

Chapter 2

Intercultural Education in Chile: A Discussion Map



Liliana Morawietz, Ernesto Treviño, and Cristóbal Villalobos

2.1 Introduction

This first chapter addresses three distinct aspects of Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB, by the Spanish acronym). The first section provides a brief overview of the recent history of EIB during the last two decades in Chile, outlining its main policies and describing the major milestones and advances, as well as its various challenges, in order to demonstrate the development path that EIB has followed in the country.

The second section reviews the two central contributions to this text. As stated above, on the one hand, the chapters look at the academic research that can encourage discussion about the education of native peoples in the coming years. On the other hand, the book aims to use a variety of evidence to contribute to the formulation, improvement, and assessment of education policies aimed at native peoples, taking into consideration the dynamism of the education system and the institutional transformations seen in recent years.

The third section makes explicit the rationale used to shape this book. The perspective of Chile as a multicultural nation is the first rationale, with this concept being understood as that of a society where different cultures coexist and interact through dynamic processes that depend on the context. From this perspective, native peoples

L. Morawietz (✉)

Center for Advanced Research in Education, CIAE, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: lmorawietz@ciae.uchile.cl

E. Treviño

Center for Advanced Research on Educational Justice, Faculty of Education, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: ernesto.trevino@uc.cl

C. Villalobos

Center for the Study of Educational Policies and Practices, CEPPE UC, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: clvillal@uc.cl

are an important part of this cultural mosaic, where different cultures meet and relationships exist that are characterized by implicit and explicit exchanges, tensions, and negotiations between distinct cultural identities (Council of Europe, 2009). The multidimensionality of educational policy is the second rationale used in the selection of the chapters that make up this book. This is based on the idea that public policy for native peoples should be built and cultivated from different spheres of action, reflecting the practices and experiences of the country's different cultural and ethnic groups. The third rationale on which this book is based is multidisciplinary, which focuses on observing cultural and educational phenomena from various multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives, without being limited to understanding the problems of indigenous peoples from any particular discipline. It thus seeks to recognize the existence of spheres of interaction at the intersection of educational processes, understood as forms of socialization that are strongly rooted in culture, as well as outlining their general magnitude and the trends they show.

2.2 Recent History of EIB

In Chile, the development of intercultural bilingual education in the national school system began to take shape with the return to democracy in 1990. Thus, and in response to the political demands of indigenous organizations, movements, and individuals, which were being expressed in the new democratic scenario, the need began to be established for education that was relevant to the cultural identities of indigenous peoples, whose long road toward recognition was beginning to develop at that time.

After several years of being included under the auspices of the initiatives that were being developed in the rural education field (particularly the MECE program to improve rural education [Mejoramiento de la Calidad y Equidad de la Educación]), EIB began being institutionalized in 1996 with the implementation by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC)—specifically the General Education Division (DEG)—of the Intercultural Bilingual Education Program (PEIB, by the Spanish acronym). We can identify three specific stages regarding this policy that have taken place in the last 20 years: (i) a first stage of focus; (ii) a second one of emphasis on the curriculum; and (iii) a third stage, which is beginning to be defined within the context of the education reform that is currently underway.

The PEIB was implemented in 1996 with the mission to “improve the quality and relevance of learning by contextualizing the curriculum and strengthening the ethnic identity of children, young people, and adults” (PEIB – ORÍGENES, 2011, p. 3). It therefore started as a program focused on rural schools with a high concentration of indigenous students, where improvement in the relevance of the education provided by the schools serving the indigenous population basically took place by means of including a cultural advisor—chosen by the indigenous communities as a traditional educator—who is responsible for integrating and developing indigenous cultural

content in the schools. Gradually, the number of schools targeted by the program increased.

The implementation of the Indigenous Language Sector (SLI, by the Spanish acronym) for establishments with *Aymara, Quechua, Mapuche, or Rapa Nui* students in 2009 was a second stage in the development of EIB in Chile. This stage is characterized by two elements: on the one hand, it generates an approach to the demands of indigenous peoples with regard to the progressive decline of the number of people who speak their languages and, on the other hand, in relation to the technical difficulties of its implementation. With respect to the former, the implementation of the SLI is responsible for reversing a process whose cause has often been attributed specifically to schooling, which involves the relegation of the indigenous language, first to the domestic space and then to previous generations, by virtue of the imposition of Spanish as the learned and official language. The school thus begins to return something that it had previously “taken away” from the communities. However, this has not been without its challenges, especially in the curricular and pedagogical areas: in school, correct teaching of a language requires that it first be standardized, a process that is not complete for many indigenous languages, in addition to having qualified speakers with teaching expertise, which are scarce. This has been resolved by creating pairs of teachers and traditional educators (Treviño et al., 2012). The teaching modality that should be adopted to ensure that children achieve adequate competency (e.g., full immersion) has also been an area of debate during this period.

