

# Conceptualizations and Enactments of Precariousness and Interculturality in Multicultural Schools and Educational Policies in Chile

*Conceptualizaciones y representaciones de la precariedad y la interculturalidad en las escuelas multiculturales y las políticas educativas en Chile*

*Conceituações e encenações de precariedade e interculturalidade em escolas multiculturais e políticas educacionais no Chile*

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**ABSTRACT:** There is an increasing demand to address interculturality in schools due to increasing global mobility at an institutional and practical levels. However, issues of identity and language commodification seem to hinder these processes in communities that have been historically and precariously minoritized such as indigenous and immigrant children. Hence, this embedded mixed-methods study analyses how interculturality is conceptualized, implemented, and experienced 1) in the National Policy for Foreign Students (2018-2022) (PNM); and 2) by six EFL teachers working in vulnerable multicultural educational contexts in Chile. First, the PNM document is analyzed following a corpus-assisted approach to critical



discourse analysis. Then, the interviews were analyzed following a grounded approach to thematic coding. Results show a clear dichotomy between ontological and epistemological understanding of interculturality in which schools attempt to promote the critical coexistence of various cultures among their students and communities despite the precariousness they face and the lack of an intersectional understating of interculturality in the PNM.

**KEYWORDS:** Interculturality; immigration; social exclusion; language commodification; education.

**RESUMEN:** Actualmente, existe una creciente demanda para abordar la interculturalidad en las escuelas debido a una alta movilidad global. Sin embargo, factores como la identidad y la commodificación del lenguaje parecieran debilitar estos procesos en comunidades histórica y precariamente marginadas como la niñez indígena e inmigrante. En este contexto, este estudio mixto analiza cómo se conceptualiza, interpreta, implementa y experimenta la interculturalidad en el documento “Política Nacional de Estudiantes Extranjeros (2018-2022) (PNM)” y en las experiencias de seis profesores de inglés que trabajan en contextos multiculturales de alta vulnerabilidad. Primero, se analiza el documento PNM siguiendo estrategias del análisis crítico del discurso asistido por metodologías de la lingüística de corpus, para luego analizar entrevistas semi-estructuradas a seis profesores de inglés de distintas ciudades del país a través de una codificación temática. Los resultados muestran una dicotomía clara entre conceptualizaciones ontológicas y epistemológicas de la interculturalidad, en donde las escuelas intentan promover la coexistencia crítica de varias culturas entre sus estudiantes y comunidades a pesar de la alta precariedad que enfrentan de la falta de un enfoque interseccional de la interculturalidad en el PNM.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Interculturalidad; inmigración; exclusión social; commodificación lingüística; educación.

**RESUMO:** Atualmente existe uma crescente demanda para abordar a interculturalidade nas escolas devido a uma alta mobilidade global. Entretanto, fatores como identidade e commodificação da linguagem parecem debilitar estes processos em comunidades histórica e precariamente marginalizadas como a infância indígena e imigrante. Neste contexto, este estudo misto analisa como se conceitualiza, interpreta, implementa e experimenta a interculturalidade no documento “Política Nacional de Estudantes Estrangeiros (2018-2022) (PNM)” e nas experiências de seis professores de inglês que trabalham em contextos multiculturais de alta vulnerabilidade. Primeiramente, o documento é analisado seguindo uma abordagem assistida por corpus de análise crítica do discurso. Em seguida, as entrevistas foram analisadas seguindo uma abordagem fundamentada da codificação temática. Os resultados mostram uma clara dicotomia entre a compreensão ontológica e epistemológica da interculturalidade em que as escolas tentam promover a coexistência crítica de várias culturas entre seus alunos e comunidades, apesar da precariedade que enfrentam e da falta de uma compreensão interseccional da interculturalidade na política educacional.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Interculturalidade; imigração; exclusão social; commodificação linguística; educação.

## Introduction

Immigration has rapidly increased in Chile since 2010. A report from the National Statistics Institute states that 1.5 million immigrants were living in the country by the end of 2019, of which Venezuelans (30.5%), Peruvians (15.8%), and Haitians (12.5%) constitute the largest communities (INE, 2020, 12 March). Studies have shown that immigrants from the Latin American or Caribbean regions are at a greater risk of living in poverty, which is heightened by their irregular migratory status, precarious working conditions, and lower income (Hernando, 2019; Ramírez-Santana *et al.*, 2019). In particular, the Haitian community has two main characteristics that negatively hinder their social and cultural integration: the

language barrier and racial discrimination (Pavez-Soto *et al.*, 2019, Riedemann; Stefoni, 2015; Rojas *et al.*, 2015, Tijoux; Palominos, 2016). Despite being the official language of Haiti (Zéphir, 2015) and, ergo, *not* a minority language (cf. Grenoble; Singerman, 2014), Haitian Creole is socially regarded as a minority language in Chile because it is only spoken by other Haitian immigrants. To our knowledge, there are no institutionalized efforts to consider the social implications of this language other than including signs in hospitals and some other governmental institutions. In fact, Haitian immigrants are mostly expected to linguistically assimilate to the Chilean Spanish variety (Sumonte *et al.*, 2018).

On October 18, 2019, the increase of CLP\$30 (*i.e.*, USD\$0.038 on November 2022) to the subway fare in the Chilean metropolitan region sparked an unprecedented social revolt that evidenced the sharp social inequality and systematic privatization and marketization of fundamental social rights generated by the political and economic system imposed in the 1980s by Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (Somma *et al.*, 2020). On this, Lorey (2015, p. 2) argues that neoliberal governments strategically establish "social insecurity, through regulating the minimum of assurance while simultaneously increasing instability" which facilitates the implementation of a narrative of *us vs them* (Wodak, 2015). In this context, immigrating to -or being an immigrant in- a country that is only recently becoming a multicultural society can become a herculean ordeal.

