

Investigating Beliefs of Teachers of Multilingual Learners (MLLs)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to measure teachers' beliefs and perceptions about multilingual learners (MLLs), MLLs' needs and struggles, and parental involvement of MLL families. We adapted Karabenick and Noda's (2004) survey instrument, which measures the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, practices, and needs related to MLLs. Exploring teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices toward MLLs is a first step in understanding the professional needs of teachers of MLLs. The total sample size of the study was 308. In the first phase of the study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test logic and feasibility of the instrument. In the second phase, we used descriptive statistics to explain the basic features of the data of the study and provide a brief summary of the samples and the measures done on this study. The results of this study indicated that although teachers' beliefs about MLLs are slightly negative their overall beliefs are positive. Many teachers while welcoming MLLs in their classrooms, desiring to support them, are unsure of how to do so.

Keywords:

Multilingual Learners, Beliefs of Teachers, Classroom Experience

Introduction

The number of multilingual learners (MLLs) has drastically increased in schools in the United States, now making up more than 10% of the total student population (NCES, 2019). While the majority of MLLs are mostly found in nine U.S. states, many of the smaller states have also had steady increase in the numbers in the past ten years (Batlova & McHugh, 2010). The experiences of MLL in schools are in partly related to the beliefs and perceptions that their teachers hold about them. MLLs will reach their fullest potential and achieve success when teachers have positive beliefs and high expectations for them (McSwain, 2001). Knowledge of second language acquisition processes, self-reported cultural competency of teachers, and teachers' beliefs and perceptions about MLLs in general have an effect on MLLs experience schools (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). In order to "understand teaching from teachers' perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work" (Thompson, 1992, p. 129). With the increasing demands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which is a federally mandated initiative



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to use common content standards for elementary and secondary students and focusing on both linguistic and academic content knowledge, there is an increased need for all teachers to respond to the needs of the increasing number of MLLs in their classrooms (Valdes, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014; Wright, 2006). Although some studies have focused on teachers' ideologies and beliefs when working with language learners and what their ideologies are rooted in (Kang, 2022; Young, 2014), there has been a paucity in research looking at the various belief systems teachers may hold toward language acquisition, multilingualism, and cultural competency (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). We understand the beliefs of teachers that underpins their professional practice (Martin-Jones, 2009). Examining the teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their own preparedness to meet the needs of MLLs and toward MLLs in general are highly influential in students' success (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Ozfidan & El-Dakhs, 2023). It is also important to note here that teachers' beliefs are influenced by societal norms and contexts (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). If teachers have unexamined negative beliefs toward MLLs, even in most well-meaning teachers may potentially discriminate against MLLs unconsciously. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand teachers' beliefs and perceptions about MLLs. In order to do this, we adapted Karabenick and Noda's (2004) survey instrument, which measures "the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, practices, and needs related to MLLs" (p.56). Many teachers while welcoming MLLs in their classrooms, desiring to support them, are unsure of how to do so.

Theoretical Framework

Educators may believe that working with MLLs requires the dedication of too much instructional time and resources, compared with English-monolingual peers (Bailey & Marsden, 2017; Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Teachers often correlate bi- or multi-lingualism with the need for additional support rather than with cognitive, social, cultural, and/or linguistic benefits (Bailey & Marsden, 2017; Butcher, Sinka, & Troman, 2007). This association reinforces a deficit view of bi- or multi-lingualism (Butcher, Sinka, & Troman, 2007). In Bailey and Marsden's (2017) study of seven teachers, only one educator described the ability to speak two languages as an advantage. In considering the drawbacks associated with MLLs, educators commonly identified slow individual academic progress, low student confidence, lack of belonging, and general social disadvantages (Bailey & Marsden, 2017). High-stakes standardized testing and punitive accountability systems that penalize educators can compound teachers' concerns about student achievement and potentially create negative attitudes toward MLLs (Mellom, Straubhaar, Balderas, Ariail, & Portes, 2018).

The researchers adapted Karabenick and Noda's (2004) survey to measure teachers' beliefs regarding their own cultural competence, multilingual learners' needs, and parental involvement. Therefore, theoretical background relevant to the constructs included in Karabenick and Noda's original survey. Karabenick and Noda considered it important to measure teachers' succeeded goals, owing to their current dominance in the conceptual framework on school motivation. This method differentiates among teachers' focus on mastery versus performance (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001; Midgley, 2002; Nicholls, 1984). Mastery goals highlight involvement in individual improvement and tasks. On the contrary, performance goals highlight students' abilities, which are made more noticeable comparing inter-student. According to Midgley (2002), "a focus on mastery goals is more conducive to the development of intrinsic interest and long-term motivation, whereas a stress on performance goals (especially when they emphasize the avoidance of failure) is linked to poorer performance and negative emotions" (p.142). Multilingual learners (MLLs) are more likely than non- MLLs to suffer from interpersonal comparisons and competition because of language and cultural differences. Thus, MLLs are more likely to thrive in classrooms that are more mastery focused and less performance focused.

