diwan for Breton and Seaska for Basque, either in cooperation with local authorities or dedicated institutions. A small number of other heritage languages are taught on the basis of cooperation agreements with representatives of countries from which labour migrants had been recruited, first negotiated in the mid-1970s and, with the exception of Spanish, renewed since 2016. France has never ratified European Council's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRM) of 1992.

Germany recognises six national minority languages and one regional language under the ECRM, ratified on 1 January 1999: Danish, Upper and Lower Sorbian, Northern and Sater Frisian, and Romanes, as well as Lower German, a German dialect historically spoken in northern Germany.(**9**) Territorial minority languages have been and are being taught in forms similar to those mentioned for France. Implementation has, however, varied considerably.(**10**) Instruction in Danish, for example, was ensured by the Dansk Skoleforening for Flensborg og Omegn, established in 1920, between the early 1920s and 1935 and, again, after 1955. with funding from Denmark and thanks to a fully recognised status in the German school system, as the only language of instruction or together with German for children with at least one Danish-speaking parent who must also be a member of a school association. Danish is also part of the official curriculum for secondary schools and can be chosen as an optional foreign language for the baccalaureate, and there are degree programmes for Danish teachers at three German universities. At the other extreme, heritage language teaching in Romanes, a non-territorial minority language spoken by 70–80,000 speakers, is mostly provided by Sinti and Roma associations – and only in Hamburg at primary schools – with the help of teachers who have rarely received professional training, because of a general lack of dedicated higher education programmes. Reasons for this are the existence of different dialects and the absence of a consolidated written form for them, as well as the minority associations'

(5)The situation is more complex in France's overseas territories, where more than fifty different languages are said to be spoken. See the reference quoted in the following note for more details.
(6) See Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France (2016) Les Langues de France, Références 2016, 2nd edition, including for the following.
(7) That is Gallo-Romance languages historically developed from Latin in Roman Gaul and spoken today in northern France, parts of Belgium and the Channel Islands.
(8) Moselle Franconian (francique mosellan or platt lorrain) is a Germanic dialect spoken in eastern France.

(9)T See the German Parliament's Scientific Services (2019) Regional- und Minderheitensprachen und ihre Förderung in Deutschland, Sachstand, and Beyer & Plewnia (2020) Handbuch der Sprachminderheiten in Deutschland.
(10) See Anke Schmitz and Helena Olfert (2013) 'Minderheitensprachen im deutschen Schulwesen – Eine Analyse der Implementierung allochthoner und autochthoner Sprachen', special number on Minderheitensprachen im deutschen Schulwesen, Zeitschrift für Fremdsprachenforschung, 24: 203-227. Available at https://www.dgff.de/assets/Uploads/ausgaben-zff/ZFF-2-2013-Schmitz-Olfert.pdf. The article contrasts the situation of Danish and Romanes, and Turkish and Russian.

express wishes, owing to historic and ongoing discrimination and, during the Nazi regime, persecution, that no state measures should be implemented for the teaching of Romanes, as foreseen by part III of the ECRM.(11) In the German Democratic Republic, Sorbian was initially recognised and taught as a heritage language, but losing public support in, and being increasingly repressed after, the late 1950s. Other heritage languages, resulting from immigration, have been and are being taught at schools on the basis of cooperation agreements with sending countries of labour migrants concluded since the 1960s or as part of public offers created by some federal states since the 1970s – sometimes in both forms and at other times not at all –, as well as part of the curriculum as a compulsory optional foreign language or bilingual education in public schools and in the form of bilingual instruction (since the 1970s) or monolingual instruction (e.g. Greek since the 1960s) at publicly recognised private schools. One scholar has compared this situation to a 'patchwork blanket with numerous [monolingual] holes'.

"Autumn workshop" by CRN to practice word order in Polish (Berlin, 2024)

(4) Only the federal state of Hesse has introduced measures defined in part III of the ECRM.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN GERMANY'S EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

In the German Democratic Republic there seem to have existed no special legal provisions for the teaching of non autochthonous heritage languages. Similar to Western Germany, GDR recruited labour migrants as contractual workers to fill labour shortages, at first from Hungary and later from Algeria, Angola, Poland, Mozambique, Cuba and Vietnam, but on a much smaller scale than in the Federal Republic. In 1989, some 94,000 contractual workers lived in East Germany, most of them of Vietnamese origin (ca. 60,000), and they had to leave in 1990. Russian was taught as the first foreign language, and the Polish and Czech languages, along with Spanish, were offered as optional third foreign modern languages at certain schools, with English or French occupying an intermediate position.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, education falls under the responsibility of the federal states (Länder), with a Standing Committee of Ministers of Education (Kultusministerkonferenz or KMK), established in 1948, acting as a coordinating organ publishing resolutions and policy recommendations at the federal level.(12) The relevant documents will serve as a historical guideline, because they reflect an often fluctuating political consensus – and at times, a lack of it – at the federal level. Until the early 1990s, these recommendations generally made a strong distinction between German citizens and ethnic Germans, most of whom displaced during or after the war or, later on, who had emigrated from Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union and had the right to apply for German citizenship, on the one hand, and non-German citizens and their descendants,

(12) This part draws heavily on Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Matthias Linnemann and Dita Vogel (2019) 'Schulischer Umgang mit transnationaler Migration und Mobilität. Rückschlüsse aus Empfehlungen der Kultusministerkonferenz seit den 1950er-Jahren', Transnationale Mobilität in Schule, Arbeitspapier 2.

on the other, with ethnic Germans being targeted for assimilation and the second being treated as potential returnees to their home countries.(13)

In the early post-war years, most foreign citizens were refugees or displaced persons (e.g. through forced labour) awaiting repatriation in camps where haphazard efforts were made to set up classes in which students were instructed in their first language or exceptionally attended regular classes at a German school. This practice was recognised and adopted in a 1950 KMK resolution on the Establishment of Schools for Foreign Ethnic Groups, with the additional provision that these schools would fall under the responsibility of the German school inspection. Students were to attend a German public school only when local numbers were too small for a 'camp school'. It was recommended that in classes instructed in a foreign language German should be taught as a foreign language and that other subjects should preferably also be taught in German, while foreign teachers would ensure history and geography lessons with a focus on the respective country of origin. Moreover, the resolution envisioned the possibility of establishing private schools for foreign children. Details for these were agreed on in 1957, specifying the use of foreign curricula and a foreign language of instruction. In 1960s Bavaria, Greek children thus had access to the full range of primary and secondary education in line with the Greek system, financed by the Greek state. Elsewhere they could attend afternoon schools – most German schools were still half-day schools – to ensure future access to Greek universities. Similar arrangements existed partly for Yugoslav children. In addition, an increasing number of international schools with mostly English as the language of instruction and leading to the International Baccalaureate (partly recognised after 1985) were accredited for children of a generally highly-educated parent who was a temporary resident in Germany for professional reasons; German students subject to compulsory schooling could attend these schools only under exceptional circumstances.

A 1952 KMK recommendation on Compulsory Schooling for Foreigners extended compulsory schooling to all foreign children living permanently on German territory, implying that the education of other foreign children remained the responsibility of their parents or their countries of origin, which was increasingly the case for accompanying minors of presumedly temporary labour migrants who had been recruited by German companies in southern Europe, northern Africa and Turkey on the basis of bilateral agreements. Its update in 1964, Education of Children of Foreign Citizens, encouraged the three remaining federal states who had not yet transposed the earlier recommendation into their School Law, to do so. The reason for this had been regulations concerning the free movement of labour within the recently established European Economic Community (1957) that, together with the continuing arrival of labour migrants from third countries, had led to the arrival of greater numbers of children. More importantly, foreign citizenship was no longer the major preoccupation but rather the fact that most of these children had acquired a first language other than German. To ensure their rapid integration into regular

(13) On educational polices for ethnic Germans, see op. cit. pp. 2–4.

(14) Initially, labour migrants were granted a residence and work permit for a limited time span and were expected to return home after its expiration and be replaced by new arrivals ('rotation principle'). In practice, however, a growing number of well-trained labour migrants tended to remain in German employment. The first agreement on recruiting labour migrants was signed with Italy (1955) and later with Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1968), after the German Democratic Republic took steps to prevent the emigration of its citizens in 1961. Some 14m labour migrants thus arrived in Germany, 11m of whom had returned home by 1973, when recruitment was stopped during the first oil crisis.

classes, schools were to set up 'welcome' or 'international classes' in which these children would learn the rudiments of the German language. At the same time, it was deemed important that children would remain, or become, proficient in their first language in view of a later (re)integration into the educational system of their home country. However, the German government was not prepared to assume financial responsibility, probably because heritage language teaching was presumedly benefitting the sending countries alone.

As a result, the ministry of education of federal states subsequently concluded a number of cooperation agreements with local diplomatic representations, i.e. consulates, that allowed the latter to organise heritage language classes in areas with high numbers of children of 'guest workers' at German schools and as an extracurricular activity, with attendance being voluntary. Consulates were responsible for hiring and employing teachers and providing curricula and teaching materials for the majority language, history and geography. German educational authorities had no say in these matters and local schools only made available classrooms. Konsulatsunterricht ('consular instruction'), whose purpose was to maintain the linguistic and cultural identity of children and, above all, to facilitate a future (re)integration into the general education systems of their countries of origin, is still the main or one of the two main forms of formal heritage language teaching in most federal states and has remained unregulated until today.