Against this background, public policies have struggled to acknowledge, address, and work with this new interculturality and the vulnerable conditions immigrants are prone to experience, particularly at schools (Giroux *et al.*, 2020). Hence, the need for clear guidelines to navigate the intercultural classroom becomes indispensable for teachers. However, the Ministry of Education has historically understood interculturality in relation to indigenous communities in the country, and great efforts have been made to promote their inclusion and the revitalization of their languages such as the Bilingual Intercultural Education Program (henceforth PEIB, its acronym in Spanish) (Abram, 2004; López; Küper, 1999). In fact, a quick search through the Ministry of Education's website shows that the *Intercultural Education Portal* (n.d.) is associated with the PEIB program whereas the *Education for All Portal* is associated with resources tailored to address immigration. Consequently, we posit that these different conceptualizations of interculturality in the development of guidelines for teachers can be problematic for their understanding of interculturality and the implementation of their teaching practices. We presuppose these conflicting understandings affect teachers' perceived lack of personal and pedagogical resources to deal with immigrant students, inadvertently perpetuating precarious learning conditions for such students.

Consequently, the study has two main objectives. First, we aim to analyze how interculturality is understood by the National Policy for Foreign Students (2018-2022) policy document. The document consists of an overview of the situation of foreign students in the country and it proposes methodologies to favor their access, permanence, and learning processes at schools. Second, we seek to identify, describe, and interpret how six English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers working with immigrant students at six different public schools understand interculturality and adapt their teaching practices to work in multicultural classrooms. Following an embedded mixed-methods approach, we analyzed the public policy document following a corpus-assisted approach to critical discourse analysis (Baker, 2006, 2020; Partington *et al.*, 2013) and conducted semi-structured interviews to six EFL teachers and analyzed the data following a grounded approach to thematic coding (Strauss; Corbin, 1990).

To this end, we first provide an overview of the institutionalized understanding of interculturality in Chile. Then, we describe and problematize the role of language and language teaching in the understanding

of interculturality. Third, we describe the methodological design of this study and the different datasets and analytical frameworks used. Finally, once we report on the main findings of the analysis, we provide some concluding remarks, followed by suggested lines of future research.

## **Interculturality and governmentality in Chile**

The protection and valuation of cultural diversity has been a central issue in education for several decades now, as highlighted by various instruments of international organizations (UN, 1948, 1966, 1989, 2007; ILO, 1989; UNESCO, 2000, 2005; among others). Likewise, indigenous social movements in Latin America have demanded relevant education for native peoples in the framework of multi-ethnic and multicultural societies in the region, managing to install and make visible educational models such as Intercultural Bilingual Education Programs (PEIB) (Abram, 2004; López; Küper, 1999). As a result, the Indigenous Law 19.253 was enacted in Chile in 1993, laying the foundations for the establishment of PEIB in the country.

It is in this context that various rethinks have proliferated, in which the modern idea of nation and citizenship in neoliberal societies is contended as both concepts still consider a single cultural unit in their configuration. These discussions arise because of the empowerment of minorities in the achievement of their collective rights; accordingly, they reposition a critical universe for aspects such as identity, culture, and rights. It is precisely along these lines that fundamental writings such as those of Benedict Anderson (1993) and Will Kymlicka (1996) stand out. The latter analyzes the foundations of liberal societies to discern what kind of legal relationship exists between individual and collective freedoms. To this discussion, Kymlicka (1996) proposes to rethink the concept of citizenship, in which both individual rights and freedoms coexist, insofar as its individuals are members of it and of its unity, but also, insofar as the very citizenship can also consider differentiated rights for these minorities of ethnic or migrant type.

In favor of a conception of multicultural citizenship, which has the integration of these sectors as its foundation, Kymlicka argues that, in practice, “the desire for these polyethnic rights is a desire for inclusion consistent with participation *in*, and commitment *to*, the main institutions on which social unity is grounded” (1996, p. 245). For this reason, a culturally heterogeneous citizenry, which can sustain a political unity within the framework of its institutions, is one of the keys that liberal societies should promote and make permanent in this multicultural citizenship. As a challenge, the author also encourages to think of a political practice which can guarantee the rights of self-government of different peoples within a state unit. This concept gains significance as the Curricular Bases of the Sector of Language and Culture of the Ancestral Native Peoples situate Chile as a multicultural society: “insofar as it is made up of people who have different cultures and languages” (Mineduc, 2019, p. 11).

The theory of interculturality (Walsh, 2007, 2010) is an increasingly important area that contributes to the understanding of the current state of Chilean classrooms. Classroom diversity is a growing phenomenon that will demand to prepare teachers for the diversity they will face in their practice. To do so, it is important to foster this diversity considering equity and symmetry among the different students and cultural background that interact in the classroom. In this sense, the theory of interculturality provides a relevant framework to address the interaction of people with different forms of knowledge and thinking

(Walsh, 2007). Furthermore, this concept serves the purpose of understanding language acquisition and bilingualism with respect to minority languages. However, previous research argues that the Chilean school system is designed from a monocultural and Western logic, excluding other forms of cultural and linguistic knowledge (Quilaqueo; Quintriqueo, 2010; Quintriqueo; Torres, 2012, 2013). On the other hand, immigration is a growing phenomenon that generates the need to promote pedagogical practices which include the diverse cultures that take part and interact in the classroom.