Now, within the educational reforms currently underway, EIB is beginning to develop a third stage, which links it to the objectives established for all of the students in the country, and no longer solely for those who belong to an indigenous people. In the context of inclusion policies, on the one hand, and the expansion of educational objectives towards the development of transversal skills in the twenty-first century on the other, the development of intercultural competencies is relevant for all students in the school system. In this new stage it is assumed that—in their long history of exchanges with Chilean society—indigenous peoples have developed skills required by society as a whole. Along with that, this stage is expected to provide continuity to the strategies and contents from the previous stages (the figure of the intercultural educator, teaching of the indigenous language), but improving the ways in which they are institutionalized and increasing their local and regional relevance.

Although it is possible to identify different stages in the 20 years of development of intercultural education policies, such as those described above, we can also see certain continuities during the entire period: the focus on schools with a high proportion of indigenous students; the central importance of traditional educators; the incorporation of traditional content, symbols, and guidelines of indigenous cultures into schools; the idea of raising the profile of their languages and fostering their development; and the objective of improving the learning of indigenous students through contextualization.

Studies and evaluations of the PEIB are so far been few and far between. Williamson and Flores (2015) note that there have been no comprehensive assessments of what has been done so far. However, it is possible to identify elements that

are repeated, such as those referring to the content of the program, its pedagogical strategies, and its effects.

Studies that refer to the contents of the program mainly point to the fact that a *folkloristic* or static view of indigenous cultures tends to emerge from its implementation, which focuses on symbols and rituals rather than on the daily and historical dynamics of indigenous peoples, communities, and individuals.

With regard to the pedagogy and curriculum under the Program, it has been argued that its implementation occupies a marginal place in the daily curricular activities of schools, making it something of an extracurricular activity. In other words, EIB is limited to the time used for the SLI and does not pervade the work of the school as a whole. This situation is also replicated with the inclusion of the traditional educator, whose status within the school is vulnerable to the reception given to him or her by the administration and teachers. In addition, on occasions, the pair of teachers and traditional educators cannot become established, with the latter being relegated in importance (CIAE, 2011; Treviño et al., 2012). As we state above, the implementation of the SLI has also been hampered by the shortcomings in the standardization of the writing of indigenous languages, as well as by the lack of teachers and adequate pedagogical resources.

The studies also point to factors that have limited the impact of the PEIB. These include the fact that it has focused on basic education, meaning that indigenous students in secondary education have been left without coverage. Also, although the percentage of indigenous students that a school must have to join the program has been reduced from 50 to 20%, there are schools with more than 50% indigenous students that have not been targeted by the policy (Treviño et al., 2012).

It has been highlighted that the PEIB has an effect in terms of the self-esteem of indigenous children and their appreciation of their own cultures (CIAE, 2011). However, the issue of the program's impact on indigenous students' learning in general terms is perhaps the most neglected. Even now, it is not clear that it has effects in this regard. Finally, it is surprising that there are studies focusing on the segregation of indigenous students within the schools targeted by the program, especially with respect to teacher perception and assessment. Although this book addresses this topic, there is still a long way to go in order to fully understand this phenomenon, not only from the point of view of segregation and inclusion, but also in terms of national and local education policy actions and their relationship with segregation.

Twenty years on, the goal of improving indigenous children's learning through the contextualization of teaching is still one of the relevant challenges of Chilean education. This is important in the Inclusion Law—which prohibits the selection of students in municipal and subsidized-private schools—and with regard to improving public education, where the vast majority of indigenous students are taught. The same is true regarding the perspective of intercultural education for the whole of Chilean society: we all require skills that allow us to relate to those who make up our increasingly multicultural society.

2.3 Major Contributions

This book is published at a time when important changes are beginning to take place in the Chilean school system. The transformations being promoted should have an impact on the learning experience of a large proportion of students in Chile and certainly on those who belong to indigenous peoples. For this reason, we hope that the chapters presented here can support the development of intercultural education in the years to come, both from the perspective of academic research and with regard to the formulation of programs and policies that will introduce the education reforms to schools and their classrooms.

In terms of academic research, this book addresses several questions that will probably need to be addressed in the near future. These include the issue of the place occupied by indigenous students in our education system and the factors that shape their learning achievements and educational paths; matters involving cultural and linguistic rights and their recontextualization in the school, and the changing relationship between local communities and schools, or the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the educational curriculum.

From the perspective of public policy, the chapters in this book are intended to serve as a reference for the formulation, (re)design, and assessment of programs and policies that will lead to changes in the education system. Perhaps the most urgent aspect in this area is to advance with intercultural education for all of the students in the system. This purpose is not only relevant insofar as it is stipulated among the objectives of the MINEDUC. The announced implementation of the area of civic education, the growing arrival of the children of immigrants—which increases the multicultural nature of our schools—and the insertion of our country into the global society, are all spheres in which we need to increase our intercultural competencies and attain a more multicultural and global view of citizenship. Several of the chapters in this book provide references in this regard. Another aspect of intercultural education that is considered in this text is that of bilingualism. For this reason, several of the chapters point out elements to which policies and programs should pay attention in order to improve their relevance and effectiveness, considering the significant consequences that language has on teaching and learning processes, and, more generally, on the social, cultural, and political integration of indigenous children.

2.4 Conceptual Criteria

The concept of intercultural education is, in itself, an idea in a state of tension. It is a construct that attempts to open up national education systems, which are essentially homogenizing, to cultural differences and to particular identities of diverse origins. This is a notion that involves much broader requirements than the contextualization of curricular content for specific populations. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006), interculturality is a

dynamic phenomenon, in which there is “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect”. Interculturality is a concept that refers to dynamic relations between cultural groups. An intercultural education would therefore be the result of changes in the historically asymmetrical relations between the populations that inhabit a country, and would provide room and representation for the cultural traditions of all students in a space that values them all equally.

The recognition of multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of contemporary societies is a condition for the possibility of intercultural education. The idea of multiculturalism refers to “the culturally diverse nature of human society. It refers not only to elements of ethnic or national culture, but also to linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic diversity” (Díaz-Couder, 1998).

In political terms, the notion of multiculturalism has contributed to the disruption of the order of multiracial societies and the privileges possessed by particular social or cultural groups, insofar as it gives visibility and representation to sociocultural diversity. It has also made it possible to diversify the way in which citizenship is understood. Multiculturalism gives rise to the exercise of “differentiated citizenship” that affords rights to certain individuals on the basis of their membership of a cultural group or community, and not exclusively by virtue of their relationship to the nation-state (Kymlicka, 1996).

In education, the notion of multiculturalism has made it possible to question curricular content that has been presented as neutral, such as that relating to the formation of the nation-state. The idea of multiculturalism also enables critical review of the hidden curriculum of our education systems. This notion of the hidden curriculum refers to content that is not verbalized: implicit academic, cultural, and social messages that are communicated to students in schools through opinions, attitudes, ways of naming, the expectations of the school and teachers, and the ways in which they are communicated. From the perspective of multiculturalism, the hidden curriculum reveals asymmetric valuations of the different cultures within our societies in general terms, but also makes it possible to address the actual discrimination to which those students who belong to so-called “minorities” may fall victim. It therefore provides the means to investigate the segregation of indigenous students, for example.

The idea of intercultural education therefore imposes challenges on public policies in general, and on educational policies in particular: as a perspective, interculturality implies multiculturalism, since it is the result of the establishment of dialogical relations, which recognize, validate, and value the multiple forms of cultural exchange that occur in each instance of social life.

Intercultural education is also a multidimensional issue. On the one hand, it does not refer exclusively to educational policies implemented in the official space of the school system, but also to experiences and initiatives developed in other social spaces. On the other hand, proposals for intercultural education draw from knowledge and experiences that do not belong exclusively to the educational sphere: it is in constant dialogue with the advances and setbacks in multiculturalism and interculturality that occur at the social level.

Although in this book we approach intercultural education from the perspective of the public policies created around it (and some of the chapters, such as Chapter 6 by Martínez or Chapter 5 by Treviño, Valenzuela, and Villalobos, consider it in this manner), the truth is that it extends well beyond them. In fact, as a policy model, EIB emerged from the demands of indigenous organizations and movements that have called for relevant education, one that improves the learning of indigenous children and provides them with representation. Indigenous peoples have had a leading role in both the expansion of the objectives and contents of EIB in the educational systems and in terms of its discussion and questioning, which has not always been sufficiently acknowledged in academic production or educational research.

Thus, there are numerous local initiatives and experiences of intercultural education or indigenous education that have emerged from the efforts and enterprise of indigenous organizations, movements, and individuals. Several of the chapters in this book provide accounts of these experiences, which may or may not be intended to become points of reference for the development or improvement of public policies in the sector.

Another dimension that shapes and informs the content of EIB is the community. This is the private space, and often the domestic sphere, where cultures continually create themselves. This community inhabits rural spaces, but also urban ones, and is formed not only by wise old people, but also young people who work and exercise their identity: they are being. Ideally, the community provides content for intercultural education. The representation of indigenous peoples in schools is therefore dynamic and contemporary: it also offers an image of indigenous peoples in their daily lives and not merely as folkloric or static cultures. This area is perhaps the most difficult to agree upon, because it is counterintuitive: if school content and school culture are generally defined by contrast to the domestic, in this case it is a matter of making the domestic space more relevant.

However, at the same time, the proposals and debates regarding intercultural bilingual education interact with developments that occur in other spaces of society: with the officialization of the use of indigenous languages in the regions, with health policies with intercultural relevance, with debates about the recognition of the multinational nature of our society, with proposals regarding indigenous representation in parliament. These and other phenomena are changing their conditions of possibility to the extent that, as we state above, intercultural education is more of a challenge than a reality.

Chapter 4, by Loncón, is an example of the multidimensionality of intercultural education. On the one hand, it shows us how teaching indigenous languages in schools is linked to linguistic policies and rights, as well as to the broader issue of their social status, and, at the same time, it points out that teaching these languages involves technical challenges, such as the standardization of their written forms, the choice of teaching models, and the training of qualified teachers. Finally, it illustrates the role of social activism in the revitalization of languages and in the articulation of demands. Likewise, Chapter 10 by Peña, Blanco-Álvarez, and Aroca-Araujo shows us how the constitutional recognition of the indigenous peoples of Colombia has

encouraged and legitimized the incorporation of indigenous *Arhuaco* mathematical knowledge into the school system.

Specifically because it is a multidimensional phenomenon, as an object of study, intercultural education requires a multidisciplinary approach that is in keeping with its complexity and particularity. The studies included in this book therefore approach it with a range of instruments with different scopes: from the comparative multinational study referring to the performance of indigenous students in mathematics and language based on the SERCE standardized assessment, described by Treviño, Villalobos, and Godoy (Chapter 3), where the authors conduct a quantitative analysis based on descriptive statistics and linear regressions, to another study by Treviño, Valenzuela, and Villalobos (Chapter 5), where the school segregation of indigenous students is investigated according to the results of the National Education Quality Measurement System (Simce, by the Spanish acronym) and the surveys of families that are carried out along with implementation of the Simce. These chapters, which seek to describe and explain the academic results of indigenous students, compare with others such as that by Haoa, Torres, and Zurob, (Chapter 9), where intercultural education on Easter Island is reviewed from an historical perspective using documentary sources. Corvalán and Joiko (Chapter 8), meanwhile, investigate proficiency in the *Rapa Nui* language among students on Easter Island by using self-reporting surveys.

Intercultural education is located at the crossroads of education and culture, and from that point it questions and examines the content of both spheres, with regard to indigenous societies as well to general society. But its complexity goes beyond that: both the normative proposals relating to intercultural education and the actual experiences of implementation constitute call for dialogue between different areas of knowledge. Many of the chapters of this book explore research paths that therefore require multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches.

As we have seen above, the demand for intercultural education forces the dominant society to question the way in which it understands not only others, but also itself. The same is true of the specific experiences of EIB: intercultural education initiatives oblige the disciplines involved to review themselves. Therefore, in order to approach intercultural mathematical education from the perspective of the *Mapuche* people, Huencho, Rojas, and Webb (Chapter 11) have to bring *Mapuche* knowledge and Western pedagogy together and consider “mathematical work in the classroom and mathematics itself as cultural and historical products”. Something similar occurs in Chapter 12 by Guillermo and Pérez, whose proposal of intercultural environmental education seeks to combine the teaching of sciences with that of traditional crafts, simultaneously questioning the educational distinction between natural sciences, human sciences, and technology.

2.5 Conclusions

As we have seen in this chapter, the task of analyzing EIB is a monumental one for several reasons. One of them is that it requires academia to take a broad perspective in order to recognize multiculturalism when conducting research. For example, this is a matter of moving past the dominant conception of indigenous peoples in Latin America, where the term indigenous has been used to label nearly 400 peoples with very different cultures, languages, and perspectives on the meaning of life (Falcón, 2002). The study of different native peoples in Chile reveals their cultural richness and the need to address that specifically from the academic world.

The study of educational initiatives from different cultures is also a bountiful source to gain more in-depth knowledge of the interaction between socialization, education, and culture, which differs between native peoples. For this reason, becoming aware of the conceptions of the world and their relationships to learning among the different native peoples should be a continuous source of information and feedback for education policy. This book includes different works based on local analysis and experiences, which pave the way to continue expanding the generation of knowledge that can lead to improvements in educational programs.

On the other hand, deepening knowledge about the challenges of EIB at global and local level could not have been achieved without the participation of academics from various native peoples, who have helped advance the understanding of cultures and their interactions with education. Likewise, collaboration between academics from different cultural backgrounds has also contributed to our understanding and the dialogue between cultures.

Lastly, EIB can be analyzed with various analytical and disciplinary tools. The inclusion of these tools in this book is intended to show that it is essential to consider and research EIB from a range of conceptual frameworks, using tools from history, anthropology, didactics, sociology, and linguistics, among others. It is only through this collaboration between fields of research that we will be able to advance towards a deeper understanding of the challenges of EIB, as we should not forget that all disciplines and the tools they use offer insights into certain facets of the phenomena under study, but neglect others, due to the scope and limitations of all research tools.

References

- CIAE. (2011). *PEIB-Orígenes. Estudio sobre la implementación de la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*. Ministerio de Educación.
- Council of Europe. (2009). *Autobiography of intercultural encounters: Context, concepts and theories*. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/Source/AIE_en/AIE_context_concepts_and_theories_en.pdf
- Díaz-Couder, E. (1998). Diversidad cultural y educación en Iberoamérica. *America, I*, 15.
- Falcón, R. (2002). *Mexico descalzo*. Plaza Janés.
- Kymlicka, W. (1996). *Ciudad multicultural*. Paidós.

- PEIB – ORÍGENES. (2011). *Estudio sobre la implementación de la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*. Ministerio de Educación. http://portales.mineduc.cl/usuarios/intercultural/doc/201111041303130.Estudio_PEIB.pdf
- Treviño, E., Donoso, F., Aguirre, E., Fraser, P., Godoy, F., Inostroza, D., Chávez, B., Place, K., Tapia, P., & Castro, P. (2012). *Educación para preservar nuestra diversidad cultural: Desafíos de implementación del Sector de Lengua Indígena en Chile*. MINEDUC-UNICEF-CPCE.
- UNESCO. (2006). *Directrices de la UNESCO sobre la educación intercultural*. UNESCO.
- Williamson, G., & Flores, F. (2015). *Estado del arte de la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe en Chile, 1990–2013*. ICIIS – Centro de Estudios Interculturales e Indígena.

Liliana Morawietz Social Anthropologist from Universidad de Chile and Master of Oral History from Columbia University (NY). She is a research assistant at the Center for Advanced Research in Education at Universidad de Chile and at the Global Education Innovation Initiative (Harvard University). Her work is aimed at expanding the analysis of factors that influence school efficacy and improvement as well as aspects such as the development of transversal skills, educational inclusion, and the integration of school communities.

Ernesto Treviño Doctor of Education from Harvard University and Master of Education from the same university. He is currently an associate professor at the Faculty of Education of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Director of the UC Center for Educational Transformation (CENTRE-UC). He is Principal Researcher at the Center for Advanced Studies on Educational Justice (CJE) and Associate Researcher at the Center for the Study of Educational Policies and Practices (CEPPE UC). His research has focused on analyzing educational inequalities, particularly at the intersection between educational policies and school and classroom practices.

Cristóbal Villalobos Doctor of Social Sciences from Universidad de Chile and Master of Applied Economics from Universidad Alberto Hurtado and Georgetown University. He is also a sociologist and social worker from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He is currently an Associate Researcher at the Center for the Study of Educational Policies and Practices (CEPPE UC). His lines of research have focused on the study of educational quality and equity policies, particularly centered on processes of segregation and inclusion.