By the early 1970s, the comprehensive schooling of foreign children was by no means guaranteed. Thus, within a short period of time, the educational authorities of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state with a high share of migrants, identified some 10,000 children of school age who were not attending any school. The 1971 KMK recommendation On the Education of Children of Foreign Employees, for the first time, took full responsibility for the compulsory schooling of these children and included a range of measures intended to promote their educational participation by completely integrating them into German public schools. Interestingly, suggestions for pedagogical support were limited to primary, vocational and the lowest tier of secondary education, excluding middle and high schools – a form of educational discrimination with long-lasting effects in the eyes of some later scholars. At the same time, this recommendation is often seen as a milestone: children who had immigrated before reaching school age were to attend regular classes, older ones a one-year preparatory class and to benefit from additional language support after joining a regular class. This model is still the prevalent one in most federal states today. Crucially, the recommendations considered it necessary to adapt the training and further education of teachers to take into account the particular pedagogical mission of teaching students f foreign origin, giving rise to various dedicated training opportunities for teachers, new higher education degree programmes and specialisations, which sometimes included knowledge about a heritage language and the countries of origin, as well as research institutes.

The establishment of schools with a foreign language for instruction and under supervision by the school inspection was no longer recommended but federal states remained free to accredit foreign schools under the responsibilities of consulates or to maintain non-German classes in addition to regular ones. The latter led in some federal states, such as Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia, to the continued existence of a parallel educational system at public schools in metropolitan areas. More importantly, each federal state could decide whether to continue the earlier practice of delegating heritage language teaching to diplomatic representations or to create their own pedagogical offers.(15)

(15) The idea of integrating heritage language instruction into the general education system was probably inspired by practices in Sweden, where heritage languages had been taught as part of the curriculum since the late 1960s.

No reasons were given but it is likely that no consensus had been reached on this question. Baden-Württemberg, for instance, chose consular instruction und favours it until today, whereas North Rhine-Westphalia opted to assume pedagogical responsibility for heritage language teaching. Other federal states have changed over time: Hessen and Bavaria have abandoned their original pedagogical responsibility in the 2000s while the city-states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen have increasingly created new offers and expanded others alongside consular instruction (for the present status, see below). Moreover, responsibilities were and are not always clear, and 'complementary instruction in the mother tongue', the most common designation at the time, has been more or less officially recognised in different states and exists in different forms, some of them well-integrated into the general education system (e.g. option to choose a heritage language in the place of a 'foreign language', bilingual branches or schools with the heritage language as a partner language), others have remained a voluntary extracurricular activity.

In the aftermath of the first oil crisis (1973) and in the face of rising unemployment, the German government adopted a series of measures, such as a hiring stop for labour migrants, restrictions on access to the labour market for resident migrants, family reunion and choice of their place of residence; unemployed labour migrants and their descendants had to leave the country. In an update to the 1971 KMK recommendations, emphasis was put on preparing school children for a return to their home country rather than on their long-term integration: in line with the Bavarian model, students were to be offered the possibility to attend nationally homogeneous learning groups at public schools with curricula deviating from the German ones and teaching taking place in their mother tongue and German, the latter to be taught as a foreign language. The time spent in preparatory classes was to be extended from one to two years, and the recommendation that school-entrants were to join a regular class regardless of their proficiency in German was deleted. In regular classes, the share of students with insufficient knowledge of the German language should be limited to one fifths and, if necessary, students could attend so-called 'foreigner classes' where they would be instructed in German according to the official curricula. Similar arguments in favour of quota for students whose first language was not German were debated after disappointing results in the PISA study of 2001. A slightly modified 1979 KMK decision was the last to address the general issue of how to integrate foreign children and youth into the German school system, after the European Community had issued a directive on the educational support of labour migrants' children in 1977. Later decisions deal only with particular aspects.

By the late 1970s, it became increasingly clear that a significant share of 'foreign employees' (ausländische Arbeitnehmer) – an administrative term for labour migrants from EEC third countries, which had replaced the earlier 'guest workers' still common in usage – were bound to stay in Germany. (16) A 1979 report by the first Federal Commissioner for Promoting the Integration of Foreign Employees and their Family Members called upon political decision-makers to recognise that Germany had de facto become a 'country of immigration' and to create instruments to favour the long-term integration of labour migrants and their dependents. The report had practically no consequences in a political, social and economic context marked by rising unemployment, continued restrictions on immigration from third countries and increasing political polarisation on the issue of immigration, which was to reach a first apogee in the early 1990s. At the same time, parts of the political left began to promote the notion of a 'multicultural society' and, in education, to advocate the valorisation of heritage languages and their use in teaching, mainly with the aim of improving the academic performance of heritage speakers. This can be interpreted as an early indicator of changing perceptions of child bilingualism, no longer seen as a

(16) These labour migrants were mostly of Turkish origin, who were particularly reluctant to leave Germany in a Turkish context of hyperinflation and civil strife. Residents with Turkish citizenship were the only ones whose numbers grew between 1973 and 1980, from 1m to 1.4m, mainly because of family reunion.

stumbling block for language acquisition but as an enriching experience with multiple potential benefits.

In 1983, the first red-green coalition government in the federal state of Hesse undertook a major reform of heritage language teaching. The latter was defined as an integral part of the general education system where students of grades one to ten could 'cultivate and further develop their mother tongue, as well as acquiring knowledge about their country of origin', initially at the rate of two and, in grades 3 and above, of up to five hours per week, preferably during the morning hours, in nationally homogeneous classes of 10 to 20 students if possible for organisational reasons. Attendance was compulsory for students with citizenship of Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia (or its successor states), Morocco, Portugal, Spain or Turkey, although parents could apply for an exemption, and optional for those with German citizenship who (or whose parents) had immigrated from one of these countries. This was a major break with earlier policies that limited attendance to foreign citizens. The course was a compulsory subject relevant for academic promotion until 1997 and took place in accordance with official curricula; school manuals required prior approval. Teaching staff had to prove a successfully completed teacher training, previous work experience and sufficient proficiency in the German language; ongoing participation in working groups on didactics and methodology would ensure greater familiarity with their mission. Instruction in some further 20 languages continued to be available through consulates in classrooms provided by the school authorities and through teachers employed by these diplomatic representations.(17) The reform, which can be considered a success because of a participation rate of 70%, was abrogated after a conservative government came into power and heritage language teaching became once, more optional during the school year 2001–2002.(18) The reform described above and, more generally the creation of public offers of heritage language teaching should also be understood as a response to growing criticism of 'consular instruction' voiced by different stakeholders for various reasons: pedagogical inefficiency, peripheral status, lack of access, questionable teaching content in the case of Turkish classes perceived by some as incompatible with the values promoted by the German educational systems, the exclusion of some heritage languages that were not the official or majority language in the respective countries of origin (e.g. Kurdish), etc.

The 1990s brought profound changes in the linguistic landscape of heritage speakers, with the emergence of new major heritage languages, such as Russian, Polish, Romanian and Arabic and an increasing diversity of other heritage languages. First, an increasing number of school-entrants with foreign citizenship (19) had been born in Germany and spoke German quite well. Second, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the lifting of restrictions on emigration in eastern European countries resulted in growing numbers of ethnic Germans arriving in Germany with the right to apply for citizenship. These had generally been schooled in the majority language of their previous country of residence and most of them spoke no or little German.(20) Civil and other wars in the Balkans, the Middle East and elsewhere resulted in large numbers of refugees seeking shelter in Germany on a scale not seen since the war, provoking solidarity but also xenophobic and racist

(17) Ernestine Subklew (2001) Muttersprachlicher Unterricht und Integration (Von der Türkenschule zum Fach Türkisch), PhD thesis, Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität zu Frankfurt am Main.

(18) See Maria Scharin (2013) Funktion und Realisierung des Herkunftssprachenunterrichts in Nordrhein-Westfalen und Finnland, Pro Gradu-Arbeit, University of Tampere.

(19) Between 1950 and 1975, some 800,000 ethnic Germans (Aussiedler) from eastern, central eastern and southeastern Europe had arrived in Germany, followed by ca. 612,000 'late repatriates' (Spätaussiedler) between 1976 and 1987, before the gradual opening of borders, including those of the Soviet Union, and the break-up of the Soviet Union led to rising numbers, reaching its apogee in 1990. By 2021, some 2.5m Spätaussiedler had settled in Germany since 1990.

(20) Inclusion into repatriation programmes was based on ancestry and vague cultural criteria.

resentment, leading to violent attacks.(**21**) In its reaction, the 1996 KMK recommendations, updated in 2013, on Intercultural Learning and Education in Schools operated a paradigm shift: the focus was no longer on pedagogical efforts targeted at foreign students (Ausländerpädagogik) but on a general pedagogics (Allgemeinpädagogik) that would promote mutual respect and tolerant behaviour and attitudes towards diversity linked to migration. Moreover, cross-boundary mobility was understood as something that might affect all members of the upcoming generation in reference to concepts from Education for Europe and One-World-Pedagogy. More particularly, skills in the first, or family, language were associated with the development of a positive identity rather than with a future return to the country of origin, and heritage language teaching was to be more closely integrated into regular teaching and opened up to all learners. The updated resolution stated four principles: schools should apprehend diversity as normal with potential benefits for all students, pave the way for the acquisition of intercultural competences as a self-reflective learning process attentive to differences and discrimination, facilitate the acquisition of German as an educational language, and promote an educational partnership with parents.

The turn of the century, after years of lower net immigration due to the economic recession, saw the introduction of a new concept, 'migrant background', first clearly defined in the context of the international PISA study: students with a migrant background were those born abroad or with at least one parent born abroad. Subsequently, the term was also taken up by the German Federal Office of Statistics with a slightly different definition to allow the collection of data not only on labour migrants but also their descendants. It rapidly entered common usage, although not in its statistical sense, but rather to refer, often pejoratively, to a distinct disadvantaged segment of German society in need of particular support and integration.

In its 2002 report on Immigration, updated in 2006, the KMK in turn adopted the term as a group characteristic for students with their 'permanent educational, social and professional integration' as a major policy goal. This abolished the radical distinction of students with or without German citizenship, but continued to use current or earlier citizenship of parents as a distinguishing criteria rather than a child's proficiency in the German language (about half of the children with a migrant background were said to predominantly use German in everyday life). In reference to earlier results of a PISA study, the report emphasised that students with a migrant background (estimated at about 20%), too, could excel in the German school system but, more particularly identified a combination of migrant background and low socio-economic status of the household as a major educational risk. Measures recommended to reduce educational deficits included linguistic support, albeit only for the acquisition of German, the expansion of all-day schools, additional training for teachers and future teachers, and an increasing hiring of teachers with a migrant background. Heritage languages should also be used to support this goal. While students with a migrant background were attested good access to bi- or multilingualism, the focus was once more on the German language: 'The promotion of bilingualism and multilingualism depends on the teaching of a sound knowledge of German and utilises the language potential of the students to develop intercultural competence'. In the context of the ongoing fiscal crisis and the importance of linguistic support for German as an educational language, comprehension was expressed for federal states that had reduced subsidies for heritage language teaching and left the latter to consulates. Bilingual teaching or teaching in a heritage language were hardly mentioned at all. As students were no longer expected to return to their home country in large numbers, heritage language teaching seemed to have lost its main raison d'être.

(21) Between 1988 and 1992, the annual number of asylum seeks grew from more than 100,000 to 440,000, before arrivals slowed down as a consequence of the incipient economic crisis and until the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015.

Similarly, the 2016 KMK report and resolution on the Integration of Young Refugees Through Education describes the rapid acquisition of German as the key to successful integration without mentioning a possible future return to the home country or already existing linguistic and other educational resources of young refugees. When large numbers of refugees arrived from Ukraine arrived after the country's invasion by Russia in 2022, the main educational policy goal was to integrate accompanying minors into the German school system by rapidly improving their proficiency in German in reception classes before they would join regular ones, although some online offers were put into place that allowed access to learning resources currently used in Ukraine and Ukrainian students could choose Ukrainian as part of foreign language teaching.(22) Overall, students were expected to remain in Germany, in line with the policy goal to retain as many (future) skilled workers in the country in the face of demographic change (i.e. an ageing working population).

The Standing Committee of Ministers of Education (KMK) has also issued several other documents less closely related to heritage language teaching over the last decades. After obligatory foreign language teaching had become obligatory for all secondary schools in 1964, the KMK introduced, in 1971, regulations that allowed students whose first language was not German to chose this language as a compulsory optional foreign language or, if this was not possible, to sit for external exams in this language, a measure intended to promote academic success for heritage speakers. Between 1998 and 2013, the KMK also published a series of reports on bilingual education in Germany, ranging from bilingual sequences and bilingual subject teaching to separate bilingual school branches in which international qualifications can often be obtained in addition to the German baccalaureate. In the last report, the KMK recommended to extend the already recognisable increase in bilingual education to all schools if possible, with the aim of facilitating access to international degree and professional training programmes. According to the report, the following languages were taught in the context of bilingual education at public schools: English, French, Italian, Spanish, Danish, Dutch, Russian, Modern Greek, Portuguese, Polish, Czech, Turkish and Chinese. No information was provided for private schools.

Early bilingual schools in Germany were the so-called European Schools created for employees of European institutions; the first one was established in Karlsruhe (1962), followed by Frankfurt and Munich, with a maximum share of 25% German students. Since 1990, schools who prepare their students for a life within the House of Europe through specific curricula on European topics and a focus on the acquisition of European languages, school partnerships and exchange programmes, can be accredited as Europe Schools (Europaschulen), of which there are today more than 600 in Germany.

"Story telling workshop in Ukrainian by Koopkultur (Berlin, 2024)

(22) See, for example, the guidelines for action, update 2.2, published by the ministry of education of Lower Saxony: Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium (2023) Bildungsangebote für geflüchtete Kinder und Jugendliche aus der Ukraine, available at file:///Users/rh/Downloads/2023.06.23_Leitfaden-Ukraine-2023-06-22.pdf.

Overall, the number of publicly recognised schools with bi- or multilingual offers in Germany is estimated as between 600 and more than 1500.(**23**) Here the situation is less clear, as no complete data exists, even for publicly recognised schools. A document published by the Scientific Services of the German parliament, thus, admits, that the total number of Turkish schools in Germany is unknown and that there exist only partial data for some federal states in the central database of German schools.(24) In addition to regular schools, run separately or jointly by the state or municipalities, German law recognises other types of schools. In the present context the main alternative schools are so-called substitute schools (Ersatzschulen), such as confessional, reform, boarding schools or bilingual schools, operated by non-public actors and which are subject to approval by the educational authorities. They are not bound by official curricula, are free to choose their teaching methods and content but most prove the equivalence of their learning goals, must be similarly equipped and overall organised as public schools, employ teaching staff with equivalent qualifications and under equivalent conditions, and not discriminate on the basis of economic criteria (i.e. through moderate school fees or rebates for less wealthy parents or siblings attending the same school) to receive public funding and being accredited as equivalents for compulsory schooling. Other requirements (e.g. the right to organise examinations) vary across federal states.

To sum up, after the end of World War II, the West German government was initially reluctant to take responsibility for the education of non-German children and young people of school age. Compulsory schooling was only gradually extended to accompanying minors of foreign citizens, at first to the descendants of permanent residents and, later on, to those of what were still perceived as temporary labour migrants. Instruction in the first language was seen as the prerogative and duty of the governments of countries of origin. Over time, this resulted in the setting up voluntary heritage language classes on the basis of cooperation agreements with the consulates of the major sending countries of labour migrants, generally as weekly courses at schools or, in rare cases, as a local replication of the respective national educational system, where a local quorum of students was met. Sending countries were responsible for hiring and employing teachers and providing teaching materials, while German educational authorities were, in most cases, making available classrooms at schools. The classes were only open to students who were citizens of the organising country and were meant to facilitate their future (re)integration into a foreign education system. In the 1970s, dissatisfaction with existing forms of 'consulate teaching' encouraged some federal states to create their own offers of (still overall voluntary) heritage language classes or to exercise some form of supervision by the school inspection for consular instruction. One or both of these forms are still the main ways in which heritage language is being implemented where it exists.

In the late twentieth century, a significant paradigm shift took place in educational policies, as a result of the wider acceptance of the idea that the descendants of labour migrants were likely to remain in Germany, the emergence of new major heritage languages (Russian, Polish, Romanian, Arabic) and their growing diversity due to the break-up of the Soviet Union and civil strife and war elsewhere, the arrival of large numbers of ethnic Germans repatriated from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with often little or no proficiency in German, increasing transnational labour mobility and xenophobic resentments that accompanied the ongoing economic crisis. It was in particular the latter two that inspired a policy reorientation. Its main goals were, on the one hand, the rapid linguistic and social integration of new arrivals to prepare them for a life in

(23) For the lower figure, see Hessischer Bildungsserver 'Schulen mit bilingualem Angebot – Überblick', available at https://arbeitsplattform.bildung.hessen.de/fach/bilingual/schulverweise/schulen.html.
(24) The document states that the database only lists seven Turkish schools for the federal state of Berlin. See Deutscher Bundestag (Wissenschaftliche Dienste) 2020 'Sachstand: Türkische Schulen in Deutschland', Berlin.

Germany and the reduction of still remaining German-language deficits among descendants of labour migrants from households often associated with a low socio-economic status. This was to be achieved by a serious of instruments designed to promote proficiency in German as an educational language through various forms of linguistic support (reception classes, continued support of students with language difficulties on the basis of German-language assessments, etc.), including the use of heritage languages for instruction, at least in early childhood education and up to lower secondary schools, to improve academic performance. In this perspective, the rigid distinction between students with or without German citizenship no longer made sense and was replaced in the early 2000s by that between students with or without a 'migrant background'. On the other hand, instruction in heritage languages was now seen as part of a wider goal of foreign language learning that would make ready all students for a working life in a globalised, or at least European, labour market characterised by transnational labour mobility. In this context, heritage speakers were considered as having particular advantages for learning foreign languages and should be supported, for example through the integration of 'prestigious' or 'useful' heritage languages (Arabic, Chinese, Turkish, Polish, etc.) in the official curricula and the option of choosing a first language as a foreign language wherever possible; 'lesser' heritage languages (e.g. almost all African, Asian and other languages deemed less important) were implicitly excluded from this scheme. Similar motives and a similar focus inspire the regulations for bi- or multilingual schools.

CURRENT STATUS AND PRACTICES OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN GERMANY

There are no official data on the number of heritage speakers in Germany or on those who attend one form or another of heritage language classes. The Federal Statistics Office and their regional equivalents collect data on migration and the legal and socio-economic status of households with a migrant background, as well as, since 2017, on whether German or other languages are spoken or predominantly spoken at home in its micro-censuses. No country-wide linguistic survey has ever been carried out, and past smaller linguistic surveys have been based on samples that do not allow for extrapolation. A few educational authorities have collected data on the language used by students at home. Only incomplete data are available for students who attend the two officially recognised forms of heritage language teaching at the level of federal states. In the following we will present some of these data that seem relevant.

The published results of the 2019 micro-census, for example, offer data on the share of residents with a migrant background by citizenship and own migration experience. More than 21 million residents, or 26%, have a migrant background (up from more than 14% in 2006). Their average age is 35.6 years, compared to 47.3 years for those without a migrant background, and the share of those under 15 years in the total population is with 20.8% almost twice as high as that of their peers without a migrant background. The average length of residence in Germany of residents with a migrant background is 19.8 years (16 years for foreign citizens and 29.5 for German citizens with an own migration experience). Almost two thirds of persons with a migrant background live in a family as parents or children, compared to 43.1% for those without a migrant background. Table 1 below details some of the characteristics of residents under 15 years.

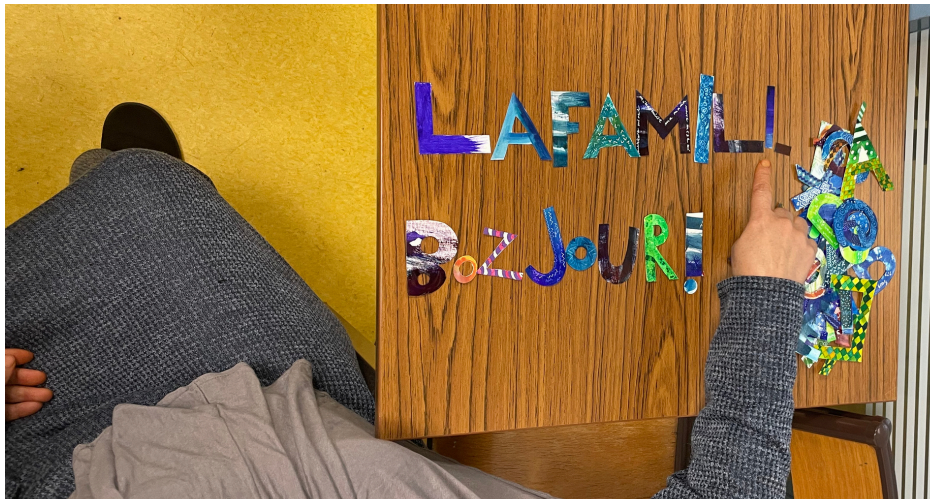
Table 1. Share of residents under age 15 with or without a migrant background and with and without an own migration experience

Residents under age 15 by citizenship and own migration experience	Share (in %)
Persons under age 15 with a migrant background	20.8
Foreign citizens under age 15 with own migration experience	9.2
Foreign citizens under age 15 without own migration experience	36.2
German citizens under age 15 with own migration experience	1.9
German citizens under age 15 with no migration experience	49.6
Residents under age 15 without a migrant background in relation to total population	11.2

Source: Federal Statistics Office, Datenreport 2021, I. Bevölkerung und Demografie, p. 31

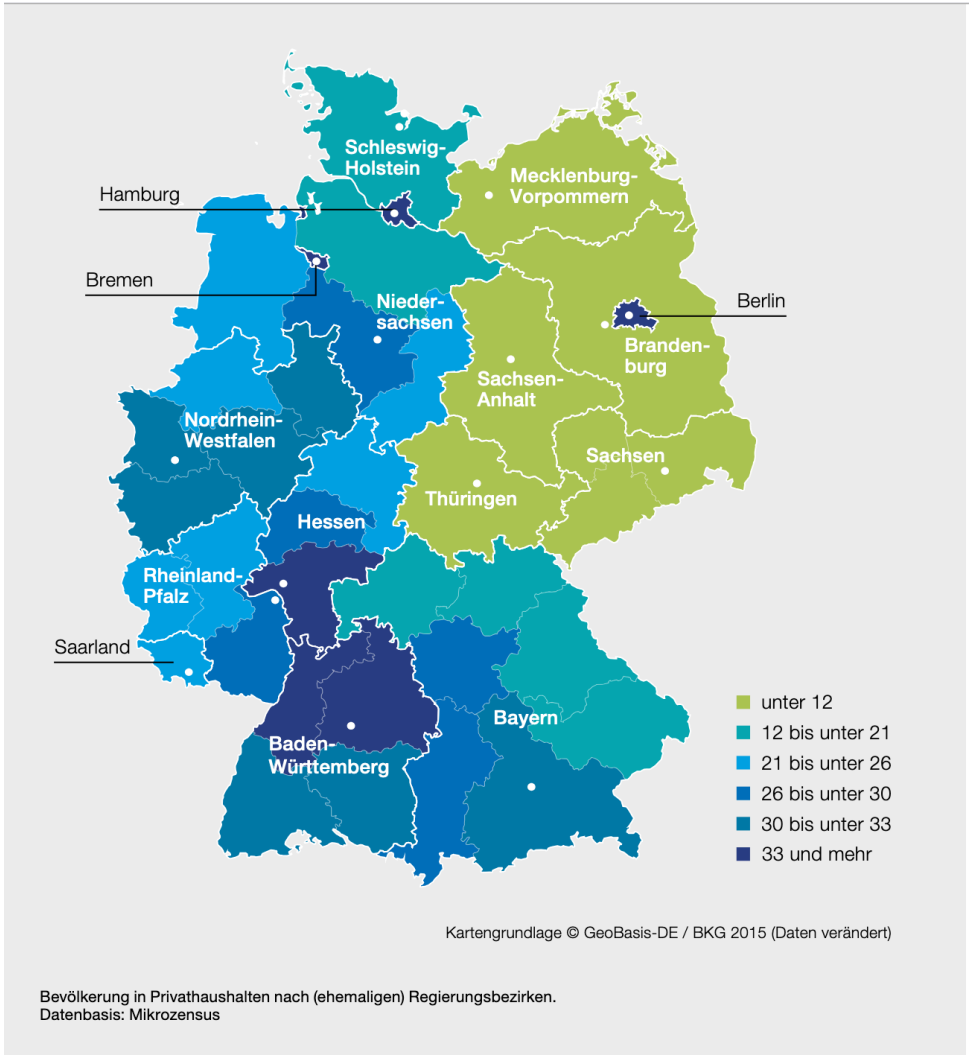
Although no inference from these data can be made with confidence on the number of heritage speakers among these more than 440,000 children, at least a majority are likely to be speakers of one or more heritage languages.

Residents with a migrant background are unevenly dispersed over the national territory, with particularly high concentrations in the federal city-states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen and historical centres of manufacturing in western Germany, and low shares (i.e. under 12%) on the former territory of the German Democratic Republic.



Practicing writing skill in one of COTA's workshops (Paris, 2024)

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: Share of residents with a migrant background living in private households by administrative district in 2019 (Source: Federal Statistics Office, Datenreport 2021, I. Bevölkerung und Demografie, p. 34)



According to the results of the 2021 micro-census, almost 80% of the residents living in private households exclusively communicate in German at home. A further 15% use German and one or more other languages for communication at home, a third of them predominantly German. The remaining 5% declare never using German at home. The major languages other than German are Turkish (15%), followed by Russian (13%), Arabic (10%), Polish (7%) and English (6%), the latter often used as a lingua franca. (**25**) Among those with a migrant background, almost a third (32%) only use German at home and 18% only one or more languages other than German, with the remaining half using German and one or more other languages for communication at home(**26**). Results from the 2022 micro-census show that almost three fourths (73%) of the persons who themselves had immigrated to Germany since 1950 speak German at home, 21% only German and more than half (52%) at least another language, while 27% don't use German for communication at home. More than 90% of the immediate descendants of these immigrants (i.e. both parents were born abroad) use German at home, 21% exclusively and 52% alongside another language; less than one out of ten (9%) never used German for communication within the household. Among those with only one parent who had immigrated 72% exclusively used German for communication at home, while 27% did so in combination with at least one other language(**27**). The data are summarised in Table 2 below. The results also mention Romanian as one of the major heritage languages (7%).

(25) The statistical samples used in micro-census are too small to extrapolate shares for other languages.
(26) Federal Statistics Office, press release of 21 February 2023.
(27) Federal Statistics Office, press release of 20 February 2022.

Table 2. Share of language(s) spoken at home by immigrants (after 1950) and their immediate descendants in 2022 (in %)

Language use at home	First-generation immigrants	Immediate descendants of immigrants	
		Both parents are immigrants	Only one parent is an immigrant
German only	21	21	72
German and at least one other language	72	51	27
Non-German language	27	9	N/A

Source: Federal Statistics Office, press release 23 February 2024

Scholars estimate that some 100 languages are spoken in German schools.**(28)** The Federal Statistics Office also publishes statistical data provided by Child and Youth Services that include data on the use of a predominant family language other than German by children up to age 14 attending publicly subsidised day care centres.**(29)** Table 3 below summarises results for 2022.

Table 3. Use of a predominant family language other than German by children attending a day nursery, kindergarten or after-school care centre by age group, school status and migrant background in 2022 (in %)

School status and age group In parentheses representative share of the total number of attendees	Other predominant family language than German	At least one parent of foreign origin	
			Other predominant family language than German
Pre-school			
Less than 3 years old (18.3%)	16.0	22.8	62.2
Age 3–7 (68.1%)	23.8	31.2	68.2
School children			
Age 5–10 (12.9%)	13.1	20.3	62.0
Age 11–14 (0.5%)	20.6	27.3	73.8

Source: Federal Statistics Office / Child and Youth Services

(28) See, for example, Deutschland (2020) 'Deutschpflicht auf dem Schulhof ist Unsinn', Interview with the linguist Heike Wiese, 21 February 2020.

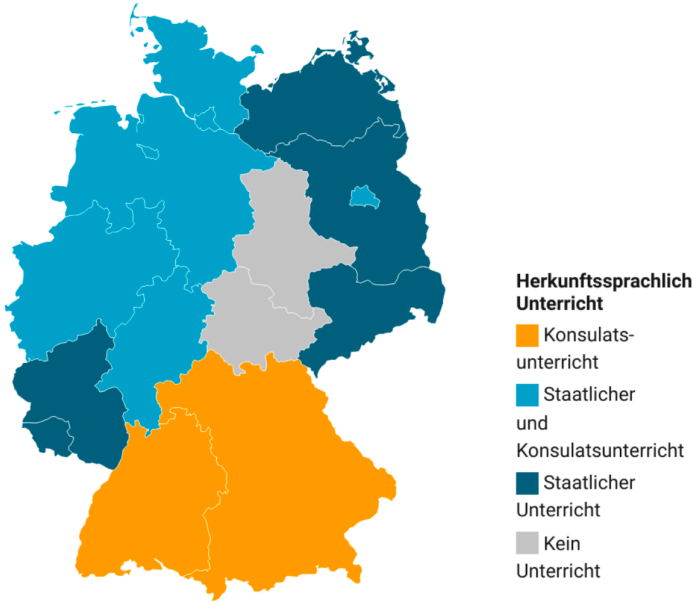
(29) B Federal Statistics Office (2022) Statistiken der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe. Kinder und tätige Personen in Tageseinrichtungen und in öffentlich geförderter Kindertagespflege am 01.03.2022.

Similar data can be found in the results of international studies assessing the academic performance of students, such as IGLU and PISA, or older local study by educational authorities in a handful of larger cities.(**30**) As should be obvious by now, the German state has never been very interested in heritage language per se, but rather in their role as obstacles to or tools to promote proficiency in German or foreign language learning.

What about heritage language teaching then? Systematic but dispersed and sometimes incomplete data are only available for the two main forms of heritage language teaching that are regulated at the level of the federal states. Fortunately, Mediendienst Integration (see preceding footnote) has recently published its second update of a factsheet based on information from the 16 ministries of education.(**31**) In short, twelve federal states offer heritage language instruction of their own, in seven of them with additional offers organised by consular representations. Several of them have expanded their offers in recent years (e.g. Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Rheinland-Pfalz and North Rhine-Westphalia). Students in Bavaria and Bade-Württemberg can only attend 'consular' courses, while Saarland has abolished 'consular instruction' in schools. However, numbers attending consular heritage language classes have seen considerable increases over the last two years: some 30% in Hamburg and roughly 40% in Hessen. Figure 2 gives a graphical overview.

(30) For an overview, see the publications on multilingualism of Mediendienst Information, a platform for journalists run by the Rat für Migration e. V., a country-wide network of researchers working on migration. on multilingualism in the educational system.
(31) Mediendienst Information (2022) 'Wie verbreitet ist herkunftssprachlicher Unterricht?'

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: Share of residents with a migrant background living in private households by administrative district in 2019 (Source: Federal Statistics Office, Datenreport 2021, I. Bevölkerung und Demografie, p. 34)



Grafik: © MEDIENDIENST INTEGRATION 2022 • Quelle: Kultusministerien der Länder 2022 • Erstellt mit Datawrapper

Consular instruction goes back to a resolution by the KMK in 1964 and is usually based on agreements between the ministry or school inspectorate of a federal state and a consulate. It uses classrooms mostly at primary schools and is funded by the respective consulates, which employ teachers and furnish curricula and teaching materials. In some federal states, the ministry or school inspectorate participate in the elaboration of curricula or exercise some form of supervision. Attendance of the courses, which combine language teaching with lessons on geography, culture and history, is on a voluntary basis.

Table 4. Heritage language teaching during the school year 2021-2022 by federal state, provider and number of heritage languages (Source: Mediendienst Integration)

Federal state	Consular		State	
		Languages		Languages
Baden-Württemberg	Yes	14	No	—
Bavaria	Yes	11	No	—
Berlin	Yes	5	Yes	6
Brandenburg	No	—	Yes	10
Bremen	Yes	6	Yes	8
Hamburg	Yes	6	Yes	12
Hesse	Yes	11	Yes	8
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	No	—	Yes	1
Lower Saxony	Yes	3	Yes	13
North Rhine-Westphalia	Yes	N/A	Yes	28
Rhineland-Palatinate	No	—	Yes	18
Saarland	No	—	Yes	4
Saxony	No	—	Yes	18
Saxony-Anhalt	No	—	No	—
Schleswig-Holstein	Yes	4	Yes	1
Thuringia	No	—	No*	—

* Thuringia has a state programme for the extracurricular promotion of the heritage language of children and young people, but no further details were provided.

Table 5 lists the heritage languages taught during three successive school years (2019-2022) and details in which federal states and in which form (consular or state).(**32**) It illustrates the extraordinary variation across federal states, ranging from the most comprehensive offers, notably in North Rhine-Westphalia where a substantial number of heritage languages are being taught, to their complete absence (Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia). Generally speaking, the major heritage languages and those with a long-standing presence in western Germany (e.g. Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, languages spoken in the successor states of Yugoslavia) tend to be well-represented and courses in several federal states are organised by consulates as well as the ministry of education, although with sometimes strong fluctuations of the number of attendees. However, in the absence of systematic data on the number of attendees and the lack of them with regard to precise territorial coverage, it is difficult to estimate the degree of availability of heritage language courses in a particular area or region. Metropolitan areas are likely to offer better and easier access. In some cases, a heritage language is taught at a single school. In others, a language (e.g. Twi) has only been taught during a single school year. Continuity is therefore not always ensured, in part because ministries of education and consulates have changed their policy on heritage language teaching over time: new courses have appeared, while others have been abolished (e.g. state offers in Bavaria after 2008).

(32) The table does not take into account heritage languages taught as a foreign language or in bilingual or international schools. Spanish, for example, is the second foreign language taught in general education, after English and before French, but heritage language courses are mainly targeted at speakers of Latin American variants.

Table 5. Heritage languages taught between 2019 and 2022 by federal state and by provider

Language	Consular	State
Albanian	BW, BAV, HES	HH, LS, NRW, RP
Arabic	BW, HB	BER, BRB, HH, HES, LS, NRW, RP, SL, SAX
Aramaean		NRW
Armenian		SAX
Bosnian (C/S)	BW, BAV, HES	HH, NRW, RP
Bulgarian		NRW, RP, SAX
Chinese		HB, HH, NRW, RP, SAX
Croatian	BW, BAV, BER, HH, HES, LS, SH	HES, LS, NRW, RP
Czech		SAX
Dari		HB
Dutch		NRW
Farsi	BER	BRB, HB, HH, LS, NRW, SAX
French		BRB
Greek	BW, BER, HH, HES, LS	HB, HES, LS, NRW, RP, SAX
Hungarian	BW, BAV	RP, SAX
Italian	BW, BAV, BER, HB, HES	HH, HES, LS, NRW, RP, SL, SAX
Japanese		LS, NRW, RP, SAX
Korean		NRW
Kurdish		BER, BRB, HB, LS, NRW, RP
Kurmanci		NRW
Macedonian	BW, BER, HES	NRW
Pashtu		NRW
Polish	BW, BAV, BER	BER, BRB, HB, HH, HES, MV, LS, NRW, RP, SAX
Portuguese	BW, BAV, BER, HB, HH, HES, LS, SH	HH, HES, LS, NRW, RP, SAX
Romanes		HH, NRW
Romanian		BRB, LS, NRW, RP, SAX
Russian		BER, BRB, HB, HH, LS, NRW, RP, SL, SAX
Serbian	BW, BAV, BER, HB, HH, HES	HES, NRW, RP
Slovenian	BW, HES	
Sorani		NRW
Spanish	BW, BAV, HB, HH, HES, SH	BRB, HH, LS, NRW, RP, SAX
Thai		NRW
Turkish	BW, BAV, HB, HH, HES, LS, SH	BER, BRB, HB, HH, HES, LS, NRW, RP, SL, SAX, SH
Twi		NRW
Ukrainian		HH, SAX
Vietnamese		BER, BRB, LS, NRW, SAX
Zaza		NRW

Source: Mediendienst Information / Ministries of education of federal states
* BW = Baden-Württemberg, BAV = Bavaria, BER = Berlin, BRB = Brandenburg, HB = Bremen, HB = Hamburg, HES = Hesse, LS = Lower Saxony, MV = Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, NRW = North Rhine-Westphalia, RP = Rhineland-Palatinate, SAX = Saxony, SH = Schleswig Holstein, SL = Saarland.

In response to criticism of the current main models of heritage language teaching (e.g. efficiency, quality, political bias in consular instruction), some scholars and other educational stakeholders have been advocating to replace and teach them only as a second or third compulsory optional foreign language or at bilingual schools, as is already the rare case for some heritage languages in a few federal states. While this solution seems appealing for some reasons (e.g. higher attendance rates, pedagogical alignment with foreign language teaching), it probably would not solve existing problems (e.g. accessibility, largely unequal proficiency levels in the same classroom) and create new ones. Thus, it is by no means sure that interested parents and students would forego other educational goals or accept the inconvenience of students having to daily commute to a faraway school. More importantly, this raises the issue whether heritage speakers, with already existing skills in the language, should be taught along the same lines as foreign language learners. Concepts derived from heritage language studies have been only gradually taken into account in curricula or teaching manuals since the mid-2010s.**(33)** Critics of the proposal have pointed to the findings that attest at best equal if not inferior competences of the majority heritage speakers in Germany when it comes to learning a foreign language, whereas defenders stress comparative advantages if socio-economic factors and gender are taken into account.**(34)**

(33) Grit Mehlhorn (2022) 'Unterricht in der Herkunftssprache – Zum Forschungsstand', Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht, 27(2), mentions as examples teaching manuals for Italian (Ecco and Scambio) and Russian (Dialog), as well the curricula for Russian as a foreign language, developed by the ministry of education of Lower Saxony.

(34)See, for example, Holger Hopp & Jenny Jakisch (2020) 'Mehrsprachigkeit im Fremdsprachenunterricht', pp. 195–9 in Ingrid Gogolin, Antje Hansen, Sarah McMonagle & Doninique Rauch, Handbuch Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildung, Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Outside formal education, there are, of course, a huge number of non-formal heritage language classes run by a variety of actors, such as cultural, migrant or other non-profit organisations, cultural institutes, churches and other religious communities, parental initiatives or language schools, some specifically targeted at children and young people, while others are open to the general public. An interesting case is the Tamilische Bildungsvereinigung e. V., an association that strongly promotes Tamil language and culture and runs more than 110 schools across Germany with over 5,000 students instructed by some 1,200 voluntary teachers.**(35)** No country-wide inventory of these offers is available, nor is information about their quality and efficiency or the number of persons using them. We will, however, present the situation of heritage language teaching in Berlin in more detail for heritage speakers of Polish and Romanian.

Alphabetisation workshop by COTA in collaboration with Sindiande (Marseille, 2023)

WHAT DO HERITAGE SPEAKERS AND THEIR PARENTS WANT?

Demand for heritage language teaching can therefore not be inferred from currently available offers. The number of heritage speakers in German is unknown as is the share of them attending some form of heritage language instruction. Data on attendance, where available, strongly suggest that this share is rather modest, while anecdotal evidence leaves the impression that parents are often very interested in having their children develop skills in their heritage language and are going to great lengths to transmit their first language to their children, at least during early childhood. To bring some light to this question, we will summarise the results of a survey undertaken in Hamburg in 2017 among 3,110 parents with a migrant background whose children are attending school at the secondary level and who speak one of the ten major local heritage languages.(**36**) Results of other studies will be presented below in the part on the teaching of Polish as a heritage language.

Hamburg's general general education system has primary schools and neighbourhood schools and grammar schools (Gymnasien) for secondary education. Heritage language teaching at school is limited to the first two, while some heritage languages are taught as a compulsory optional second or third foreign language. More than half (53%) of the parents responding to the survey declared using two languages at home, 37% a single language, 9.4% three languages and a small number of parents four or five languages.

Whereas a large majority (88%) considered heritage language teaching important, only 18% of one of their children (**37**) attended one or another form of HLT – 44% of them lessons organised by a non-state actor such as an association or community, 23% by a consulate and 27% by a school. For 27 children, parents declared not having received any information about HLT offers at school at the time their child entered secondary education (after grade 4). At this point, HLT attendance rates drop by half (7.8%, down from 15.2%). More generally, a majority of responding parents professed being unaware of existing offers by consulates (70%), by schools (65%) or non-state actors (56%), although this may reflect the actual situation for some heritage languages (see Table 5 above). Parents learn about HLT offers mainly through informal channels, despite a detailed brochure published by the federal state's educational authorities.

Unsurprisingly, the main reason why their child is not attending a heritage language course is said to be the lack of offers, while between 12 and 16% of the responding parents consider proficiency in German and one or more of the main foreign languages taught at school to be more important and do not want their child to attend a heritage language class. At the same time, 62% would like to see their child attend such a course at the German school, mostly to acquire reading and writing skills in the heritage language. Other benefits mentioned are that it would promote social integration, tolerance for other languages and cultures, and enhance a child's linguistic and cultural identity, as well as further academic success and bi- or multilingualism, and help a child learning about the home country of their parent(s) and not forget its origins. One parent out of three saw HLT as a way to prepare children for a future return to their home country, a perspective no longer present in official educational policies but still present in practice (e.g. in bilingual schools or consular instruction).

(36) Drorit Lengyel & Ursula Neumann (2017) 'Herkunftssprachlicher Unterricht in Hamburg. Eine Studie zur Bedeutung des herkunftssprachlichen Unterrichts aus Elternsicht (HUBE)', Die Deutsche Schule, 109(3): 273–282. Initially, 15.000 parents with foreign or dual citizenship who had at least one child aged 10 to 18 were randomly selected and sent a questionnaire. The relatively high return rate for this kind of questionnaire (more than 20%), accompanied by phone calls, emails and positive annotations, can be seen as an indicator for parental interest in heritage language teaching.

(37) Parents were asked to provide information for only one child.

Parents' main motivations for attendance of a heritage language class by their child are a better knowledge of the heritage language (63%) and a child's wish to attend it (62%), followed by its geographical proximity (32%), its organisation by the German school (26%), that it does not interfere with the schedule of other activities (25%) and its organisation by an association or community (22%). Only 3% of parents condition it on its organisation by a consulate and 2% as a concession to social pressure. Close to half of the students (48%) attending a neighbourhood school took part in a heritage language class at a school, while students at grammar schools mainly (60%) attended a class organised by an association, 28% by a consulate and 12% by a school. When HLT is not available, as in grammar schools, parents and students tend to switch to offers outside school. Finally, no strong link between parents' educational background and attendance of a heritage language class could be observed, and parents of academically successful children tend to be strong advocates of heritage language teaching.

"Embroidering stories in the Sky", storytelling creative workshop where student invented their own constellations and told their stories, COTA (Tunis, 2024)

To sum up, one key factor for parents of children in secondary education to send them to a heritage language class is therefore the existence of an appropriate offer, that is one in close proximity to the home or at the school a child is already attending. Another is whether the children themselves wish to join such a class and the timing of the latter does interfere with other activitiesconsidered important. Only a small minority of responding parents generally rejected heritage language teaching because they esteem proficiency in German and other conventional foreign languages to be more crucial. The results suggest that the attendance rate of heritage language classes could be improved through a better offer and a better information policy. However, a rough estimate of actual participation rates reveals that these are probably much lower than that indicated by parents responding to the survey. (**38**)

(38) There are no official data that allow us to calculate actual participation rates for heritage language classes for the year of the survey. But a back-of-the-envelope calculation on the basis of available proxy data gives us an order of magnitude. Hamburg's Statistical Yearbook indicates that during the school year 2016–2017, the share of students with a family language other than German in the general education system amounted to 25,8% (49,615 students), with a slightly higher share (31%) for students at neighbourhood secondary school (31.3% or 9738 students) and a considerable lower one for students of a Gymnasium (15.3% or 3923 students). According to data provided by the Hamburg educational authorities, 1,464 students attended a voluntary heritage language class organised by a consulate (76%) or at a school (24%) during the school year 2018–2019; this does not take into account foreign language offers that are part of the official curriculum. The actual participation rate of students in general education at primary or secondary level with a family language other than German in one of the two forms of voluntary heritage language classes appears then to be closer to 0.3%, that is substantially lower than the 18% quoted in the survey results.

WHAT PLACE FOR HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN EDUCATION?

How can we explain the very low attendance rates of voluntary heritage language classes organised by consulates or as extracurricular activities at schools, as well as of foreign language or bilingual offers for heritage languages, in the face of high shares of students with a migrant background or a family language other than German? This also seems to pertain to offers provided by non-state actors, as shown by the Hamburg survey quoted above. Even in federal states, where the number of students attending voluntary heritage language classes is relatively high, as in North Rhine-Westphalia (over 105,000 students of school offers only in 2021-22), Rhineland-Palatinate (13,407) and Baden-Württemberg (ca. 27,000) and the offer is rather comprehensive, as in the first two, with 38 and 17 heritage languages respectively, their share compared to the total number of students remains consistently low: 4.25%, 2.5% and 1.8%. In Berlin, for example, only 1.2% of all students attended one of the two main kinds of heritage language classes: some 500 students consular instruction, down from 2,300 in 2017-18, with 80% of it in Turkish, and only 3,453 a school offer, with 60% of it in Turkish. In this context, it appears useful to assess heritage language teaching along four dimensions, as suggested by one scholar: legitimacy, motivation, practicability and self-organisation. **(39)**

Legitimacy. Heritage languages are mostly taught as voluntary extracurricular activities or used for instruction in early childhood education, primary schools and, to a lesser extent, in lower secondary schools with the explicit policy aims of supporting the acquisition of standard German as an educational language – proficiency in it is seen as crucial for academic success after grade 4 – and of overcoming language deficits in German during early instruction in other subjects (e.g. mathematics). Less importantly, their promotion is meant to facilitate foreign language and foreign-language learning skills, as well as intercultural competencies. Only rarely is heritage language teaching recognised as a full or compulsory subject (as a second or third foreign language) or used as part of a bilingual education. In educational policies and in institutional terms, its status is therefore extremely weak and reflected in its marginal role (i.e. largely outside official curricula) and the precarious situation of its teachers (e.g. low remuneration, weak recognition, uncertain career perspectives).

Consular instruction, on the other hand, is based on policy goals of foreign governments that seek to enhance or maintain language skills, especially in reading and writing, in the official or majority language among descendants of emigrants and to reinforce ties with their 'home country'. As such, it has no legal standing in the German educational system and is mostly tolerated, except when it is at times perceived as threatening the social and political order or promoting content contrary to German values (e.g. Turkish consular instruction). Cooperation agreements between the ministries of education and consulates only regulate practical details of its implementation.

Over time, attitudes towards early bi- or multilingualism, including with regard to heritage languages, have become more favourable among educational stakeholders (scholars, teachers and educators, parents, decision-makers) in terms of its supposed benefits. Foreign language teaching, notably of English, has been expanded over the last decades to all school types and all age groups. On a more modest scale, this trend has also benefited a small number of heritage languages that are considered 'useful' in the perspective of increasing transnational labour mobility and under the

(39) See Hans H. Reich (2016) 'Über die Zukunft des Herkunftssprachlichen Unterrichts', op. cit. Some of the author's arguments have been taken up for the following paragraphs, although his major preoccupation is with the future of heritage language teaching.

influence of EU language policies (e.g. 'three-language rule'). As a result, some federal states have in the recent past increased the number and scope of bilingual offers at schools, in response to aongoing debate among scholars and educational policy-makers. One current has, indeed, been advocating the recognition of heritage language teaching as part of foreign language teaching, open to all students whatever their origins, and their full integration into official curricula.(**40**) In this view, conventional heritage language teaching is described as an end-of-life model that perpetuates the social stigmatisation of heritage languages as the 'poor people's foreign languages', in contrast to elitist multilingualism, and perceptions that their prevalence in areas with high shares of migrants leads to the emergence of 'parallel societies'. Recognition as a foreign language would bring teaching practices in line with standards of foreign language teaching typical for English, Spanish or French and raise the status and prestige of major heritage languages, while the opening up to other students would make these languages attractive to other parents and contribute to reducing educational segregation. Proponents of a second current have remained attached to the aims of conventional heritage language teaching as a way to maintain and promote heritage speakers' linguistic and cultural identity and their ties to the home country of their parents, some of whom also envision a future return to their country. Moreover, heritage languages that are deemed 'minor', because they are not seen as economically 'useful', are spoken by small numbers in Germany or have specific characteristics that distinguish them from majority languages (e.g. variants of Kurdish, lack of a consolidated writing system), are unlikely to attract non-heritage speakers and additional funding within the framework of foreign language teaching. Some parents of heritage speakers are, however, put off by the nationalist accents or identity politics associated in particular with consular heritage language teaching. Advocates of a third, older, current a sceptical of the benefits of early bi- or multilingualism in heritage languages. They have pointed to findings that attest to at best equal if not inferior foreign language skills of the majority of heritage speakers in Germany and worried that spending time learning a heritage language in class comes at the expense of proficiency in German as a school language. Pedagogical efforts should therefore concentrate on the latter. This view has become increasingly controversial, as proponents of heritage language teaching have presented evidence of comparative linguistic advantages of heritage speakers if socio-economic factors and gender are taken into account, and sociolinguists and variant linguists have shown that most heritage speakers generally have a much better and more solid command of German than previously thought.(**41**)

Unsurprisingly under these circumstances, no political or societal consensus has emerged on heritage language teaching, a situation that has led to patchy implementation, widely diverging practices and reforms that appear haphazard and inconsistent over time, as well as to reluctance by decision-makers to commit financial and pedagogical resources to it.

(40) See, for example, Almut Küppers and Christian Schroeder (2017) 'Warum der türkische Herkunftssprachenunterricht ein Auslaufmodell ist und warum es sinnvoll wäre, Türkisch zu einer modernen Fremdsprache auszubauen. Eine sprachenpolitische Streitschrift', Fremdsprachen Lehren und Lernen, 46(1): 56–71.

(41) A particularly interesting case is kiezdeutsch, a multi-ethnic social dialect spoken by young people, with or without a migrant background, in low-income neighbourhoods of metropolitan areas with a high share of immigrants. Linguistic studies (see in particular Heike Wiese (2012), Kiezdeutsch. Ein neuer deutscher Dialekt entsteht, 2nd revised edition, Munich: C.H. Beck) have shown that, contrary to widespread ideas about its 'foreign' features, the linguistic characteristics of kiezdeutsch are well in line with historic and current usages of German, with only a handful of lexical borrowings from other languages, and that its speakers are perfectly able to switch to colloquial German when they communicate outside their peer group. Often virulent criticism of this urban dialect in the media mostly relies on invented quotes and unsubstantiated claims to argue that its use illustrates the refusal of its speakers to integrate into German society and even that it is responsible for an ongoing decline of the German language. In a similar vein, heritage speakers from a low socio-economic background are often accused of being 'semi-literate' in both German and the heritage language, including by visiting dignitaries from countries where the heritage language is the majority language.

Motivation. In most families with a migrant background (at least one parent born abroad), German and one or more heritage languages are used in varying proportions that are likely to change over time in favour of German after children enter school and as a consequence of length of residence in Germany. At the same time, parents overwhelmingly express the wish that their children become proficient in both German and the heritage language, the first because of its importance at school and later at work, the second because it's the (or a) 'mother tongue'. Exceptions are rare and due to intra-familial conflicts or biographical idiosyncrasies (e.g. migration experience, attitude towards the country of origin). In the absence of heritage language courses at school, parents sometimes turn towards other offers (consular instruction, language courses by non-state actors), self-organisation or look for private arrangements (e.g. stays with close relatives in the home country during holidays). But in many cases parents are satisfied that transmission within the family will equip children with necessary skills in the heritage language. The disappearance of school offers in Bavaria and Hesse in the 2000s, for example, did not meet with strong protests from the parents of heritage speakers. As these resigned attitudes show, few parents understand heritage language teaching as a right to education.

Parents of heritage speakers also tend to give considerable weight to older children's wishes. These students are frequently less enthusiastic about perfecting their skills in their heritage language than their parents would wish for. By the time they finish primary school, German has often become their dominant language not only at school but also through its use within their peer group. Many of those who attend heritage language classes drop out at some stage, especially if they are less proficient than fellow learners. At the threshold to adolescence, the development of new interests, including for other foreign languages such as English, and more time spent outside the family reinforce this trend, although the heritage language continues to be used for communication with family members and other speakers, albeit often in a less varied way. Here again, a minority of heritage speakers will buck the trend and, for biographical reasons, redouble their efforts to improve proficiency or may turn to heritage language teaching in later life.

Strong parental motivation, thus, encounters a range of constraints that lead to lower expectations in practice, often perceived as more 'realistic', while young heritage speakers tend to lose interest under the influence of the majority language and other interests.

Practicability. Heritage language classes are not easy to organise and generally require a lot of coordination. To meet the necessary quorum, students often come from different classes and different age groups. Learning groups sometimes include students that attend different types of heritage language teaching.. Classes, including those organised by consulates or private actors, therefore often take place at hours or on weekdays (e.g. Saturday schools) outside the regular school hours, inconvenient for parents, students and teachers, or at venues located outside a student's school. Heritage language teachers have to be available and to cope with students' very uneven proficiency levels. Moreover, heritage language classes have to compete for students' attention with a broad spectrum of other extracurricular activities offered at the increasing number of all-day schools or by providers outside school, some of them more popular, others deemed more important. Such activities include sports; musical and dancing performances or other artistic activities; study groups for mathematics, science, literature, history, politics, etc.; foreign languages; reading groups; crafts or home economics skills; various forms of pedagogical support (e.g. accompanied homework, linguistic and other support); games and brain teasers; social learning and so on.

Professional self-organisation. Until the last decade, heritage language teaching, unlike the role of plurilingualism in classrooms, only occupied a minor place in scholarly publications. International cooperations in this field are rare. There are few degree programmes for heritage language teachers and researchers, and their alumni often face uncertain career prospects. Commercial providers of educational material have been hesitant to publish dedicated teaching materials. Many of the latter in use, enthusiastically developed in the early years of heritage language teaching with European or bilateral funding, appear old-fashioned today. Existing best practices are hardly known beyond a narrow range of practitioners.

Educational stakeholders have regularly evoked the shortcomings of current heritage language courses. Scholars, for example, have pointed out obsolete teaching methods, the lack of professional qualifications of teachers and inappropriate teaching materials. Teacher unions and heritage language teachers have questioned inferior working conditions and remunerations, and the former questionable teaching content in consular instruction. Interest groups of heritage speakers or their parents have been critical of insufficient offers in terms of territorial or linguistic coverage and deplored the missing recognition of the usefulness of many heritage languages. Educational decision-makers are concerned about the practical organisational details of HLT in everyday school life (e.g. timing, allocated resources, integration of teachers, overlapping of teaching content). In this context, proposals for reform are not lacking (e.g. creation of new offers, closer integration into official curricula, better training and higher pay for teachers). However, urgent calls for reform meet with overwhelming disinterest from the general public, who may even ignore the very existence of heritage language teaching. Understandably, political decision-makers have seemed ambivalent about their stance on heritage language teaching and reluctant to commit financial resources and take decisive positions, while reforms, when implemented, often appear haphazard and inconsistent over time. (**42**)

Co-creation workshop with children and parents to tell and write stories on objects (Maisons-Alfort, 2023)

(42) For this debate, see also Hans H. Reich (2016) 'Über die Zukunft des Herkunftssprachlichen Unterrichts', op. cit., who discusses the future of heritage language teaching in terms its legitimacy, motivations, practicability and professional self-organisation.

HISTORICAL CHALLENGES OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN FRANCE

The teaching of heritage languages in France has its roots in migration policies and educational initiatives implemented as early as the 1970s. Faced with the massive arrival of immigrant workers from various countries, France established an educational program aimed at preserving the language and culture of children from immigrant backgrounds. This program, known as the Teaching of Heritage Languages and Cultures (Enseignement des Langues et Cultures d'Origine - ELCO), has evolved over the decades under the influence of socio-political transformations and debates on integration.

During the Trente Glorieuses (Thirty Glorious Years) period, France welcomed a labor force primarily from North Africa, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey. In response to demands from emigration countries and with the aim of maintaining cultural ties, France signed bilateral agreements with nine countries: Algeria, Croatia, Spain, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Tunisia, and Turkey.(**43**) These agreements allowed the introduction of ELCO programs in French schools, with funding and administration partly managed by the countries of origin(**44**).

The initial objective of ELCO was twofold: to maintain the culture and language of children to facilitate a potential return to their country of origin, while also supporting their academic and social integration in France.(**45**) However, this approach faced criticism, with some perceiving it as an obstacle to integration and as a form of educational segmentation.

In practice, these courses, conducted outside regular school hours, never received strong institutional recognition within the French education system. They were often regarded as secondary, with limited pedagogical methodology and evaluation.(**46**)

From the 2000s onward, debates on integration and the role of heritage languages gained new momentum. In 2016, the ELCO program was reformed and replaced by the International Teaching of Foreign Languages (Enseignement International des Langues Étrangères - EILE), which better integrated these teachings into the national education framework.(**47**) This change aimed to move beyond the cultural maintenance approach and incorporate these languages into a multilingual educational perspective aligned with republican values.

EILE now focuses on six main languages: Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Italian, Serbian, and Portuguese. Courses are organized for students from CE1 (2nd grade) to CM2 (5th grade) and may bring together students from different schools at a single location.(**48**)

Despite these developments, several challenges remain. One of the main issues is the institutional and pedagogical recognition of these teachings, which continue to be marginalized within students' educational paths.(**49**) Furthermore, the question of teacher training and the standardization of pedagogical methods remains unresolved.

(43) Ministry of National Education, "History and Challenges of ELCO," 2018.
(44) Beacco, J.-C., & Byram, M. (2007). Second Language Acquisition in Migration Contexts, Paris: Didier.
(45) Sayad, A. (1999). The Double Absence: The Illusions of the Emigrant and the Sufferings of the Immigrant, Paris: Seuil.

(46) OECD, Educational Language Policies in Europe, 2005.
(47) Circular No. 2016-055 of March 29, 2016, on the implementation of EILE.
(48)Ministry of National Education, "EILE Pedagogical Guide," 2017.
(49) Coste, D. (2014). Multilingualism in Education: Issues and Perspectives, Paris: CNRS Editions.

In a globalized context that values multilingualism, the issue of heritage languages should no longer be considered solely in terms of integration but rather as an educational and cultural asset that fosters openness and linguistic diversity in France.

According to available data, the former ELCO program involved approximately 80,000 students, representing less than 1.2% of primary school students.(**50**) In France, language proficiency statistics indicate that 6% of the population claims to master Arabic, while Spanish (11%), German (4%), Italian (4%), and Portuguese (2%) are also present due to historical migration waves.(**51**)

In primary education, English remains the dominant foreign language taught, followed by German (2.52%), Spanish (0.39%), and Italian (0.29%). Other languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Portuguese, and Russian, are taught but concern a very small percentage of students (between 0.01% and 0.03%).(**52**)

The history of heritage language teaching in France illustrates the evolution of migration and educational policies in response to integration challenges. While ELCO represented an initial step in recognizing the languages of immigrant populations, the transition to EILE reflects a desire to rethink these teachings. However, ensuring the full pedagogical integration of these languages within the French education system remains a crucial objective.

(50) Wikipedia, "Enseignement Langue et Culture d'Origine" https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enseignement_Langue_et_Culture_d%27origine
(51) Ministry of Culture, "Chiffres clés 2022 - Langues et usages des langues en France" https://www.culture.gouv.fr/fr/Media/Medias-creation-rapide/Chiffres-cles-2022-Langues-et-usages-des-langues-en-France-Fiche.pdf
(52) CNESCO Report, "Educational Policies and Foreign Language Learning in France" https://www.cnesco.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CCLV_PAULIN-MOULARD_MEF-v2.pdf

EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN FRANCE

Heritage languages in France can be categorized into three main groups:

- Regional Languages: These are languages traditionally spoken in specific parts of France, often predating the widespread use of French. Examples include Breton in Brittany, Occitan in Southern France, and Alsatian in Alsace.
- Non-Territorial Languages: Languages without a specific geographical link to France but spoken by French citizens for several generations. This category includes languages such as Maghreb dialectal Arabic, Western Armenian, Berber, Judeo-Spanish, Rromani, and Yiddish.
- Immigrant Languages: Languages brought by more recent immigrant communities, which may not yet have deep generational roots in France but contribute to the country's linguistic diversity.

Efficient methods exist to improve language skills both in French and the heritage language in Bilingual Education Models, but in addition to English, German and Spanish, it concerns only regional languages. Certain regions have established bilingual schools that integrate heritage languages into the curriculum such as the Calandreta Schools: Located in Southern France, these schools provide bilingual education in Occitan and French and Diwan Schools In Brittany, offering immersive education in Breton and French, aiming to revitalize the Breton language.

Regardless of the language, several difficulties are faced by the educational institutions themselves which that make heritage language teaching challenging:

(53) https://www.imarabe.org/fr/agenda/cinema/mauvaise-langue

- Declining Enrollment: Heritage language programs often compete with a multitude of extracurricular activities, leading to decreased student participation.
- Integration into Mainstream Education: In many cases, heritage language courses are not fully integrated into the standard school curriculum, limiting their accessibility and perceived importance.
- Resource Constraints: Heritage language classes frequently consist of mixed-age groups with varying proficiency levels, posing challenges for educators. Additionally, employment terms and salaries for heritage language teachers are often unsatisfactory, and opportunities for collaboration with mainstream teachers are limited.

However, within the the scientistic sphere, initiatives are being made to unite different actors in the domain such as researchers, teachers and educators to value heritage language teaching, such as Les langues d'héritage en France (Heritage Languages in France), supported by the International Research Network : https://www.sfl.cnrs.fr/les-langues-dheritage-en-france.

Still, the most important actors in the field of heritage language education in France are certainly the non governmental organisations comprising mostly smaller associations, especially in the case of “rare” or “small” heritage languages. This is what will be illustrated through the following two case studies about Arabic and Hungarian teaching in France.

(50) Wikipedia, "Enseignement Langue et Culture d'Origine" https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enseignement_Langue_et_Culture_d%27origine
(51) Ministry of Culture, "Chiffres clés 2022 - Langues et usages des langues en France" https://www.culture.gouv.fr/fr/Media/Medias-creation-rapide/Chiffres-cles-2022-Langues-et-usages-des-langues-en-France-Fiche.pdf
(52) CNESCO Report, "Educational Policies and Foreign Language Learning in France" https://www.cnesco.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CCLV_PAULIN-MOULARD_MEF-v2.pdf

Project partners testing visual storytelling method through the stop motion animation technique in the second ALADIN Co-desinging Lab (Marseille, 2024)