El Guiniguada, 33 (2024), pp. 01-09
Print ISSN: 0213-0610 – **eISSN: 2386-3374**

Servicio de Publicaciones y Difusión Científica
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación

Servicio de Publicaciones y Difusión Científica (SPDC) de la Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, España

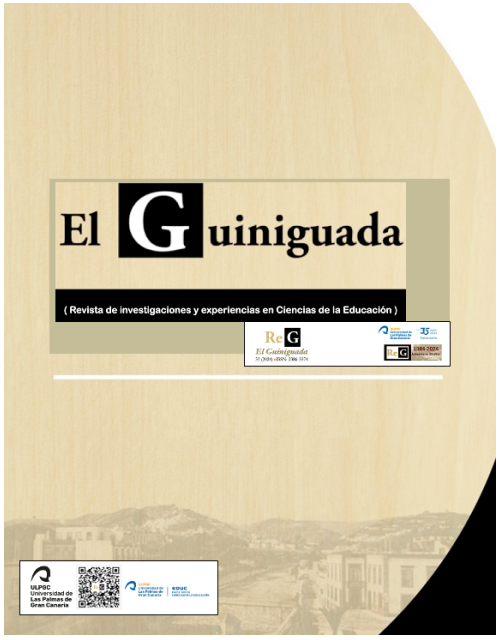
El Guiniguada

(Revista de investigaciones y experiencias en Ciencias de la Educación)

eISSN: 2386-3374

10.20420/ElGuiniguada.2013.333 (doi general de la revista)

Journal information, indexing and abstracting details, archives, and instructions for submissions:
http://ojsspdc.ulpgc.es/ojs/index.php/ElGuiniguada/index



Proposal to Initial Teacher Training for multilingual classrooms in Chilean schools

Propuestas de formación inicial docente para aulas multilingües en la escuela chilena

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DOI (en Sumario/Título, en WEB de la Revista)
Recibido el 06/10/2023
Aceptado el 04/03/2024

El Guiniguada, 33 (2024), pp. 01-09
Print ISSN: 0213-0610 – **eISSN: 2386-3374**

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Proposal to Initial Teacher Training for multilingual classrooms in Chilean schools
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RESUMEN

El presente estudio buscó explorar los conocimientos e ideologías sobre multilingüismo y el grado de acceso e inclusión que tienen los inmigrantes en la escuela pública chilena con base en los datos entregados por profesores en formación y servicio del sistema educacional chileno. Para contestar estas preguntas se realizó una encuesta a 103 docentes, cuyos resultados se recogen en dos trabajos previos de Toledo et al. (2022a) y Toledo et al. (2022b), los cuales reunimos en este artículo, aportando un panorama completo de los resultados. Entre los hallazgos se encuentra una valoración positiva del multilingüismo por parte de los dos grupos de profesores, así como también la ausencia de lineamientos y formación para los profesores para enfrentar la interculturalidad y las aulas multilingües en el sistema educativo chileno actual.

PALABRAS CLAVE

FORMACIÓN INICIAL DOCENTE, CLASE MULTILINGÜE, INCLUSIÓN LINGÜÍSTICA, INMIGRANTES, ESCUELA PÚBLICA

ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore the knowledge and ideologies about multilingualism and the degree of access and inclusion of immigrants in Chilean public schools based on information provided by teachers in training and in service of the Chilean educational system. To answer these questions, a survey was conducted among 103 teachers, the results of which were reported in two previous papers by Toledo et al. (2022a) and Toledo et al. (2022b), which we gather in this article, providing a complete overview of the findings. Among the findings, we report a positive perception of multilingualism by both groups of teachers and the absence of guidelines and training for teachers to face interculturality and multilingual classrooms in the current Chilean educational system.

KEYWORDS

INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING, MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM, LINGUISTIC INCLUSION, IMMIGRANTS, PUBLIC SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Applied linguistics in foreign languages, education, and migration studies focuses on providing immigrants equal access to education. On one hand, learning is understood as the negotiation of meanings—ideas, concepts, and languages interrelated within specific contexts (Hawkings & Cannon, 2017). On the other hand, migration encompasses not just the movement of people but also ideas, languages, cultures, and life visions, which, when subjected to the imposition of hegemonic cultures, can either become empowered or marginalized (Hawkings & Cannon, 2017). In these contexts, schools, perhaps more than any other space, highlight the role of language as a tool for developing a socially healthy community in multicultural environments (Heller 2003; Baynham 2011).

Fundamental Rights and School Inclusion in Chile

The Chilean State recognizes the fundamental right of foreign minors to access the educational system under the same conditions as nationals (Ministry of the Interior and Public Security of Chile, 2018). However, this declaration is superficial if the linguistic barrier is not considered. Chilean public schools have implemented an inclusion system that allows access to students without prior selection (Superintendency of Education, 2016) and without considering linguistic policies for integrating non-Spanish-speaking immigrant students. Such students are placed in a specific course according to their age, regardless of their language proficiency and previous schooling background. In this context, the responsibility of integrating non-Spanish speakers is left to each educational establishment. The lack of support in developing Spanish language skills has isolated non-Spanish-speaking immigrant students (especially Haitians), whom their teachers and peers perceive as belonging to a different ethnicity and language group, failing to understand Spanish and performing poorly academically (Toledo Vega et al., 2021). According to these and other labels, the Chilean public school views the Haitian collective as a problem which was exacerbated after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study examines the Chilean educational system regarding multilingual and multicultural classrooms by addressing (1) the knowledge and ideologies about multilingualism held by in-service and trainee teachers and (2) the level of access and inclusion of immigrants in Chilean public schools, according to teachers. A survey was conducted among 103 teachers, and the results are presented in this paper, offering a comprehensive overview of the findings (Toledo et al., 2022a; Toledo et al., 2022b).

Curriculum and Performance Evaluation Systems

The Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) maintains a curriculum to organize the school system. The Language subject incorporates reading, writing, and oral communication axes from primary to secondary education. This subject is focused on because it ostensibly caters to communication and because the responsibility for non-Spanish-speaking students largely falls on Language teachers, among whom a significant number of Haitian students are in public schools. Currently, there is no exact figure for the effective population of this group in Chile, which the 2024 Census aims to collect. Nevertheless, these students are a heterogeneous group, including bilingual (Creole-French), trilingual (Creole, French, and English), and monolingual (Creole) individuals, the latter being the most numerous and corresponding to children and adolescents with little or no previous schooling.

Generally, the curriculum axes do not consider the possibility that the students might not be native Spanish speakers. For example, the document outlines skills such as critical reflection,

appreciation, respect, and interest in others; valuing spoken and written discourse for social participation; and rigour, perseverance, and collaboration in work (MINEDUC, 2015a: 44-45). However, a student without linguistic competencies in Spanish is unlikely to develop these skills. Moreover, the pressure to teach content for students to perform well on standardized tests overlooks the development of skills and aptitudes that might be more useful for the immersion of immigrant students. The vision of learning the Spanish language is essentially monoglossic (Toledo et al., 2022c), which fosters a deficit discourse about students without competence in the host community's language (Gkaintartzi et al., 2015).

The parameters of the National Performance Evaluation System and the methodology for ranking educational establishments assess all with the same standardized instruments designed for native language speakers. This results in a decrease in the performance rating of schools with large immigrant communities (Toledo et al., 2022c) and a reduction in the financial aid they can receive from the State. Currently, the resources allocated to inclusive education in Chile consider students with special needs due to cognitive or sensory conditions. Whether to utilize these funds for Haitian students or under the belief that their linguistic limitations are learning difficulties, teachers refer these students to educational psychologists or speech therapists, unaware of the specialized work available for teaching Spanish as an additional, foreign, or second language (ELA). In this context, language constitutes a barrier between teaching and learning rather than being a tool for building knowledge (Toledo et al., 2022a).

Linguistic Attitudes and Pedagogical Knowledge of Language

The FID and the professional development programs for teachers of the Castilian language in Chile currently lack disciplinary training to address multilingual classrooms. Despite this, the current educational context in Chile considers an instructional pedagogy that values and reinforces the native languages of students among ELA learners in school. Unfortunately, when it comes to minority languages in impoverished public-school contexts, bilingual teaching seems unviable. However, it is perfectly possible to build a sense of appreciation for these languages within the school community through simple measures such as using everyday socialization expressions in the native languages of non-Spanish-speaking communities.

To date, no studies have been conducted on the viability of bilingual education in contexts like these; however, studies by Toledo-Vega et al. (2023, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, and 2021) show the absence of this educational model in the Chilean public school. Another measure for learning the target language in school (Spanish) is the acquisition in the FID of pedagogical language knowledge, which involves teaching disciplinary content in the specific language of the discipline (Toledo Vega et al., 2021; Ollerhead, 2019; Aalto & Tarnanen, 2015). This knowledge aims to (i) provide teachers with tools to distinguish between language-related difficulties and those related to disciplinary knowledge; (ii) allow the implementation of strategies that facilitate learners' access to institutionalized knowledge and teachers' understanding of which aspects are most challenging for learners and why; and (iii) help teachers understand and respond to cultural diversity, providing opportunities for participation for the entire class and employing strategies better to understand the specific needs and progress of their students.

The deficiencies of the FID and the professional development programs on teaching-learning an additional language translate into a series of misconceptions about learning Spanish: that children learn on their own, that teaching ELA is like teaching the Language subject (for native speakers in school) (Bahamondes et al., 2021), and that it is enough to incorporate students in the classroom for them to "absorb" both linguistic and disciplinary knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory case study conducted through convenience sampling and qualitative and quantitative descriptive analysis. Its purpose is to understand the linguistic ideologies and opinions regarding multilingual classrooms in school contexts among in-service and trainee teachers in the Chilean school system.

Data collection adapted the interview protocol of Gkaintartzi et al. (2015) as an online survey that gathered information related to the dimensions shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey Dimensions

Dimension/Subdimensions
A **Knowledge and Training of Teachers in SL Pedagogies and their Ideologies about the L1 of their Students a Multilingualism**
1. Knowledge and Training in SL Teaching 2. Multilingualism in School and Teachers' Ideology about Students' L1
B **Access and Inclusion of Immigrant Students in Public Schools**
3. Relationship with the Immigrant Community 4. Inclusion of Immigrant Students in the Chilean School 5. Access of Immigrant Students to Education

The survey participants were 69 in-service teachers (PS) and 34 Pedagogy students in practice (EP). The PS group had an average of 9.1 years of teaching experience, 42% were elementary or primary school teachers, 40.5% were high school teachers, and the rest were special education, kindergarten, or adult education teachers. All had experience with non-native speaker students to varying degrees. In the EP group, 70% were training to be high school teachers, 32.35% to be primary school teachers, and the rest to be special education or kindergarten teachers.

We present the information according to the five subdimensions of the survey and the categories revealed through content analysis of the open-ended questions. The former is complemented by the nominal quantitative analysis of the dichotomous responses (yes and no). The categories in each subdimension are presented in descending order of frequency.

RESULTS

Subdimension 1: Knowledge and Training in SL Teaching

A Chi-square test was conducted to examine if there was a significant relationship between groups (PS and EP) concerning the following questions: (1) Do you have experience teaching a second language (SL)? (2) Have you participated in any training for multilingual classrooms?; and (3) Do your students speak any minority languages? For the first question, no significant differences were found between groups: X^2 (1, N=103)=.118, $p > .05$; since the majority of EP informants were about to become English teachers, so most members of both groups had experience in SL teaching and learning. There were also no significant differences for the second question: X^2 (1, N=103)=.983, $p > .05$, as the majority in both groups had not received specialized training regarding multilingual classrooms. Differences were only noted in the third question: X^2 (1, N=103)=24.616, $p < 0.01$, since only the PS group had experience with students of minority languages.

Regarding open-ended questions, the highlighted categories include (i) difficulties of immigrants accessing education during the pandemic, (ii) lack of educational resources, and (iii) implementation of discretionary strategies such as differentiating between native and non-native speaker groups, adapting or simplifying materials, using a vehicular language, resorting to non-verbal communication, and promoting teamwork with immigrant students who have a better level

of Spanish to serve as mediators. There is also (iv) a need for trained professionals to manage non-Spanish-speaking students, including psychologists and translators.

Subdimension 2: Multilingualism in School and Teachers' Ideology about Students' L1

This subdimension mentions (i) difficulties imposed by the pandemic and the consequent online teaching, which limited immersion contexts for immigrant students. Regarding language learning, there is an (ii) observed need for these students to learn Spanish to integrate and avoid stigmatization. Concurrently, a significant role is assigned to (iii) maintaining the L1 of non-Spanish-speaking students, which Chilean teachers consider a way to boost self-confidence among these students. The category of (iv) scarce resources and strategies is attributed to a school system and curriculum that allow no time for anything beyond content delivery. Many teachers argue the necessity of modifying the curriculum, although none suggest how. Lastly, the (v) appreciation of multilingualism and the use of L1 by teachers to learn Spanish is noted. The dichotomous question about whether L1 at home inhibits learning Spanish is answered affirmatively by a smaller percentage of in-service teachers (16.17%) and trainee teachers (15.15%). The Chi-square test confirms no significant differences between groups regarding linguistic ideologies.

Subdimension 3: Relationship with the Immigrant Community

This subdimension again accounts for the (i) beliefs about using L1 at home. In this regard, the PS assert that they promote (or would promote) the use of Haitian Creole in homes, emphasizing the importance of learning Spanish to be part of the host society. It also highlights the (ii) difficulty in communicating with the parents of immigrant students due to the language gap. Related to this is the (iii) absence of parents, which many teachers complain about. Finally, the (iv) effect of the pandemic, which negatively impacted the relationship with the immigrant community in general, but especially the Haitian one, is reiterated.

Subdimension 4: Inclusion of Immigrant Students in the Chilean School

This subdimension raises several categories. It should be noted that, although our survey addresses the situation of any non-Spanish-speaking immigrant student, the informant teachers expressly referred to Haitians, as they are the most numerous non-Spanish-speaking community in the Chilean school. The first category concerns the (i) discrimination towards the Haitian community, which, according to teachers, is inherited from the parents of Chilean students. Teachers add that Haitian students relate among themselves, forming small ghettos. On the rare occasions when a Haitian student very immersed in Chilean culture is mentioned, it turns out that this young person has a poor relationship with their own mother culture.

The second category that appears is (ii) the socioeconomic vulnerability of the Haitian community, which negatively impacts the education and inclusion of minors, especially since the pandemic. The third category addresses the (iii) role of the State, the school, and teachers in this panorama. Teachers point to the lack of opportunities for professional development that would help deal with multilingual classrooms. The responsibility of the State is also reflected in the absence of public policies to face the effective immersion of immigrant students and in the imposition of a curriculum that, according to teachers, does not adapt to the requirements of students from other cultures.

The fourth category has to do with (iv) linguistic and cultural barriers, imposed mainly by the lack of knowledge of Spanish, which is why the guardians of Haitian students also cannot help them with disciplinary content. This is related to the (v) problems in the school trajectories of Haitian students, as many of them had not been schooled before arriving in Chile or had not

completed their studies up to the level at which they were placed in the Chilean school. Regarding this, the sixth category indicates that (vi) the linguistic gap, given the absence of ELA learning programs, impedes understanding instructions and the socialization of immigrant students with their peers and teachers, which ultimately undermines their motivation to become part of the host community. On this point, teachers highlight that the most significant socialization problems occur in high school. The seventh category again addresses the (vii) role of the State to improve the situation by changing the curriculum and applying new methodologies that promote interculturality in schools that are economically and educationally accessible. Finally, the (viii) games and activities to achieve the inclusion of Haitian students stand out. The playful aspect is one of the factors that favour the socialization of immigrant children in primary school. Still, this trait later disappears in high school, when teenagers tend to need to share experiences verbally.

Subdimension 5: Access of Immigrant Students to Education

In this last subdimension of the survey, the (i) school's responsibility is highlighted, to develop ELA knowledge that allows a better understanding of the contents by non-Spanish-speaking students. The (ii) need for intercultural spaces in school and teachers' learning of Haitian language and culture also stands out. This would allow them to better assist their students in acquiring disciplinary content. Regarding both categories, the State appears again as a necessary manager for training teachers who can face the challenges of interculturality.

The (iii) precarious access to education of Haitian students is also highlighted, attributed to the pandemic and the little contact these students had to develop their Spanish further and receive feedback from their teachers. Regarding the precariousness mentioned, the (iv) socioeconomic vulnerability of the Haitian community appears, which, during the pandemic, could not access Internet services, causing a high percentage of Haitian students to drop out of school. The responsibilities regarding the access of non-Spanish-speaking immigrants to education show the (v) role of teachers, the school, and the family in their comprehensive education.

DISCUSSION

Intending to establish guidelines for a FID that contemplates the multilingual reality promoted by migrations, this study asks: (1) what knowledge and ideologies about multilingualism do in-service and trainee teachers have? and (2) what degree of access and inclusion do immigrants have in the Chilean public school, according to teachers?

In general, no ideological differences were detected between either group, only concerning experience, as might be expected. Most informants value multilingualism positively (60.3%) and their students' mother languages. It is also possible to verify that the effective inclusion of Haitian students is worryingly low. On this point, the pandemic appears as a recurring category, explaining the school dropout of the Haitian community for two years. In addition, the economic and social vulnerability that increased with the pandemic is recognized (Toledo-Vega et al. (2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023).

Among the categories that are raised as complications for favouring interculturality in multilingual classrooms and the inclusion of non-Spanish-speaking students in school, the responsibility of the State stands out, which, through MINEDUC, does not provide or facilitate adequate resources for in-service or trainee teachers. Teachers identify the school as responsible for teaching ELA but agree that teacher preparation is needed to undertake these classes in Chilean public schools.

The need reported by teachers highlights the importance of offering both trainee and in-service teachers training programs in pedagogical language knowledge so that trainers acquire tools that

facilitate both access to institutionalized knowledge and to the target language and culture (Toledo Vega et al., 2021; Ollerhead, 2019; Aalto & Tarnanen, 2015).

In general, the responsibilities for the current problems of multilingual classrooms seem to fall first on the State, then the school, the teachers, and the families of the students, who would not pay much attention to the education of their pupils. From these results, we propose (1) the creation of well-knit work teams, with conscious and committed leadership from school principals; (2) the design of clear lines of action in multilingual classrooms; (3) training in the mother tongue of students; (4) preparation in ELA and pedagogical language knowledge.

As for school administration, we propose (1) participation of the establishment in collaboration networks; (2) reduction in school bureaucracy and provision of time to focus more on developing students' skills (socialization and emotionality for good mental health); (3) implementation of remedial programs for students without prior schooling and, finally, (4) the search for mechanisms that encourage parents to take greater responsibility in the education of their children, also facilitating Spanish classes for them.

Authors' contribution:
Gloria Toledo: research - analysis - writing - supervision
Karina Cerda: methodology - writing - validation
Andrea Lizasoain: conceptualization - analysis - writing

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