Importantly, Karabenick and Noda (2004) determined that increased teacher contact with MLLs was positively correlated to favorable attitudes toward having MLLs in their classrooms. The most positive impressions of MLLs were associated with less experienced teachers in elementary schools (compared with more experienced teachers at the high school-level). The researchers' results also demonstrated that educators with more favorable attitudes toward MLLs generally adopted a mastery approach to instruction versus a performance (or competitive) approach to instruction.

Karabenick and Noda (2004) identified issues of teacher ambivalence in their study, particularly related to the notion of whether or not people of different cultures can work and socialize together, in addition to pinpointing ambivalent educator perspectives about familial support and care. Problematically, 62% of participating teachers believed that the parents of MLLs were less involved in the schools than parents of other students (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). The current study investigated whether teachers with more positive attitudes toward MLLs stressed the more beneficial (i.e., mastery) goals for achievement.

Research on teachers' beliefs

For the purposes of this study, we are using the term belief in its broadest terms, referring to teachers' beliefs as attitudes as part of the cognitive aspects of teaching. This study encompasses multiple factors

of teachers' beliefs about MLLs, including knowledge about language acquisition, attitudes toward language teaching, parental involvement of MLLs, and teachers' own cultural competency. We position ourselves in that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are affected by their own experiences and have a great impact on their decisions for teaching and what and how they teach language learners (Abdi & Asadi, 2015; Phillips & Borg, 2009). We begin with an understanding that as teacher educators we need to focus on understanding the beliefs of our teacher candidates so that we can set out to establish programs to shift any negative beliefs that teachers may have toward MLLs and work toward improving the educational experiences of MLLs. We argue that beliefs can shift over time with professional development.

Beliefs are thoughts and judgements that we make about ourselves, others, and the world around us are ideas that are based on our thought processes (Khader, 2012). Beliefs are ideas that are shaped by our experiences (Khader, 2012). Beliefs are defined as the teachers' opinions and their views on teaching and learning (Haney, Lumpe & Czerniak, 1996). Beliefs of teachers not only affect teachers' pedagogy in the classroom, but also their expectations they hold for their students. Studying teacher beliefs is critical in teacher education because beliefs "drive classroom actions and influence the teacher change process" (Richardson, 1996, p. 102). Teachers beliefs have influential implications for MLLs in their classrooms. For example, Rueda and Garcia (1996) found that teachers' beliefs about second language learning and teaching shape their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect students' behavior in the classroom. Additionally, teachers' attitudes toward MLLs affect the classroom interaction between the students and the teacher, which directly affects student success.

Different terms that have been used in the literature about teacher beliefs are beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, perceptions, dispositions, cognition, values, and expectations (Knopp & Smith, 2005). While some researchers focused on multiple definitions of beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Kagan, 1992), others have referred to it as teacher cognition (Borg, 2003; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Beliefs of teachers can be categorized as implicit and explicit, contextualized in nature, and may change over time (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Mantero & McVicker, 2006). Beliefs can be both subjective and objective and drive teachers' day to day decision making and actions in the classroom (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Some scholars have argued that teachers' professional knowledge can be considered as belief (Kagan, 1992). Fang (1996) added that beliefs are part of teachers' knowledge. Fenstermacher (1994) proposed that beliefs and knowledge can be used interchangeably.

Teachers' beliefs and perceptions of MLLs

Teachers hold a variety of beliefs about Multilingual Learners (MLLs), bi- or multi-lingualism, and cultural or language diversity. In a study of 729 teachers at a midwestern suburban school district in the United States, Karabenick and Noda (2004) found that 89% of teachers believed that cultural differences enrich the lives of community members (p. 68). Karabenick and Noda (2004) established that teachers more positively oriented toward MLLs in their classrooms may be more likely to believe the following: First language proficiency supports academic success and does not hinder learning another language; bilingualism and bilingual education are beneficial; MLLs should be tested in their first language; lack of fluency in the second language does not indicate a lack of comprehension; and MLLs do not necessarily demand additional time or resources. 75% of surveyed teachers indicated the belief that bilingualism has practical, career-related advantages, and 52% of respondents believed that higher levels of bilingualism develop cognitive skills (Karabenick & Noda, 2004, p. 64).

Bailey and Marsden (2017) interviewed seven educators teaching at predominantly monolingual primary schools in England and learned that teachers held a variety of favorable beliefs about MLLs. For instance, participating teachers expressed that MLLs could contribute to teaching student-peers, that MLLs applied themselves to learning activities, and that MLLs' families possessed a strong cultural work ethic and were interested in their students' well-being and academic achievement. One of the implications of Bailey and Marsden (2017)'s study was incorporating home language into the classroom in order to improve the educational, social, and individual experience of MLLs. These beliefs include that MLLs deserve to fully access the curriculum, that it is appropriate to celebrate diversity by honoring students' cultures and lived experiences, and that MLLs should be welcomed into the classroom environment.

The lens with which teachers view MLLs is often rooted in their beliefs and how this is reflected in their teaching. In one study, preservice teachers working with MLLs characterized the MLLs as "victims" with insurmountable challenges, rather than students with unique skills and strengths (Sugimoto, Carter, & Stoehr, 2017, p. 186). The negative image of MLLs may lead to the "lower expectations" that in-service teachers may have for their language-learning students (Ukpokodu, 2007, p.8).

In another study, Kelly (2018) set out to determine if preservice ESL teachers do, in fact, hold a "deficit view" of English learners (p. 112). Several college students enrolled in an ESL teacher education program drew depictions of their idea of what teachers teaching MLLs should look like, at the beginning and end of

an ESL methods course (Kelly, 2018, p. 110). Most of the preservice teachers depicted direct instruction, in which the ESL students were passive recipients of the lesson (Kelly, 2018, p. 120). Most of the participants did not change their drawings much after completing the course, signalling that their perceptions of MLLs as passive members of the classroom remained the same (Kelly, 2018, p. 124-125).

Teachers' beliefs about multi-lingualism and linguicism

In Young's (2014) study of 46 head teachers in France about their attitudes toward plurilingualism and how their ideologies influence how language policies are enacted in schools, she drew attention to the ways in which schools "contribute to the reproduction of social relations of inequality between dominant and minority language groups. Using interviews as primary data collection tool, Young (2014) explored how teachers perceived students' home languages and their understanding of plurilingualism. She found that in an effort to meet the needs of plurilingual students, teachers' practice are highly influenced by personal beliefs rooted in monolingual ideologies. Young (2014) proposed that understanding teachers' beliefs/ideologies is a first step in working toward deconstructing and instilling critical language awareness.

Linguicism is defined as "the ideologies, structures, and practices used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources on the basis of language (their mother tongue" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 13). According to Phillipson (1992), linguicism "has taken over from racism as a more subtle way of hierarchizing social groups in the contemporary world" (p.241). While racism often positions 'whites as the entitled beneficiaries of unearned societal privilege and status' (Huber et al. 2008, 11, 41), linguicism normalizes native (monolingual) speaker values, beliefs, and experiences as those dominant and thus legitimate. Linguicism, particularly a preference toward and the dominance of the English language, is detrimental to the learning experiences of MLLs (Cummins, 2005). An academic prioritization of English frequently results in bilingual children becoming monolingual children (Cummins, 2005). Educators' misunderstandings or lack of knowledge about bi- or multi-lingualism, language learning or acquisition, and cognition are also harmful and exacerbatory (Mellom, et al, 2018). Therefore, disrupting misconceptions about language proficiency is important in teacher education as we strive to prepare teachers to meet the needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse student populations.

Teachers may believe that use of a home language or first language in any context hinders learning a second language (Conteh, 2012; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Reeves, 2004, 2006). Indeed, educators might

even be unaware of why and how home languages can be useful in academic environments (Bailey & Marsden, 2017). In their research study, Karabenick and Noda (2004) found that slightly more than half of all teacher-respondents believed that the use of a first language at home interfered with learning a second language. Mehmedbegovic (2008, 2011) ascertained that educators often had misgivings about the usage of a home language in the classroom setting. This hesitancy was frequently linked with teachers' fears on immigration and difference, or otherness (Burant & Kirby, 2002; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Mehmedbegovic, 2008, 2011). A tendency of teachers to over-observe cliques of EL students may also reflect a lack of understanding of the other (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Teachers' lack of prior exposure to diverse populations can manifest as misunderstanding or fear of students (Walker, Shafer & Iiams, 2004).

Misinformation additionally impacts teachers' negative beliefs. Walker, Shafer and Iiams (2004) and Reeves (2006) found that teachers believed that MLLs should be fluent in English in either one or two years in classrooms in the United States. However, García's research (2005) showed that most MLLs typically spend six years in the public school system to master the English language. Further issues are the misinterpretation of bilingual education and the overestimation of the associated costs of this type of education (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). In order to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations, teachers must go through series of professional development to shift their ideological beliefs that are engrained and overcome their deficit beliefs. There have been numerous studies that showed teacher attitudes can be shifted with appropriate professional development in working with multilingual learners (Fitts & Gross, 2012; Katz, Scott, & Hadjioannou, 2009; Halpern et al., 2022). The authors were asked to work with multiple school districts to create a series of professional development. In an effort to prepare educators for professional development, we set out to determine their pre-existing beliefs about MLLs. It was in that spirit that we adapted a survey to determine the initial beliefs of teachers toward MLLs. The purpose of this study was to determine the beliefs of teachers on multiple factors including culture, cultural competence, parental involvement, and MLLs' struggles in school settings.

Research Question: Our main research question was "What are the perceptions and beliefs of K-12 educators toward their own cultural competence, MLLs' needs and struggles, and parental involvement of MLL families?"

Research Methodology

This study measured variables using a statistical evaluation and analyzes these measurements

using different statistical models in order to create understanding of MLLs' experiences in schooling. The research design of this study provided informative data regarding teachers' beliefs on MLLs' cultural struggles and competence at schools and how that impacts their academic success. The study also provided complete and detailed description of the teachers' perspective on MLLs' difficulties by constructing statistical models and figures to highlight what is observed.

Context of the study

The local context where this study took place included multiple school districts in a state in the Northeast U.S. Participants included both ESL and mainstream teachers in K-12 that taught variety of subjects including ELA, ESL, science, social studies, or mathematics. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used to conduct research about participants with specific traits who might otherwise be difficult to identify. Teachers were recruited from the local school districts using electronic communication. The state where this study took place is a small state that have had an increase in the numbers of MLLs in the past ten years. The teacher force consists of predominantly white middle-class women, whom only about 20% of have training to teach MLLs. Therefore, studying the beliefs and perceptions of these teachers is significant.

Instrument

The researchers found Drs. Karabenick and Noda's study in 2004 to be appropriate after they decided to study the beliefs of teachers toward MLLs, and they contacted the authors of the study via email to receive permission for adapting their instrument. After the researchers got permission from Dr. Karabenick and Noda, they start preparing their instrument on Qualtrics software to collect data digitally. The instrument, according to Karabenick and Noda (2004), measures "the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, practices,

and needs related to ELLs" (p.56). Karabenick and Noda developed the instrument based on professional literature and many years of teacher experiences. They found that their scale is sufficiently reliable, which had a low but significant correlation ($r = .11, p < .001$) with teachers' ELL attitudes. The questionnaire reflects MLLs' common difficulties and the impact of parental involvement in schooling.

Karabenick and Noda (2004) used exploratory factor analysis to derive scales (described subsequently), which were constructed by averaging the responses to individual items that had noticeable factor loadings. The items in the instrument were reverse coded where appropriate so that higher values represent more agreement and less disagreement. The instrument included four factors. The first factor labels MLLs' cultural struggles at schools. This factor basically discusses about cultural difficulties that affects language learning. The second factor emphasizes the cultural competence at schools. This factor basically highlights what schools need to do to adjust to diversity. The third factor of the study highlights parental involvement. This factor basically describes what parents need to do to help their children's language learning. The last factor indicates MLLs' common difficulties in classroom. This factor basically highlights common difficulties that ELL students encounter with their classmates and teachers.

Participants

The total sample size of the study was 308 (Male = 121; Female = 187). The occupations of the participants for this study were as follows: ESL/BDL Teachers (168), Special Education Teachers (36), EL Directors (28), School Administrators (28), Assistant Principals (29), and Principals (19). The races of the participants were as follows: White (155), Hispanic (82), Black or African American (45), Asian (26), Alaska Native or American Indian (10), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (6) (see the table 1 below).

Table 1.

Demographics data of the participants (n=308)

		n	% of total
Gender of the respondent	Female	187	60.71
	Male	121	39.29
Occupation	ESOL/BDL Teacher	168	54.55
	Special Education Teacher	36	11.69
	EL Director	28	9.09
	School Administrator	28	9.09
	Assistant Principal	29	9.42
	Principal	19	6.17
Race	White	140	45.45
	Hispanic	81	26.30
	Black or African American	45	14.61
	Asian	26	8.44
	Alaska Native or American Indian	10	3.25
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	1.95

The demographic data of this study indicated that 85% of the population hold bachelor's degrees, 11% of the participants hold master's degrees, and 4% of the participants hold doctorate degrees. The demographic data of this study also highlighted that 62% of the participants have more than 10 years teaching experience and 38% of the participants have from 1 to 10 years teaching experience.

Data collection

The researchers had pre-existing professional relationships with many school districts and set out to reach out as many as participants in this state. They contacted school principals, assistant principals, and district coordinators after receiving IRB (#FWA00003132) approval and legally received many teachers' email addresses to send the survey instrument electronically, which was prepared in Qualtrics. The first page of the survey instrument included consent form for the participants. They had to agree to be a participant to go onto further steps of the questionnaire. The electronic link of the instrument was sent to 2203 educators and the researchers only received 308 responses. The participation of the study was completely voluntary. The background of the respondents was not representative of the sample identified by the researchers.

Data analysis

After the researchers collected the raw data, they entered all data into SPSS statistical software to analyze them. AMOS statistical software was used for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The researchers basically used descriptive statistics to explain the basic features of the data of the study and provided the samples and the measures done on this study.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Using AMOS, the researchers conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the instrument. CFA, according to Thompson (2004), "is a multivariate statistical procedure that is used to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs" (p.211). The researchers used the CFA to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables and test the hypothesis that a relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs exists. The result of CFA shows that the instrument supports the statistical data analysis by indicating fit index statistics and recommended value and resources of these statistics.

Table 2 highlighted that the χ^2 (chi-square) ratio with degree of freedom is 523.181/442=1.18. This shows that

Table 2.
Goodness-of-fit indices of the hypothesized measurement model

Fix Index	Resource(s)	Recommended Value	Overall model
CFI	Hu & Bentler (1990); Brown, & Moore (2012)	.90 ≤ CFI ≤ .95 (adequate fit)	.93
RMSEA	Tabachnick & Fidell (2007); Brown, & Moore (2012); Hu & Bentler (1990); Byrne (2004)	RMSEA < .08 (fair fit) RMSEA < .05 (good fit)	.041
SRMR	Hu & Bentler (1999)	SRMR ≤ .08 (good fit)	.069
TLI	Bentler (1990); Brown, & Moore (2012)	>.95	.98
χ^2 Test of Model Fit	Hu & Bentler (1999); Brown, & Moore (2012); Tabachnick & Fidell (2007); Jöreskog & Sörbom (1993)	Low χ^2 value and p > .05 If p < .05	523.181
χ^2 /df	Byrne (2004)	Good Fit χ^2 /df < 1 Acceptable Fit χ^2 /df < 2	1.183

Note: " χ^2 = chi-square, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = the standardized root mean square residual, CFI = comparative fit index, and TLI= Tucker-Lewis Index"

the suggested matrix and the original variable matrix are excellent fit. For the measurement model, the value of RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), which was .041, illustrates good fit for this study. Brown and Moore (2012) affirmed that “the value of RMSEA is good fit if it is <.05 and fair fit if it is <.08” (see also Hu & Bentler, 1999; and Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) (p.132). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the value of SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) is an absolute measure of fit and explains “the standardized difference between the observed correlation and the predicted correlation” (p.176). For this study, the researchers found the value of SRMR is .069. Hu and Bentler (1999) affirmed that the value of SRMR should be lower than .08. Brown and Moore pointed out that the value of CFI (comparative fit index) calculates “the model fit by examining the discrepancy between the data and the hypothesized model, while adjusting for the issues of sample size inherent in the chi-squared test of model fit, and the normed fit index” (p.198). For this study, the value of CFI is .93. The value of CFI, according to Brown and Moore (2012), should be between .90 and .95 for a good fit. The value of TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), which was also called NNFI (Non-Normed Fit Index), was .96. This shows the model of interest improves the fit by 95% relative to the null model. The values of fit index shows that the data fit a hypothesized measurement model and measured variables represent the construct well (see Table 2).

Validity and reliability

The faculty members, who were experts in the

Table 3.

MLLs’ cultural struggles at schools

I believe:	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Cultural differences enrich the lives of members of communities	5.00	8.10	5.72	58.10	23.08	3.91	1.07	.89
Cultural conflicts arise between ELLs and non-MLLs in class	4.56	6.77	9.29	53.24	26.14	3.89	1.02	.90
ELLs’ home culture and native language should be considered in curriculum development	4.37	6.90	10.60	35.10	43.03	4.10	1.06	.94
Language and cultural interventions should be provided in the curriculum	4.10	5.61	9.14	39.70	40.44	4.10	1.10	.94
ELLs’ home culture and language should be considered in the special education evaluation process	4.00	5.29	7.32	41.14	42.25	4.21	1.09	.91
Speaking native language at home prevent ELLs from learning English	4.86	8.00	8.86	37.13	41.15	4.12	1.09	.92
Teachers should build a cultural bridge between native and non-native students	5.38	8.31	8.59	39.59	38.14	3.79	1.01	.87
MLLs feel comfortable in the classroom	24.31	19.12	9.00	23.43	24.14	4.01	1.04	.79
Strong native-language skills contribute to MLLs’ academic achievement	5.32	7.04	7.91	41.45	38.29	4.20	1.10	.92

Note: “1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.”

field of applied linguistics or closely related field, tested the survey instrument in order to review and revise the instrument before it was administered. They revised unclear terminology, vague items, and inappropriateness by reading each items loudly. The correlation ($r_s = .541, p = .001$) is a medium/moderate correlation (.40 -.60) (see Tashakkori & Teddlie 2002; Morse, 1994). The validity results of the study were statistically found significant; therefore, this is a valid instrument.

The survey instrument was piloted with 30 participants to evaluate the feasibility, which helped to not waste recourses and time. This helped to test the proposed study process and design. Cronbach’s alpha of the study was found to analyze the reliability of scale. The average of 35 items’ Cronbach’s alpha score was $\alpha = .93$. Nunnally (1978) affirmed that “a minimum value of .70 for Cronbach’s alpha is considered acceptable” (p.54). Hence, the scale was found reliable.

Findings

The researchers used SPSS statistical software to report descriptive statistics regarding teachers’ perspective of MLLs’ difficulties in the classroom. The findings consisted of four factors as follows: MLLs’ cultural struggles at schools, cultural competence at schools, parental involvement, and MLLs’ common difficulties in the classroom.

Factor 1: MLLs’ cultural struggles at schools

Table 2 highlighted that cultural differences enhance the lives of members of communities and may cause conflicts between MLLs and non-MLLs in class. The literature also indicated that conflicts can occur between MLLs and non-MLLs because of differences in personality, opinions, and values (Arias-Valenzuela, Amiot, & Ryder, 2019). According to the relatively high mean scores of the item, MLLs' home culture and native language should be considered in curriculum development, and language and cultural interventions should be provided in the curriculum. Curriculum specialist should identify some necessary cultural contents be involved into the curriculum for the students who have culturally and linguistically diverse background (Offorma, 2016). The respondents also mostly agreed that speaking native language at home may prevent MLLs from learning English. Strong native-language skills contribute to MLLs' academic achievement as well. Overall, this factor highlighted that teachers should build a cultural bridge between native and non-native languages for MLLs' academic success. In this factor, cronbach's alpha scores for each item has relatively high (.79<items<.94), which indicated each item under this factor is reliable (see Table 3). For cronbach's alpha, according to Nunnally (1978), "a minimum value of .70 is considered acceptable" (p.243).

Factor 2: Cultural competence at schools

The relatively high mean scores of the items under this factor highlighted that schools should have a set of principles and values that identify diversity and conduct self-assessment to confirm sensitivity to cultural characteristics. Schools need to become culturally competent when there is an issue or crisis, a shared vision, and a desired outcome (Ozfidan & Toprak, 2019). Schools should demonstrate attitudes, behaviors, policies, and structures that allow MLLs to work efficiently cross-culturally and value diversity. According to Sherr and Jones (2019), "cultural competence in social work practice implies a heightened consciousness of how culturally diverse

populations experience their uniqueness and deal with their differences and similarities within a larger social context" (p.102). This factor also displayed that schools should be committed to manage the dynamics of difference and incorporate cultural knowledge into their practices and learn about MLLs. Additionally, the findings presented cronbach's alpha scores for each item in this factor. The lowest value of Cronbach's alpha is .87 and the highest of Cronbach's alpha is .95, which indicates each item in the table is reliable (see Table 4).

Factor 3: Parental involvement

This factor highlighted importance of parental involvement in schooling. Most of the respondents emphasized that parents cannot speak English and they only speak their native language at home. According to Ilhan, Ozfidan, and Yilmaz (2019), this is good for parents and children to not forget their native language, but this is not good for parents to learn English and participate in society. The respondents mostly agreed that parents should be welcomed as valuable contributors to school's learning community, and they can support their children's understanding of school's information more effectively when they understand it. Therefore, parents should learn English to help their children in some of the school content. According to the relatively high mean scores of the items, parents should get involved in school activities and they should also monitor and help the completion of their children's homework. Teachers also believed that parents should keep in regular contact with a staff member or teacher regarding their child's progress and visit the school and their child's classroom regularly. Furthermore, the findings also showed that parents should not consider cultural/ethnic differences as a barrier of involving in society. Cronbach's alpha scores for each item in this factor are higher than .85, which indicates each item in the table is reliable (see Table 5).

Factor 4: MLLs' common difficulties in classroom

Table 4.

Cultural Competence at schools

Schools should:	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
have a set of principles and values that identify diversity	6.10	10.10	10.00	52.72	21.08	3.79	1.01	.87
conduct self-assessment to confirm sensitivity to cultural characteristics	5.56	9.24	9.25	49.77	26.18	4.01	1.05	.91
demonstrate attitudes, behaviors, "policies, and structures that allow them to work efficiently cross-culturally and value diversity	6.30	10.10	10.60	36.10	36.90	3.92	1.00	.89
be committed to manage the dynamics of difference	4.61	7.10	9.70	42.10	35.48	4.02	1.05	.92
adjust to diversity and the communities' cultural contexts	5.00	8.30	9.31	38.14	39.25	4.10	1.07	.93
incorporate cultural knowledge into their practices and" learn about	6.86	9.00	8.86	36.13	39.15	4.12	1.09	.95

Note: "1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree."

Table 5.*Parental involvement*

Parents:	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
cannot speak English	6.72	10.10	9.05	41.10	33.03	4.01	1.03	.91
speak their native language at home	5.56	8.78	10.28	49.24	26.14	4.05	1.09	.92
should be welcomed as valuable contributors to school's learning community	4.37	7.90	9.60	36.10	42.03	4.09	1.06	.94
can support their children's understanding of school's information more effectively when they understand it	5.10	5.61	9.14	38.70	40.44	4.11	1.10	.91
should get involved in school activities	4.29	5.00	7.32	41.14	42.25	4.13	1.09	.94
should monitor and help the completion of their children's homework	4.13	7.00	9.86	37.86	41.15	4.12	1.09	.87
should keep in regular contact with a staff member or teacher regarding their child's progress	5.35	6.25	7.20	38.97	42.23	4.06	1.05	.92
should visit the school and their child's classroom regularly	5.31	8.38	8.59	39.59	38.14	3.83	1.01	.85
should not consider cultural/ethnic differences as a barrier of involving the society	5.25	6.35	8.20	37.97	42.23	4.13	1.10	.93

Note: "1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree."

Table 6.*ELLs' common difficulties in classroom*

MLLs:	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
should develop literacy in their first language to facilitate the development of writing and reading in English.	4.72	7.10	9.00	53.10	24.08	4.14	1.01	.93
are able to use their native language to access academic content more easily	4.77	7.56	9.29	42.24	36.14	4.09	1.04	.91
do not understand the content compared to native English speakers	5.37	6.90	9.60	36.10	42.03	4.10	1.06	.94
will be more successful if they learn to write and read in their native language	4.61	6.10	10.14	39.70	38.44	4.11	1.10	.94
exposed to English to learn better	5.00	5.29	7.32	40.14	42.25	4.13	1.07	.91
are more successful after they solved the language barrier	4.86	8.00	8.86	37.13	41.15	4.12	1.09	.92
don't take their study seriously	4.25	6.35	8.20	38.97	42.23	4.20	1.05	.93
speak more of their native language than English	5.38	6.31	8.59	39.59	40.14	3.79	1.01	.87
become too dependent on the teacher	4.31	9.12	9.00	38.43	39.14	4.01	1.04	.90
encounter culture shock	4.32	6.04	7.91	42.45	39.29	4.21	1.10	.92
are bored and/or unmotivated	5.56	6.77	9.29	52.24	26.14	4.23	1.02	.94

Note: "1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree."

This factor highlighted MLLs' common difficulties in the classroom. According to the relatively high mean scores of the items, MLLs should develop literacy in their first language to facilitate the development of writing and reading in English. This is one of the biggest issues for people who have poor language background from their native language. MLLs do not understand the content compared to native English speakers. This affects MLLs' academic achievement negatively. The findings indicate that MLLs are able to use their native language to access academic content more easily and they will be more successful if they learn to write and read in their native language. MLLs encounter culture shock; therefore, they are usually bored and unmotivated. Teachers should find more integrative and entertainment teaching strategies for MLLs, who have motivation problems and are bored in classroom (Gowri & Ilankumaran, 2020). For reliability, the researchers reported Cronbach's alpha scores, which were relatively high (.87 < items < .94) (see Table 6).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and perceptions of educators toward MLLs. The findings of the study presented mixed results. The results indicated that although teachers' beliefs about MLLs are slightly negative their overall beliefs are positive. Many teachers while welcoming MLLs in their classrooms, desiring to support them, are unsure of how to do so. This is critical in the field of TESOL/bi-/multilingual education in discussing the effect of beliefs and attitudes on teaching. This finding is consistent with other teacher beliefs studies that beliefs could implicitly influence the pedagogical choices that teachers make on a daily basis (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). As Fives and Buehl (2012) indicate teachers' implicit beliefs are critical determinant of teacher behaviors and "act as a filter on interpretation of teaching experiences without the teacher's conscious knowledge" (Harrison & Lakin, 2018, pg. 97). Although the majority of the teachers in this study expressed a positive attitude in teaching MLLs, their responses are consistent with previous literature that there is a dire need for professional development to support these teachers in order to ensure MLLs receive the best education possible (Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

The researchers adapted Karabenick and Noda's (2004) survey to measure teachers' beliefs regarding their own cultural competence, multilingual learners' needs, and parental involvement. Karabenick and Noda considered it important to measure teachers' succeeded goals, owing to their current dominance in the conceptual framework on school motivation. This method differentiates among teachers' focus on mastery versus performance. Mastery goals highlight involvement in individual improvement and tasks. On

the contrary, performance goals highlight students' abilities, which are made more noticeable comparing inter-student. The current study found that MLLs are more likely than non- MLLs to suffer from interpersonal comparisons and competition because of language and cultural differences. Thus, MLLs are more likely to thrive in classrooms that are more mastery focused and less performance focused. The current study investigated whether teachers with more positive attitudes toward MLLs stressed the more beneficial goals for achievement.

The results of this study indicated that teachers believed that speaking native language at home prevents MLLs from learning English, and MLLs' home culture and native language should be considered in curriculum development and language and cultural interventions should be provided in the curriculum. Teachers' beliefs also indicated that strong native-language skills contribute to MLLs' academic achievement and teachers should build a cultural bridge between native and non-native students. The beliefs of teachers indicated that schools should have a set of principles and values that identify diversity and conduct self-assessment to confirm sensitivity to cultural characteristics. The results also highlighted that parents should be welcomed as valuable contributors to school's learning community, and they can support their children's understanding of school's information more effectively when they understand it. The teachers beliefs revealed that they expected parents to be involved in school activities and they should also monitor and help the completion of their children's homework. Teachers expected parents to keep regular contact with a staff member or teacher regarding their child's progress and visit the school and their child's classroom regularly. Even though the teachers believed that parents should not consider cultural/ethnic differences as a barrier of involving the society, their beliefs on parental involvement certainly was not one that was culturally sensitive to different parental backgrounds, similar to what Gonzales and Gabel (2017) highlighted about the different ways parents can be involved despite what is expected by the U.S. schools. The teachers belief about parental involvement was in line with western views of parent involvement. The teachers also believed in the power of first language literacy to facilitate the development of writing and reading in English. MLLs do not understand the content compared to native English speakers. Additionally, teachers believed that MLLs are able to use their native language to access academic content more easily and they will be more successful if they learn to write and read in their native language.

Conclusion

Understanding teachers' beliefs is an important step in understanding teaching practices and their overall

impact on MLL achievement in schools. By exploring teachers' beliefs and attitudes we can expand our understanding of teacher practices and design professional learning experiences that delve deeper on self-awareness of unconscious attitudes toward MLLs. MLLs are the fastest growing student population in the United States (NCES, 2016), and will comprise nearly 40% of the K-12 population by 2030 (Center for Public Education, 2012). There is an increased need for teachers of MLLs to be more prepared to teach MLLs and gain greater understanding of the needs of these students and approach teaching MLLs with a more additive approach rather than deficit views. More research on teachers' beliefs about MLLs is required and its impact on everyday practice should also be further investigated. Further studies should include qualitative measures that may integrate teacher interviews and classroom observations to see how self-reported measures of teachers correlate with everyday attitudes toward MLLs.

Overall, the researchers suggested that teachers of MLLs need to be made aware of the instructional practices with the support of continuing discussion and professional learning to apply foundational knowledge into practice. The current research provided insights into teachers' everyday beliefs and instructional practices in working with MLLs; however, more research is needed on teacher beliefs on teaching and learning to further understand the instructional needs of teachers of MLLs. The current research not only provided teachers a space for reflection on their beliefs and practices in the classroom, but it also informs school leaders on the importance of making bottom-up decisions regarding professional learning needs of the teachers who are already demonstrated their commitment to supporting all of their students but specifically MLLs with more culturally responsive instruction. For a future study, the researchers are planning to include qualitative measures that might integrate teacher interviews and classroom observations to see how self-reported measures of teachers correlate with everyday instructional practices with MLLs.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Information

Which **one** of the following categories best describes your job position or primary role?

- ESL/BDL Teacher
 Teacher (Please specify grade span) Early Childhood Elementary Secondary
 EL Director
 Special Education Teacher
 School Administrator
 Guidance Counselor
 School Psychologist
 Social Worker
 School Support Staff (e.g. paraprofessional, classroom aid)
 Administrative Support (e.g. registrar, attendance secretary, etc.)
 Other, please specify:

Are you certified in ESL/BDL? Yes No

Have you received any training on ELs?

- Yes
 No
 Other, please specify

Has your training on ELs helped you better support all of your students (both ELs and non-ELs)?

- Yes, it has.
 No, but it has helped me better support ELs.
 No, the training was not helpful at all.
 Not applicable.

What is your race? (Select one or more):

- Black or African American
 Alaska Native or American Indian
 Asian
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 White
 Other
 Decline to State

What is your gender?

- Female
 Male
 Decline to State

What is your highest level of education?

- Bachelors
 Masters
 Doctorate
 Other

How long have you worked in the field of education?

- Less than 1 year
 1 - 3 years
 4 - 6 years
 7 - 10 years
 More than 10 years

How many years have you been at your current position?

- Less than 1 year
 1 - 3 years
 4 - 6 years
 7 - 10 years
 More than 10 years

Have you ever had ELs in your classes?

- Yes
 No
 N/A

Do you have ELs in your classes now?

- Yes
 No
 N/A

Likert-scale question

The different sections of the survey asks for the extent to which you agree or disagree with a series of statements. To ensure complete coverage, and to increase the survey's reliability, there may be more than one statement that refers to the same domain. Please indicate your response to each statement.

I believe:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cultural differences enrich the lives of members of communities					
Cultural conflicts arise between ELLs and non-MLLs in class					
ELLs' home culture and native language should be considered in curriculum development					
Language and cultural interventions should be provided in the curriculum					
ELLs' home culture and language should be considered in the special education evaluation process					
Speaking native language at home prevent ELLs from learning English					
Teachers should build a cultural bridge between native and non-native students					
MLLs feel comfortable in the classroom					
Strong native-language skills contribute to MLLs' academic achievement					

Please continue providing your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement...

Schools should:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
have a set of principles and values that identify diversity					
conduct self-assessment to confirm sensitivity to cultural characteristics					
demonstrate attitudes, behaviors, "policies, and structures that allow them to work efficiently cross-culturally and value diversity					
be committed to manage the dynamics of difference					
adjust to diversity and the communities' cultural contexts					
incorporate cultural knowledge into their practices and "learn about					

Please continue providing your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement...

Parents:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
cannot speak English					
speak their native language at home					
should be welcomed as valuable contributors to school's learning community					
can support their children's understanding of school's information more effectively when they understand it					
should get involved in school activities					
should monitor and help the completion of their children's homework					
should keep in regular contact with a staff member or teacher regarding their child's progress					
should visit the school and their child's classroom regularly					
should not consider cultural/ethnic differences as a barrier of involving the society					

Please continue providing your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement...

MLLs:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
should develop literacy in their first language to facilitate the development of writing and reading in English.					
are able to use their native language to access academic content more easily					
do not understand the content compared to native English speakers					
will be more successful if they learn to write and read in their native language					
exposed to English to learn better					
are more successful after they solved the language barrier					
don't take their study seriously					
speak more of their native language than English					
become too dependent on the teacher					
encounter culture shock					
are bored and/or unmotivated					