The diversity of today's classroom implies the need to approach interculturality from a perspective that includes an epistemological conceptualization in which different ways of thinking and knowledge are addressed (Walsh, 2007). In this sense, interculturality is presented as a concept that deals with language acquisition and development, bilingualism, and the valorization and revitalization of minority languages.

## Language (teaching) and interculturality

According to Bourdieu (1991), communicative exchanges are “relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized” (p. 37). As a result, authors such as Heller and Duchêne (2012, 2016), and Zappettini (2014) have posited that language has been subjected to processes of marketization because of the growth of neoliberal governments worldwide. In these processes, language not only becomes a discursive trope that strengthens narratives of national identity and authenticity (e.g., Wodak *et al.*, 2009; Wodak, 2012), but it also becomes an economic asset that allows people to compete in an increasingly globalized job market (Heller; Duchêne, 2012). As (job) opportunities become scarce, and precarization becomes a normalized governmental strategy (Lorey, 2015), populist and exclusionary discourses emerge from the basis of a *politics of fear*, that is, using a minority other as a scapegoat for most societal ailments (Wodak, 2015). Consequently, the language we speak -and how we speak it- is at the basis of two social phenomena that relate to interculturality in the educational sector: the tendency towards linguistic assimilation (*i.e.*, monolingualism), and the commodification of English as a linguistic and economic asset to succeed.

## Linguistic assimilation

Monolingual and linguaphobic attitudes towards fluctuations in migratory patterns or perceived language changes are not a new phenomenon (e.g., Bauer; Trudgill, 1998; Thomas, 1991). Nowadays, these fluctuations tend to be perceived as a threat to the national identity, culture, and values (e.g., Musolff, 2019; Wodak, 2015). For instance, Rodríguez-Izquierdo *et al.* (2020) concluded that L2 Spanish teachers in Spain regarded language diversity as problematic not only for them, but also for their immigrant students as the latter were at a social and cultural disadvantage if they did not learn the dominant language. Moreover, their participants adhered to a marked linguistic hierarchy, where Spanish is the most important language and the foreign students' first language was the least important, thus ranking languages in terms of their perceived social value (see also Flores; Rosa, 2015; Pettit, 2011). Inevitably, this subtractive tendency to language

teaching results in learning the dominant language in detriment of their first language, which can “subtract from the child’s linguistic repertoire, instead of adding it” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010, p. 186-187).

In Chile, Quintriqueo *et al.* (2016, p. 6) believe this phenomenon is the result of university teaching programs, which train teachers to “replicate hegemonic Western knowledge at schools [and to] transmit monocultural and (post)colonial power structures [which are] embedded in their educational practices”. Similarly, Pavez-Soto and Galaz-Valderrama (2018) found that second-generation children (*i.e.*, children of immigrant families born in Chile) feel discriminated against because they look or sound like immigrants, despite being Chilean nationals. For these children, the discrimination is unfair because they consider themselves Chileans, which illustrates an identity struggle to fit in. Similarly, Mondaca Rojas (2018) found that distinctive accents in the northern regions close to the border with Peru and Bolivia were used by teachers to distinguish and differentiate their students. More worryingly, immigrant students’ accents were used by their classmates to mock and bully them, forcing them to assimilate their speech to that of their classmates to avoid mockery and social segregation (p. 157). Hence, even when efforts are made for their inclusion, these othering practices and narratives remain unproblematized and, consequently, normalized under ideological conceptualizations of normality and difference (Matus; Rojas, 2015).

In this context, the case of Haitian students whose first language is Haitian Creole poses even more challenges for their inclusion in the educational system. Sumonte *et al.* (2018) explain that teachers struggle precisely because of their lack of training to work and communicate in multicultural contexts (*i.e.*, *intercultural communicative competence*; see also Tajeddin; Alemi, 2021). Language teachers, in particular, lack the resources and skills to teach Spanish as a Second Language because university programs are not addressing the multiple diasporas living in the country. Hence, they use their intuitions and resort to their own cumulative experiences to develop, adapt, update, and implement their intercultural teaching practices (Sepúlveda-Poblete, 2019). However, a factor that strongly determines these efforts are teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards language and immigrant students. On this, Tuts (2007) believes these attitudes can either foster or hinder teachers’ practices towards linguistic assimilation or monolingualism.

## Language commodification

This tendency towards linguistic assimilation is determined, to a certain extent, by the added values attributed to languages in society, even in multilingual and multicultural ones (*e.g.*, Rodríguez-Izquierdo *et al.*, 2020). Against this background, English has become the default lingua franca across the globe, to the point in which more people speak English as a second (or more) language rather than as a first (Mauranen, 2017). This phenomenon is aided by the idea that English is indispensable for economic and sociocultural success, as it opens opportunities to those who speak the language fluently (Carmel, 2019; Pérez-Arredondo; Bernales-Carrasco, 2022). Consequently, more and more efforts are made to teach English at a young age, which reinforces the idea that English is “a gatekeeper to positions of wealth and prestige” (Matear, 2008, p. 143). Hence, educational institutions have had to adapt to this business logic by foregrounding notions such as competition and efficiency (Martín Rojo; del Percio, 2019).

In this process of commodification, some languages and their associated cultural norms become more important than others, while a valuation system appears to operate on ideals of language *correctness*.

In the case of EFL teaching, Received Pronunciation (*i.e.*, RP) is usually associated with status and prestige whereas General American pronunciation is perceived as relaxed and urban (Carrie, 2016; Carrie; McKenzie, 2017). Consequently, other regional varieties are not even considered in the language classroom. In Latin America, there is also this notion of the supremacy of the native (American/British) speaker, although few studies have explored its implications in teaching practices (*e.g.*, Avalos-Rivera; Corcoran, 2017). Ultimately, however, linguists such as Lippi-Green (2012) maintain that these idealizations of language, and what constitute good/standard language use are ultimately ideological.

Chile is also adamant in becoming a bilingual country, and this is where we start to find inconsistencies between the institutional policies and the social imaginary. As mentioned in the first section, the PEIB was founded to incorporate aboriginal peoples' cultural and linguistic knowledge to promote a policy that acknowledges and encourages multiculturalism in the country. This bilingualism was cemented in the idea of learning our own aboriginal languages, which is optional for school and mandatory for those schools that concentrate at least 20% of heritage students. The English Open Doors Program, on the other hand, was created in 2003 as part of the strategic plan to become a bilingual country and expand our political and economic opportunities (Matear, 2008). In line with this, there are even some presidential candidates that openly favor EFL learning as opposed to Mapudungun (Kast, 2021). This utilitarian emphasis on learning English turns a blind eye on those regional varieties of English which are not regarded as prestigious and misses the chance of enhancing students' communicative competence because of ideas of what *correct English* really is (*e.g.*, Tajeddin; Alemi, 2021).

We posit that the utilitarian narratives around English learning pose extra challenges to the already complex and rather static interaction of cultures and languages at multicultural schools. It adds another layer to the language valuation system that is ranked higher than Spanish and other language/regional varieties immigrant and/or heritage students might speak in the classroom or in their private sphere. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how these cultural and linguistic dynamics are represented in educational and governmental policies and how they are interpreted and enacted by teachers to truly facilitate an effective transformation of teachers' practices and the educational system more generally.

## Data and methods

This is an *embedded mixed method* study, that is, we collected quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously while the latter works to support the data obtained in the former (Creswell, 2012). The study consists of two stages, which deal with different datasets and approaches to their analysis.

## Stage 1: Corpus-assisted approach to Critical Discourse Studies

The first dataset corresponds to the National Policy for Foreign Students (2018-2022) (henceforth PNM, as for its acronym in Spanish), a 12,759-word document published by the Ministry of Education in 2017 to “address the demands raised by different social actors from educational communities to the Ministry” (Mineduc, 2017, p. 4, *personal translation*). It describes the needs of, and demands from, the public educational system to efficiently integrate immigrant students, while offering some methodological definitions to support the implementation of this policy at schools. While the PEIB program offers a more varied and robust source of information that explicitly includes the word *interculturality*, it also backgrounds the presence of immigrant students as their focus is on indigenous communities. Hence, we turned to the PNM document instead as it offers an opportunity to identify how interculturality is explicitly linked with immigration.

The document was analyzed following a corpus-assisted approach to discourse studies (hereafter CADS). According to Baker (2020, p. 125), CADS aims to “identify large-scale linguistic patterns which may not always be visible to the human eye but can indicate value judgements or stances which may sometimes be present without the text producer, or indeed the reader, being aware of them”. Traditionally, CADS requires the creation of a corpus of large texts to be able to identify statistically relevant linguistic patterns through the different methods available by the software such as collocations, N-grams, etc. Since the PNM document is small for CADS standards, we can conduct a keyword analysis instead. A keyword analysis consists of the examination of the relative *salience* of the frequency of words (Baker, 2006), that is, it generates a list of “significantly more frequent [words] in the first corpus (known as the study or target corpus) than the second (the reference corpus)” (Partington *et al.*, 2013, p. 18). In this study, the reference corpus corresponds to an 87,151-word report mandated by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF on the need to generate guidelines for the understanding of interculturality in the educational system (Loncón Antileo *et al.*, 2016). The aim of this analysis is to identify how similar or different the PNM document is from the suggested guidelines and conceptualizations this report gives to the Ministry of Education. The statistical analysis is carried out using log-likelihood with a p value of <0.01 (critical value: 6.63) using the free concordance software AntConc (Antcon, 2019). This critical value ensures the keywords found in the PNM document did not occur by chance (Hunston, 2002). Finally, we set the software to show the top 100 keywords, which were then subsequently filtered to only consider open class words (*i.e.*, nouns and adjectives).

## Stage 2: Content analysis

The second data set corresponds to semi-structured interviews to six EFL teachers working with immigrant students at public schools in different cities from the Metropolitan (4), the 10th (1), and the 14th (1) regions of the country. The schools were contacted because they hold the largest groups of immigrant students in their respective cities, and because they were willing to participate in a larger project that aims to improve EFL learning in Haitian students in multicultural contexts. The interviews lasted approximately



50 minutes and consisted of 12 prompts which were adapted from Sepulveda-Poblete (2019)'s interview protocol on interculturality and EFL teaching. We then categorized the questions into four *primary topics* that structured the interview (cf. Krzyżanowski, 2008), namely, a) EFL teaching practices (4); b) Critical pedagogy and interculturality (2); c) Perceptions of, and experiences with, immigrant students (3); and d) EFL teachers' reflections on interculturality and EFL teaching (3). The interviews were then audio recorded, transcribed, anonymized through the use of pseudonyms, and analyzed thematically using ATLAS.ti.

The coding process followed the different phases proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The first round consisted of *open coding*, the preliminary stage that allowed us to examine, conceptualize, and compare the data. Then, we proceeded to conduct *axial coding*, in which we created links based on the preliminary codes we identified in the first stage. Finally, *selective coding* allowed us to abstract the categories found and relate them to the objectives of this study (cf. Saldaña, 2016). This iterative process resulted in eight codes, which are defined and described in Table 1.

Consequently, the inclusion of teachers' voices addresses the need for their understandings and conceptualizations of interculturality as informed by their own teaching experiences at schools (Stefoni *et al.*, 2016). More importantly, the inclusion of these interviews contributes to the identification of possible incongruencies in relation to institutional ontological understandings of interculturality and teachers' empirical knowledge in the implementation of these policies.

Table 1 – Definition and description of codes

CODES	FREQ.	DESCRIPTION
Inclusion	12	Schools' acknowledgement of diverse cultural groups so that they can better identify their foreign students' needs.
Multiculturality	89	Current context where national and ethnic differences are evidenced (Kymlicka, 1996). It also includes the presence of different cultures.
Interculturality	29	Coexistence in culturally diverse educational settings (Giménez Romero, 2003). It also includes teachers' perceived relations that trespass the educational setting (students' private sphere) and perceived issues in cultural coexistence.
Immigrants' experiences	33	Teachers' perceptions on immigrants' experiences in the country.
English as lingua franca	17	References to the benefits and importance of learning English and aspects of the Anglo-Saxon culture. It also includes teachers' motivations to pursue an English degree.
Impromptu teaching practices	12	Impromptu teaching practices teachers resort to due to working in multicultural settings.
Social problem	28	Social problems such as crime and drugs that hinder people's physical and emotional well-being.
Precariousness	66	References to lack of resources that have a detrimental effect on people's lives. It also refers to social and economic vulnerability, augmented by a lack of effective and timely state intervention (Lorey, 2015).

Source: The authors.

## Findings and discussion

### Understanding interculturality in the PNM document

As mentioned earlier, keywords reflect the most *statistically* frequent words in the data set when compared to another (reference) corpus. That is, it shows us what makes the analyzed corpus unique when compared to other datasets. The corpus-assisted analysis showed 94 content keywords, which were sorted in terms of the discursive strategies (Baker *et al.*, 2008) used in the PNM document.

Figure 1 – Semantic categorization of the top 100 keywords in the PNM document (nouns and adjectives only)

SEMANTIC CATEGORIES	KEYWORDS
(Type of) Students	<i>foreign(ers)</i> [358.49]; <i>special</i> [55.03]; irregular [37.05]; <b><i>belonging</i></b> [26.93]; <i>group</i> [23.23]; <i>age</i> [23.06]; <i>adolescents</i> [20.58]
Governmental Actors/Institutions	<b><i>inclusion</i></b> [203.99]; <i>responsible</i> [157.71]; DEG [139.83]; <i>minister</i> [98.82]; <i>articulation</i> [90.57]; <i>unit</i> [85.41]; <i>cabinet</i> [77.8]; <b><i>migration</i></b> [73.06]; <i>internal</i> [55.90]; <i>help</i> [50.12]; DIVESUP [49.40]; <i>minutes</i> [49.40]; ORI [49.40]; IPE [45.28]; <b><i>refugees</i></b> [45.28]; <i>lists</i> [41.17]; <i>office</i> [41.17]; <i>international</i> [40.12]; <i>national</i> [39.10]; <i>registration</i> [38.47]; <b><i>studies</i></b> [37.19]; CNT [37.05]; <b><i>work</i></b> [36.94]; <i>coordination</i> [36.73]; <i>document</i> [35.49]; <i>data</i> [34.22]; DIPLAP [32.93]; EPJA [32.93]; <i>assistance</i> [32.50]; <b><i>meeting</i></b> [31.56]; <b><i>teams</i></b> [30.98]; UIP [28.82]; <i>ministry</i> [28.69]; <i>undersecretary</i> [27.17]; <i>commitments</i> [26.93]; <b><i>meetings</i></b> [26.93]; <i>department</i> [24.70]; <i>foreign affairs</i> [24.70]; <i>letter</i> [24.70]; <i>treaties</i> [24.70]; <b><i>educational</i></b> [24.40]; <b><i>Chile</i></b> [23.98]; <i>ratified</i> [23.47]; <b><i>educational</i></b> [21.83]; <b><i>participation</i></b> [21.65]; <i>subject</i> [21.64]; <i>adults</i> [20.58]; <b><i>higher education</i></b> [20.22]; <i>acts</i> [19.23]; <i>validation</i> [18.62]
Educational Actors/System	<i>students</i> [326.66]; <b><i>inclusion</i></b> [203.99]; <i>educational</i> [75.63]; <i>educational</i> [66.08]; <i>kindergarten</i> [53.86]; <i>access</i> [47.60]; <i>intersectoral</i> [37.05]; <b><i>work</i></b> [36.94]; <i>high schools</i> [35.21]; <i>permanence</i> [31.56]; <b><i>meeting</i></b> [31.56]; <b><i>teams</i></b> [30.98]; <i>communities</i> [30.23]; <i>universities</i> [28.82]; <b><i>belonging</i></b> [26.93]; <b><i>meetings</i></b> [26.93]; <b><i>education</i></b> [24.49]; <b><i>educational</i></b> [24.40]; <b><i>immigrants</i></b> [23.47]; <i>admission</i> [23.06]; <b><i>nationals</i></b> [22.09]; <b><i>educational</i></b> [21.83]; <i>system</i> [21.32]; <b><i>higher education</i></b> [20.22]; <i>trajectory</i> [20.17]; <i>good</i> [19.23]
Society	<b><i>inclusion</i></b> [203.99]; <i>civil</i> [86.47]; <i>citizen</i> [74.87]; <b><i>people</i></b> [60.69]; <b><i>families</i></b> [49.85]; <b><i>protection</i></b> [46.95]; <b><i>refugees</i></b> [45.28]; RUN [41.17]; <b><i>studies</i></b> [37.19]; <i>equality</i> [34.22]; <i>right</i> [32.82]; <i>rights</i> [28.97]; <i>dignity</i> [28.82]; <b><i>nationality</i></b> [28.82]; <i>benefits</i> [26.78]; <b><i>education</i></b> [24.49]; <b><i>Chile</i></b> [23.98]; <b><i>immigrants</i></b> [23.47]; <b><i>challenge</i></b> [23.06]; <b><i>nationals</i></b> [22.09]; <b><i>participation</i></b> [21.65]; <b><i>conditions</i></b> [20.44]
Migration	<b><i>migration</i></b> [73.06]; <i>migratory</i> [69.99]; <b><i>people</i></b> [60.69]; <i>migrants</i> [56.27]; <b><i>families</i></b> [49.85]; <b><i>protection</i></b> [46.95]; <b><i>refugees</i></b> [45.28]; <i>needs</i> [44.20]; irregular [37.05]; <b><i>nationality</i></b> [28.82]; <b><i>second</i></b> [26.34]; <b><i>immigrants</i></b> [23.47]; <b><i>group</i></b> [23.23]; <b><i>challenge</i></b> [23.06]; <b><i>nationals</i></b> [22.09]; <b><i>conditions</i></b> [20.44]
Time Parameters	<i>semester</i> [61.65]; <i>December</i> [38.82]; <b><i>second</i></b> [26.34]

Source: The authors.

Note. Bold italics signal overlapping terms across semantic categories whereas square brackets provide *keyness* (log-likelihood, p value = <0.01; critical value: 6.63).

Unsurprisingly, the most common semantic category corresponds to intertextual links to governmental programs, institutions, and activities that regulate immigration (e.g., the International Relations Office (OIR), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Migration), education (e.g., Provisional Identification Number [IPE]; Under Secretary of Early Education; Educational Unit for Young and Adults (EPJA)), and/or provide official statistics and information about these entities and their activities (e.g., documents, offices, acts, validation, etc.). The document not only openly acknowledges the roles of different governmental actors and institutions in the creation of a program for immigrant students, but it also foregrounds the advances conducted to improve their inclusion in society. For instance, the Provisional Identification Number (PEI) has proven invaluable for immigrant students, regardless of their migratory status, to access education in the public system. It also stresses the role of meetings *across* these institutions and *with* the educational sector for the implementation of this program, including a timeline that is reflected by the least frequent semantic category (i.e., time parameters). However, the keyword analysis did not show references to interculturality, even though the word is present in the corpus (n = 15). This means that interculturality is not a statistically salient concept in the PNM document when compared to Loncón *et al.*'s report on conceptualizations of interculturality. In other words, the PNM document does not concern itself with the *interaction* of different cultures in educational environments as much as its *protection* within these environments. This approach to interculturality (i.e., something to be protected but not necessarily incorporated to our society) resonates with the idea of *functional interculturality*, that is, the “acknowledgment of diversity and cultural differences, which aims towards their inclusion within the *established* social structure” (Walsh, 2010, p. 77, *our emphasis*; see also Tubino, 2005).

This functional approach to interculturality becomes clearer when we analyze the representation of students, migration, and society. There is a clear *categorization* of students (van Leeuwen, 2008), that is, their identification in relation to who they are and where they come from. While their age (i.e., *enaging*) is used to homogenize immigrants as a whole (i.e., *collectivization*), there is also an emphasis on *de-spatialization* (Reisigl; Wodak, 2001) which can potentially enhance the narrative of us vs them viz a viz the idea of where they belong. This means that, while *they* belong to *other* cultures and *other* geographical spaces, they are living in *our* country (e.g., foreign(ers) [358.49] vs nationals [22.09]); they have specific and special needs that must be targeted to foster their inclusion regardless of their migratory status (e.g., irregular [37.05]). The semantic categories of *migration* and *society*, on the other hand, also highlight this idea of passivity, in which immigrants, their families, and their cultures must be protected and granted access to the same rights nationals have to achieve real inclusion. Against this background, while immigration is acknowledged as a challenge, the document mostly foregrounds democratic values of the host society. For instance, *inclusion* ranks third among the highest keyness in the corpus [203.99], preceded only by foreign(ers) [358.49] and students [326.66]. Similarly, equality [34.22], right(s) [32.82 and 28.97], and dignity [28.82] are also statistically relevant concepts, echoing the soundbites that fueled the social revolt of 2019 (Somma *et al.*, 2020).

Regardless, very few instances highlight the precarious *conditions* [20.44] some immigrants face when settling in the country. Most of the occurrences refer to the idea of levelling the ground so that foreigners and nationals can have the same access to rights and (social) welfare. Only three out of the 20 occurrences of the term refer to the socio-economic and cultural factors that could increase their vulnerability and precariousness, while two of them refer to the same definition of inclusion:

Integration and inclusion [are] understood as the aim of the system to eliminate all forms of arbitrary discrimination that hinder learning and student participation, and the promotion of understanding educational institutions as meeting point among students from different socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as from different nations, gender, and religions (p. 19).

Along with the third reference to vulnerable conditions, these occurrences suggest a vague attempt to approach interculturality intersectionally (Crenshaw, 1991). Conversely, at the very least, they problematize other social issues such as class, race, and ableism as amplifying the impact of being a migrant in the country: “some foreign students also belong to First Nations, are differently abled, are at Sename institutions<sup>1</sup>, and so on, an endless array of conditions that add to their ‘migrant’ condition” (p. 32). These occurrences foreground the need to understand the inclusion of immigrant students in the educational system as a multilayer complex phenomenon, which must target not only their geographical or cultural background, but also their own identity and their history. This specific construction of society and immigration resembles Walsh’s idea of *critical interculturality*, namely, interculturality that seeks structural and social transformation (2010). For this author, the starting point for critical interculturality is the identification of the structural, colonial, and racial issues to then challenge top-down power dynamics and achieve a transformational change in society at large.

Nonetheless, the document appears to remain in the functional stage, as suggested by the representation of the educational system and its actors. At a first glance, the emphasis on inclusion [203.99], intersectoral approaches to immigration [37.05], and the constant communication among actors (*e.g.*, work [37.05], meeting [31.56], teams [30.98], communities [30.23], etc.) suggest the intention of integrating immigrant students to the educational system (*e.g.*, PEI). However, all these efforts seem to be made to integrate them to an already established system. Guidelines are drawn so that teachers, principals, and other educational actors become aware of these students’ situations to facilitate their inclusion. There are no specific guidelines on how the system should shift focus from monocultural practices to intercultural ones so that everyone can thrive in a multicultural context. Clearly, the implementation of *good* practices [19.23] are encouraged, but they are not explicitly defined. Hence, it seems that the responsibility of these changes falls on teachers and school administrators, rather than a change at the institutional level.

The document recognizes the need for intersectoral efforts, but these do not target the institutional level. Concepts referring to efficiency, such as rates of access [47.60], permanence [31.56], and admission [23.06] overshadow intersectoral communication and the intercultural nature of the public school system in favor of a business logic (*e.g.*, Martín Rojo; Percio, 2019). Furthermore, it hinders the possibilities of an intersectional approach, in which students’ identities and histories are addressed meaningfully and effectively at the schools and in their private sphere because of a lack of consistency in the conceptualization of interculturality. This is a task most schools deal with individually, with more or less resources depending on their city council’s budget and involvement, which poses different challenges to teachers who try to do their best to integrate immigrant students. These challenges are addressed in the following section.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Service for Minors (SENAME) is the Chilean Social Services Department. They protect children and adolescents’ wellbeing, regulate and control their adoption, and are responsible for their custody, rehabilitation, and reinsertion if they have broken the law.

## Implementing intercultural teaching practices in a multicultural EFL classroom

The participants' perception of how inclusive their schools are is relatively high and deeply appreciated. For most of them, their schools' inclusive approach is based on the interaction with and the acknowledgement and respect of various cultures, allowing students to discuss their cultural gastronomy and norms at various events created throughout the year. This is an important point, as teachers appear proud of having these events continuously rather than just having them around the National Holidays (18 September) or Indigenous Peoples' Day (12 October). Some of them mention school initiatives to create intercultural awareness within the school community as a whole, including international and heritage students:

There is a Mapudungun Workshop and there are Haitian [students], they like it [...] [it] was all initiated by the school principal. There are no Mapuche students as far as I know. If there are, there is only one, but s/he doesn't feel identified as Mapuche. There are [students] with a Mapuche surname, but s/he says that s/he is not Mapuche, nor does his/her mother come to school with their traditional attire because... in the case of the Mapudungun teacher, she is *REALLY* Mapuche, and arrives dressed up in her traditional attire and all that (Gabriela).

The extract suggests genuine interest from the school to maintain and acknowledge the cultural diversity of its students. The school arranged a workshop to teach Mapudungun to anyone who was interested, even if Mapuche heritage students did not feel identified as such. Despite the small numbers of heritage students, the school promotes the inclusion and awareness of their culture to the whole school community. Nonetheless, Gabriela makes a distinction about *looking* Mapuche, which resonates with Pavez-Soto and Galaz-Valderrama (2018)'s findings in that second-generation students might still be categorized as foreigners despite being born in the country. Regardless, there is a clear intention from this school to create an intercultural community where everyone actively embraces multiculturalism.

This is also shown in the teachers' perceptions about how the multicultural identities coexist in the school community. References to multiculturalism or cultural pluralism describe how multiculturalism is constructed and embodied at their schools. For example, Gabriela mentions that "children are not even attracted to their own countries". This perspective suggests the construction of a community deprived of cultural differences in that it advocates for the multiple co-existence of cultures as opposed to national individualism. Furthermore, Ana explains that Haitian students learn in a multicultural context, based on the premise that the coexistence of cultures equates with a multicultural education. Against this background, the perspective posited by these teachers resembles the idea of multicultural citizenship proposed by Kymlicka (1996), which favors integration. Nevertheless, there is no acknowledgement of the commitment required from governmental institutions beyond affective and emotional containment practices in the search of these students' integration. For instance, both Ana and David mentioned they had to learn how to integrate these students and promote their integration and tolerance among their students once they faced multicultural classrooms. In both cases, the participants highlighted the positive result of that experience, but they failed to mention or recognize possible transformations that took place to allow for their integration in the educational

context. Multiculturalism, then, is constructed from the integration and elimination of differences across nations. However, these teachers seem to overlook the challenges the integration of territorial differences entail.

On the other hand, interculturality implies the potential transformation of institutions, trajectories, and structures of racialized and hierarchical power (Walsh, 2011). In this sense, there is one aspect that shows this potential transformation as the participants (5 out of 6) value that their students can coexist in their diversity in the classroom (Giménez Romero, 2003). For instance, Camila mentioned that there is “a lot of integration” and “no discrimination” against the immigrant students at her school, thus foregrounding the perceived positive attitudes that students have towards immigrant children. Likewise, other teachers also described the students as welcoming and respectful (Camila), with resources to overcome their differences and promote integration (Ana and Daniela) through peer interaction and scaffolding: “It was like the process of getting to know the kids, their culture and exchanging information. They helped each other, the Haitian students who knew more helped the Chilean ones who struggled, so that was very good” (Manuela).

Interculturality, on the other hand, also poses various challenges to these teachers, of which the most salient ones refer to linguistic, cultural, and territorial displacements (Huenchullán Arrué; Stang Alva, 2018; Quintriqueo *et al.*, 2016). Hence, all participants identify language as a barrier to integration. Other teachers mentioned that this barrier is overcome thanks to the support of other students, evidencing the schools’ substantial lack of (socioeconomic) resources:

Yes, one class has like four Haitian children, and two of them were sisters. One of them knew a lot of Spanish and she sometimes helped us [teachers] or we asked her directly to explain the content [to them] or to translate what we said, but the two sisters did not always go to class so if the one who knew Spanish was missing, we had to use our translation app to help the other Haitian students (David).

In addition, there are other cultural differences that require teachers’ interventions. Ana, for instance, explains that some foreign parents struggle to understand the characteristics of the Chilean educational system, particularly the fact that teachers are not allowed to physically discipline students. According to this teacher, Haitian parents expect teachers to physically discipline their children to get their attention or punish disruptive behavior. This cultural difference poses an extra challenge to the teacher as she must teach these parents about these cultural differences, without the linguistic fluency required. Consequently, these experiences foreground the precariousness these schools face when trying to overcome the linguistic barrier and/or the integration of diverse cultures.

Precariousness, understood as the “socio-ontological dimension of lives and bodies” (Lorey, 2015, p. 11; cf. Butler, 2004), is a constant in these teachers’ narratives. Their practices, experiences, and their understandings of interculturality are determined by various degrees of precariousness they and their students suffer. In this context, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty and inequality in the Americas (Pandemic [...], 2021), and it has worsened the precariousness of the public educational community more generally. In Chile, 3/10 of students had classes daily (compared to the eight in ten in private schools) and 2/3 of public-school students relied on their schools to provide food supplies (Ponce *et al.*, 2020). Hence, the precariousness these teachers face is not only *relational* but it is also *social* (Lorey, 2015).

The most salient form of precariousness refers to the lack of structural, technological, and economic resources to teach and learn effectively in the (online) classroom. Structural resources fall under the teachers' domain and refer to deficiencies in their classrooms that hinder the possibilities of dynamic activities to teach the language pre-pandemic. All participants agree that they would like to have an English classroom, without the hassle of moving audio-visual equipment and books from one classroom to another. Technological and economic resources, on the other hand, fall under the students' domain, and teachers are thoroughly descriptive when narrating their experiences in their current contexts.

According to these teachers, the move towards online teaching negatively impacted their students. These students did not have access to quality technological gadgets such as smartphones, laptops, or tablets to access their online classes and, when they did, they would have to share it with their siblings and/or wait until their parents got home to access school materials. Similarly, teachers could not send study guides because students did not have the means to print materials at home and they had to prioritize contents from the national curricula to not jeopardize their learning process due to lack of technological resources:

The school where I work is highly vulnerable, there is a lot of poverty, there is a lack of resources, so when we moved to online classes, there were many families that did not have a computer. They had a phone, and there were three students at home, so they had to share one phone, the cell phone data, the cell phone data was not enough for all of them to access the online platform (Manuela).

In terms of lack of economic resources, these teachers emphasized that the pandemic had only deteriorated their students' physical and mental wellbeing. While they all stated that hunger among their students was an issue even before the pandemic (and regardless of their cultural background), they also claimed that their students' living conditions interfere with their learning process:

[Precariousness] is an issue that trespasses the boundaries of nationalities. Most [students] do not have breakfast because they do not have anything to eat, so if going to class on an empty stomach is already hard, attending online on an empty stomach... Also, when they turn on their microphones to answer a question, the noise is so unbelievable that you want to ask "what's happening" because, of course [their parents/tutors] are working at home [...] There are people, their tutors, their families are watching TV while the child is in class, I mean, they do not not even have the ... how can I say it, the empathy, I have no idea how they do not realize that what they do affects the child's [learning process] (Prof\_4F).

It follows, then, that these teachers feel that their students' absence from their classes (whether face to face or online) is merely a sign of this precariousness. Intercultural differences are backgrounded in this context because they feel there are more alarming needs that are transversal to their students' reality. Ergo, apart from feeling powerless for being unable to effectively communicate with Haitian students, they also prioritize their students' emotional and physical containment, a task that has become more and more difficult because of the pandemic: "how do you contain a student, I don't know, whose parents hit them the day before, or that their neighborhood is dominated by drug dealers, or that they need to steal to eat" (Ana). