

What do teachers want? Professional development opportunities for instructors of Portuguese as a heritage language

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Abstract

Understanding teachers' thoughts and beliefs may be a tool to help prepare teacher training programs. Community-based school teachers, especially those who work with less commonly taught languages, do not have frequent access to professional development opportunities. Faced with the varied and specific needs of heritage learners, these instructors, who may not have received previous training in language teaching, may find their challenges quite daunting. Given those challenges, they tend to welcome the chance to attend events that help them in their teaching practice. Through a survey about perceptions and beliefs, this study shows that some workshops and other professional development opportunities held by consulates and universities may be of little relevance to the realities faced by teachers who work with heritage LCTLs. Our findings suggest that teacher training programs may prove to be an invaluable tool if they are not episodic, but rather prolonged and based on instructors' expressed needs.

Key words: community-based schools, heritage language, Portuguese, teacher training

1. Introduction

Since at least the late 20th century, scholars and professionals in the field of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) have argued that the maintenance and development of LCTLs as a heritage language would be advantageous for several reasons, including national security, trade, and competitiveness (Walton, 1996; X. Wang, 2000). Therefore, it is essential that instructors of heritage LCTLs, such as Portuguese, have access to the necessary training to guide their pupils in the development of their heritage language.

In the North American context, in areas where there are significant Portuguese-speaking populations of either Portuguese or Brazilian heritage (e.g., Boston, Newark, Toronto, Miami, among others), we can find Portuguese language classes taught specifically to heritage learners in different types of institutions: universities, public schools, charter schools, and community-based schools (which include schools run by community associations and religious groups). Evidently, instructors in all these settings need (and perhaps expect) to have access to training that is specific to heritage language teaching, since it is well known that heritage language learners have needs that are often not satisfied by strategies used in foreign and in native language teaching contexts (Bono, 2016; Schwarzer & Petrón, 2005; Valdés, 1981). However, one may argue that teachers in community-based schools have an even more pressing need for training, since many have been trained as teachers in their home country to work with monolingual learners (Lee & Bang, 2011) or have not received any formal training in education (Liu, Musica, Koscak, Vinogradova, & López, 2011).

We understand teacher education as multiple actions that foster professionalization, which means learning how to teach, developing skills and strategies to reflect and deliberate about theory and practice; to narrate, explain and justify choices on planning and classroom decisions; and, ultimately, to register and disseminate their experiences (Costa & Schlatter, 2017; Garcez & Schlatter, 2016; Perrenoud, 2002; Schön, 1983). This view entails teacher's participatory and visible involvement at the micro and macro levels

of the pedagogical activity, including the design of their own training along with trainers and institutions (Nóvoa, 1995).

As Pinho (2016, p. 235) mentions, access to teachers' thoughts and beliefs about teaching Portuguese as a heritage language (PHL) allows for reflecting upon what it is that training programs need to address. This paper aims to contribute to this type of reflection by discussing the perspectives of teachers when they are asked to describe opportunities for professional development. We present the results of a survey teachers filled out, whose items focused on their expectations and opinions about professional development opportunities. The survey may be considered a channel for the teachers to express beliefs, expectations, and desires, and as a result we have a meta-pragmatic view on how teachers see their own development and assess their experiences. Based on an analysis of that view, we propose some approaches to teacher educators and academics in order to fulfill some of the wishes expressed by teachers of Portuguese as a heritage language in community-based schools.

2. Heritage language learners and teachers

Researchers in the heritage language (HL) field have long argued that HL learners have specific needs, different from those of foreign language (FL) and of monolingual learners. Valdés (1981) points out that HL learners need opportunities to develop their oral proficiency as well as their receptive skills, which are normally at a higher level than that of FL learners. She also argues that FL classes offer limited opportunities for HL learners' development of writing and reading skills. Furthermore, Valdés (1997) defends that one of the goals of a HL class should be the expansion of learners' bilingual range, which may be difficult to attain in classes designed for FL learners.

As has been discussed in the literature (Beaudrie, Ducar, & Potowski, 2014; S. Wang, & Green, 2001; among others), the linguistic abilities of heritage speakers are generally uneven. The

definition of a HL learner provided by Valdés (2001) alludes to someone who “speaks or at least understands” the HL (p. 38). This definition encompasses learners with a wide range of linguistic abilities, which is another point that sets them apart from FL learners.

While FL classes do not meet the needs of HL learners, classes designed for monolingual speakers also do not suit this group. Kataoka, Koshiyama and Shibata (2008) analyzed the linguistic ability of heritage learners of Japanese both in their HL and in English, their dominant language. The authors mention many differences between HL learners and monolingual learners of Japanese, including choice of vocabulary and choice of particles and verbs, and suggest that curricula designed for monolingual learners may not be suitable for heritage learners. As highlighted by Beaudrie et al. (2014), the linguistic needs of HL learners may be best met with a combination of approaches related to foreign language and native language arts.

Just as the needs of HL learners are specific to that group, so are the needs of HL teachers. Without specific training, teachers often feel ill-equipped to deal with the particularities of HL classes (Beaudrie et al., 2014). However, it is common to assume that teachers trained in FL instruction are adequately equipped for HL classrooms. In the case of heritage LCTLs, this picture is complicated by the fact that not only are teachers not trained in HL pedagogy, but many have not even had access to basic language teaching pedagogy (Chik & Wright, 2017).

One starting point for these instructors may be familiarizing themselves with prior research. In the matrix that they proposed, Kagan and Dillon (2009) highlight the importance of examining research in the HL field. According to them, HL instructors need to be familiarized with the research about heritage speakers in general and about language-specific findings in order to build their course syllabi. They also call attention to the need to know about the community in question.

Along with Kagan and Dillon (2009), Schwartz (2001) highlights the importance for HL teachers to know their students and understand their communities and their cultural identities. The relevance of understanding learners' profiles is also mentioned in Lico (2015), who suggests that teachers/schools and families need to work together in order to assist PHL learners in their cultural-linguistic development in Portuguese. Schwartz (2001) defends that it is essential for HL instructors to understand the value of different dialects that may be present in a given classroom as well as the value of those dialects in the community. According to her, HL teachers must also possess a strong background in linguistic principles and language acquisition processes.

In relation to instructional strategies, it is important to note that the "one-size-fits-all" approach does not work with HL learners, given the great variation in HL proficiency found among those learners (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). One possible way of addressing this variation is to bring some differentiated instruction to the classroom (Carreira, 2007, 2012; Schwartz Caballero, 2014). As Carreira (2007) points out, differentiated instruction is ideal for HL classrooms because it provides space for different ways to learn, which allows for effective learning independent of the level of proficiency in the HL.

The need for differentiation is mentioned by Pinho (2016, p. 234), who reports on a survey of PHL teachers in Germany. Pinho's results include difficulties posed by classrooms that encompass learners of different ages, different levels of linguistic proficiency, and different learning goals (p. 234). The author suggests that differentiated PHL teaching may be developed with curricula that respond to the linguistic diversity of learners (p. 235). Another challenge faced by the teachers surveyed is finding a balance between PHL and the majority language(s) (p. 233). The teachers in Pinho's study noted that learners bring not only different linguistic abilities, but also different views of the Portuguese language as well as various ways of relating to the language, which may or may not be frequently used at home and in the community (p. 232). The role of the family and of the community in maintaining and developing PHL learners'

abilities is discussed in Lico (2015), who maintains that PHL classes can only show positive results if the culture/language is valued and used both at home and in the community (Lico, 2015, p. 227).

While classroom scenarios may require different instructional strategies, the HL teaching community is also diverse, having different types of background (Chik & Wright, 2017; Lee & Bang, 2011). Furthermore, HL teachers fulfill different roles, from educators to advisors, along with helping families strengthen the bond between children and community-based schools (Lico, 2011), which count so much on the time and energy lent by both teachers and parents.

As has been documented, community-based HL schools face many challenges, such as curriculum design (Liu et al., 2011). Kondo-Brown (2010) asserts that the curricula for community-based HL schools in the United States vary widely. As examples, the author cites variation in the very language used to communicate with learners: while for some the target language is the primary language of communication in some programs, others use it “sparsely” (p. 28). In light of this kind of variation, Kondo-Brown cautions against forming generalizations in relation to community-based school programs. Nevertheless, the author includes one consistent finding: parents tend to have a positive perception of these schools, since they believe that attendance helps maintain children’s ties to their heritage culture. Boruchowski (2015) mentions that a HL curriculum should aim to guide learners through HL maintenance and development (p. 166) and suggests that HL curricula address learners’ specific needs, which starts with a discussion involving schools, educators, and parents (p. 168).

In relation to professional development, Potowski and Carreira (2004) suggest that teachers meet for workshops or for a series of half-day Saturday sessions. These professional development sessions should call attention to the need of using authentic language samples produced by HL learners as well as reflections on personal experiences with dialect variation. Note, however, that many community-based schools hold classes on Saturday mornings

(Bradunas, 1988) and, to our knowledge, that is the case for most schools that teach Brazilian Portuguese. In personal communication with community-based school administrators it has been made clear that this schedule restricts the number of workshops that can be offered, since teachers may have to volunteer their time on Saturday afternoons to attend these events (our personal communication with administrators has also revealed that not all Brazilian Portuguese community-based schools can pay their instructors for attending these sessions). Holding workshops during the week is also problematic, as many (if not all) of these teachers have full-time jobs. Still, efforts to help community-based school teachers with professional development have been documented. Lico (2011), for example, mentions a partnership between a community-based school and a university to promote a series of meetings and workshops for PHL educators and anyone involved with teaching PHL.

In light of the challenges regarding professional development for teachers of heritage LCTLs, this study aims to shed light on the kinds of professional development opportunities that community-based school teachers of Portuguese have access to, as well as their views on the relevance of these events. This paper takes the discourses that PHL teachers embody in their voices as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983) as a means to understand their needs and expectations. The following research questions guided our study:

1. What types of professional development opportunities do community-based school teachers of PHL consider relevant for their training?
2. What types of professional development opportunities are not viewed as relevant by community-based school teachers of PHL?
3. What do these teachers believe should be included in professional development opportunities?

3. Methodology

In order to answer our research questions, we devised a short survey with four open-ended questions in Portuguese that participants filled out anonymously. We chose to write the questions in Portuguese because the great majority of potential participants were native speakers of the language and some, as relatively recent immigrants, may not have felt sufficiently at ease writing in English. By asking these questions we intend to create a primary set of perceptions and beliefs that PHL teachers bring up when asked about their own practices, experiences and expectations. Additionally, the questions may provide a window into teachers' views about past training opportunities, which may highlight what trainers and institutions should consider when designing training programs.

The research on beliefs and perceptions includes the metacognitive approach (Barcelos, 2007; Pajares, 1996), which allows for researchers to analyze narratives and questionnaires in order to explain beliefs about teaching and learning both from teachers and students. In this study we use the metacognitive approach to create a primary set of perceptions and beliefs that PHL teachers from community-based schools bring up when asked about their own practices, experiences, and expectations.

Sixteen Portuguese language educators took part in the survey via an online survey tool (the survey was sent to 58 potential participants via email); another 29 teachers answered the questions in person (on paper) at the end of a workshop. Thus, there were a total of 45 respondents; all answers were anonymous. All participants, both for the online and the in-person phases, were from Brazil and were living in the United States (mostly in the New England area) at the time of survey completion. The following questions were asked:

- a. In what professional development opportunities (workshops, lectures, internships, university-level classes, etc.) related to teaching Portuguese as a heritage language have you taken part?

- b. Thinking about these opportunities, what do you believe was relevant for your teaching?
- c. Still thinking about these professional development opportunities, what do you believe was not relevant for your teaching?
- d. Thinking about your teaching, what should be a professional development opportunity address in order to fulfill your needs as an instructor?

Answers were more varied in some of the questions than in others. In the next section, we look at those answers, showing general tendencies as well as a few excerpts that illustrate those tendencies.

4. Results

4.1 Previous professional development

Our first question to the participants aimed to identify the types of professional development opportunities they had had access to as well as the institutions that had sponsored those activities. Our data reveal that several participants had already attended multiple events (such as workshops and conferences). Most teachers (91%; $n=41$) had participated in workshops. Roundtables were mentioned by 15.5% ($n=7$) and about 13% of participants ($n=6$) referred to participation in conferences. About 9% of participants ($n=4$) mentioned having attended lectures and another 9% ($n=4$) referred to internships. Three participants (6.6%) said they had taken courses on teaching HLs, including one who had concluded a Master of Arts with a thesis on the topic. Finally, one participant mentioned attending a seminar. We note that we follow the terminology used by participants and we have no way of knowing exactly what terms like “seminar” may refer to (it is possible that the word was used in lieu of workshop or conference). In what concerns the institutions that offered these professional development activities, the 29 participants who answered the survey in person were attending an event sponsored by a consulate. Seven participants (15.5%) also mentioned having taken part in other opportunities sponsored by the same

consulate. Events at universities (conferences, workshops) were alluded to by 15.5% of participants (n=7).

4.2 “Everything is positive”

The second question included in the survey sought to elicit what content the participants considered positive and enriching in the professional development events they had attended, and thereby answer our first research question. Sharing and exchanging experiences as well as access to methods, techniques, ideas, and/or strategies that can be used in the classroom were the aspects most cited in this question (each mentioned by 10 participants).

Several participants (n=6) also highlighted, in some form, the difference between teaching Portuguese to native speakers and to heritage learners. Learning about curriculum was included in three answers. Other positive aspects offered include access to research (n=2), hands-on experience (n=1) and learning new content (n=1). Several participants did not offer specific comments, including instead some form of “everything is positive” in their answers.

The many answers that mentioned “everything is relevant” reveal that teachers attribute high value to opportunities of interaction with peers where they can exchange and share experiences (methods, techniques, ideas, and/or strategies that can be used in the classroom). That trend points to the central role of socialization among teachers in training situations. By interacting with each other, teachers are able to learn from and with each other, and thus develop professionally. It also points to the relevance teachers see in creating networks and building a sense of learning and professional community. The answer provided by participant #24 illustrates both the idea that everything is relevant and the importance of socialization: “Everything was relevant: songs, workshops, linguistics and especially the interaction with other teachers in order to exchange experiences and discuss what works are important in the PHL teaching field.”

Another trend about positive outcomes of the participation in the professional development opportunities relates to the difference between teaching Portuguese to native speakers and to heritage learners. This type of answer reveals the diverse background of the cohort who completed the survey: those who point out the difference between teaching L1 and HL had likely been trained as Portuguese language (L1) teachers in Brazil, while others may have been trained as FL teachers or may not have had any teaching experience before working with PHL (and were likely only exposed to training in the form of workshops and lectures, as elicited in the answers to our first question). This trend is exemplified by the following excerpt by participant #10: “[...] identification of characteristics and difficulties related specifically to PHL and the different ways of dealing with and overcoming them [...].”

4.3 What was not relevant

The third question we posed to participants attempted to reveal what type of content offered in professional development opportunities was not considered relevant by the cohort who answered the survey, and thus address our second research question. Once again, several participants mentioned that they believed everything was relevant and positive in some way. The answers that did include non-relevant aspects were quite varied. Only a few of those were mentioned by two participants each, namely content about phonetics/phonology, unfocused conversations, and individualism and/or competition within the PHL community. Other responses, each offered by one participant, included lack of answers to questions posed, lectures that were too general, content not applicable to their students’ age, lack of continuity, the origin of PHL, lack of sharing, politics, literacy, materials, and sexology.

Responses to our third question show, once again, that for many participants the very opportunity to interact with others and exchange thoughts is itself relevant. These respondents appear to value these opportunities quite highly, perhaps because they had not had access to many of them. The issues that were mentioned as non-relevant point to three main aspects. The first aspect relates to how

the workshops and lectures are managed. Participant #37 offered the following: “During workshops, some debates end up not being relevant to the workshop topic, and these debates use up valuable time with presenters.” The unfocused debates mentioned contrast with interactions among teachers, which is generally considered positive—at least when they are on point.

Another aspect that surfaced in these answers is a possible lack of connection between what is presented and the contexts in which participants teach, which may be perceived as specific. This idea is illustrated by the answer provided by participant #36, who stated that “the type of material used [is not relevant].” This participant went on to suggest that teachers need a common system of teaching PHL that may be adapted to any context (a type of answer also present in our last question, as we discuss in the next subsection). The lack of connection is also brought up by participant #13, who wrote: “I believe that these lectures presented a lot of theory that does not affect my daily classroom practice.”

Finally, answers pointed to a certain individualistic attitude perceived by some respondents (contrasting with sharing, which is seen as helpful). An example is the response provided by participant #31, who stated that the following is not relevant: “The individualism that exists in many groups (‘I’ is used a lot). I think we are one group, so we have to unite for the preservation of our language.”

4.4 What do teachers want?

Results for the fourth question posed to participants, which looked to elicit what (in general terms) they hoped to gain from professional development opportunities geared towards PHL teachers (and thus answer our third research question), point to different types of expectations. While some participants did not offer any suggestions, others provided more than one.

The different ideas for content that were brought up may be grouped into three main categories. The first one relates to teaching strategies and ideas, offered by 14 participants and exemplified by the

following: “[...]. Workshops that develop more teaching strategies” (participant #40). Respondents also wished to learn how to develop a PHL curriculum/course (for different learner ages). This type of desire was expressed by a total of 10 respondents and can be seen in what participant #14 wrote: “A workshop that promotes [...] development of teaching materials and collective curriculum development.” The third most common answer, provided by 9 respondents, was associated with teacher development and is illustrated by participant #10: “Online courses [...], blog or wiki for PHL professionals [...]” Finally, four respondents referred to bureaucratic aspects and other challenges related to community schools, as shown in the following: “A workshop about bureaucratic aspects of developing a PHL teaching program; support groups with contacts of leaders in the PHL teaching field” (participant #33).

A few participants revealed a desire to have a common curriculum that could be used in all community schools, as mentioned in the discussion of the results for our third question. The answer provided by participant #36 illustrates this view: “We need a common system for PHL teaching, in which all projects are interrelated, though independent. [This system would] define goals, curriculum and materials to be used for free by all schools, as well as assessment that provides learners with [some type of] official certification.” Other respondents, such as participant #31, expressed a desire to attend more workshops: “Continuing workshops. It’s always great to learn about new things people are doing in class.” From including formal Portuguese language grammar to providing an official certificate to learners, answers pointed to many possible avenues and a cohort that had many and varied ideas for what might be useful for them in a professional development opportunity.

As we can see, although participants offered a wide range of answers to some of our questions, it is possible to identify some common threads. After addressing our research questions, we discuss those tendencies and what they may indicate in relation to preparing teachers to work with heritage learners of LCTLs such as Portuguese.

4.5 Answering our research questions

Our first research question aimed to elicit teachers' beliefs about what types of opportunities they believe help them develop professionally. Our results indicate that, mostly, instructors value the exchange that happens when they have the chance to discuss issues with other teachers. Therefore, many believe that every professional development event is helpful and relevant and appear to try to make the most of the opportunity.

The fact that many believe that every opportunity is fruitful does not mean that nothing is seen as unhelpful. The answer to our second research question, which sought to find out what instructors do not find relevant in training events, may be summed up as: discussions that are not perceived as immediately applicable to their classes. Participants provided many different answers, but they all seem to point to (the lack of) applicability in the classroom.

Finally, our third research question asked what teachers thought should in fact be included in training events. Once again, the responses given may be varied, but they point to practical aspects of teaching, such as teaching strategies and curriculum development. This need for applicability confirms our assertion about the aspects that are not considered relevant in the events they attended. Our next section provides a discussion of these results and what they mean for teacher educators who lead training events for community-based school instructors.

5. Discussion

According to Barcelos (2007), investigating teachers' beliefs helps to understand their choices and decisions, their experiences and expectations. This type of investigation also sheds light on the distortions between theory and practice and between the beliefs of teachers and of teacher educators.

As illustrated by some of the excerpts in the Results section, instructors working with PHL in community-based schools seem to

yearn for tools that can help with the development of lessons and teaching materials, which is a challenge for many community-based schools (Lee & Bang, 20011; Liu & al., 2011). Furthermore, while a few perceive access to research as a positive outcome of workshops, several others see no value in discussing research (which they tend to consider too theoretical). For the latter, there appears to be no connection between research findings and their own practice. Similar findings are mentioned by Lee and Bang (2011), whose subjects stated that professional development opportunities needed to be more interactive and hands-on.

While several participants voiced a desire for workshops that focused on activities and did not address previous research, it is important to highlight that teacher development in and of itself appeared in several answers to our fourth survey question, which asked what teachers hoped to gain from professional development opportunities. These answers reveal that PHL teachers do perceive the need to have access to workshops and other events that may help them tackle the challenges they face in their classrooms every week, which go well beyond teaching materials.

Most of the workshops, conferences, and other types of training opportunities are organized by institutions such as consulates and universities, as mentioned in the surveys. This means that such organizations take responsibility for the PHL training that is available, which seems to be very positive given the number of training opportunities listed by the participants. However, many participants complain about the lack of continuity of the subjects covered in those events. Thus, opportunities for training may be just episodic and not part of a continued plan of PHL teacher education. It is also remarkable that many participants perceive a disconnect between what is offered and their realities, but there is no mention in the answers about local initiatives of training within the community-based schools themselves, such as specific training programs, meetings, tutorials and co-teaching (Bulla & Costa, 2017).

Several of the answers provided by the teachers to our survey questions appear to reveal a sense of immediacy, which is

understandable, since many of the teachers are likely facing a new situation for which they do not feel prepared. Therefore, we can identify a general eagerness to have access to a curriculum, activities and lesson plans that can be used in their classrooms, somewhat akin to a recipe that can be followed and perhaps slightly tweaked according to the “ingredients” at hand. Instructors appear genuinely interested in teaching a good class, but without necessarily considering emerging issues in the field (Costa, 2013). While stakeholders might come together to develop some guidelines for PHL teaching (and maybe even some materials to be shared), instructors and program directors would need to make decisions about what to adapt, and how. Such decisions would be best informed by careful consideration of how their practice relates to research findings and current issues and how such findings may (or may not) apply to each context.

Professionals who offer workshops to PHL instructors need to establish clear connections between research findings and instructors’ practice, so that instructors may reflect on previous findings in order to enhance their own teaching (Kagan & Dillon, 2009). One possibility might be to offer a professional development opportunity (be it one workshop or a mini-series) that focuses on exactly that issue: establishing connections between research and practice. This type of workshop may start with teachers’ practices and invite instructors to reflect upon their own classroom experience with HL learners. Having reflected on their practice, instructors would be presented with research that may help shed light on what they see in the classroom. Then, participants would be invited to offer possible modifications to their practice based on their reflection and their knowledge of research findings.

Another approach that may be fruitful for PHL teachers in community-based schools is having the teachers investigate their own classrooms to foster both understanding of research findings in different contexts and awareness about their own realities (Cho, 2014). A more focused view of the relationship between theory and practice may emerge from that approach. However, this kind of action would only be successful if workshops, conferences, and other

similar initiatives were planned to last more than just one meeting. Long-lasting opportunities of training can include different approaches to the content as well as use classes taught between meetings as a springboard for discussion. Otherwise, episodic actions may increase the perception of lack of connection between training and reality.

Besides inviting teachers to investigate and reflect on their own practice, workshops may also offer ideas for teaching materials and invite teachers to practice adapting them so they can be used in their classes. This type of exercise, which would include a discussion about how and why the adapted materials would be used, may help teachers feel more secure about their teaching tools. It would also demonstrate that, while it may not be easy to find materials that are ready to use and perfect for each class, it is not difficult to modify a good idea so that it can be used and produce positive results. As for the diversity in linguistic abilities generally found in the PHL classroom, differentiated instruction for HL learners, as outlined in Carreira (2007, 2012), would help teachers address particular needs exhibited by pupils. Practice in adapting materials would be helpful for differentiated instruction as well, since the same type of material can be used for several different goals.

The suggestions provided here for professional development opportunities aim to help PHL instructors meet the needs of their pupils, which are very different from the needs of students of FL or L1 these teachers may have had (Beaudrie et al., 2014; Kagan & Dillon, 2009). To help teachers better understand these needs, workshops should include bilingualism as a central construct, following Schwartz's (2001) suggestion that HL teachers should have a strong background in linguistic principles. Our findings reveal that there is little reflection on bilingualism itself. Understanding bilingualism would be a valuable resource for any language teachers, perhaps especially for HL teachers who, for the most part, did not themselves grow up in a bilingual environment.

Although our research focuses on teachers of Portuguese as a heritage language, it is possible that similar trends would be found in

the wider LCTL education community. At a minimum, comparing our data to results from other communities (who work with both HL and FL teaching) would shed light on the extent to which language teachers share challenges in relation to professional opportunities, which would in turn help LCTL teacher trainers decide what to include in their courses and workshops.

6. Conclusion

Heritage language community-based schools count on teachers whose main occupation is generally not related to HL education and who often cannot take part in formal training such as university-level courses. The workshops and training series provided to these teachers should aim to equip them with the necessary tools to deal with the range of linguistic abilities found among HL learners (Valdés, 2001), providing teachers with the specific set of skills needed (Beaudrie & al., 2014; Chik & Wright, 2017; Potowski & Carreira, 2004). Discussions about the specific needs of HL learners are considered essential by teachers. The complexity of HL teaching, as highlighted by Cho (2014), needs to be central to any professional development opportunity offered to teachers of heritage LCTLs.

This study shows that community-based schools teachers of PHL consider workshops, seminars, and conferences to be opportunities that are relevant for their training. Those opportunities are seen as a way to be in touch with other teachers; the chance for interaction that kind of event provides is perceived very positively (as also reported by Chik & Wright, 2017, regarding teachers of Khmer and Vietnamese). However, the link between research and practice does not seem to be successful when proposed by the teacher educators, emerging as a negative aspect of those development opportunities. Additionally, there is a sense of disconnect, since those workshops and seminars are only episodic and not part of a strategic plan of professional development. Thus, a more continuous series of workshops which makes clear the link between research and practice may be the first step when planning training events for community-based school PHL teachers.

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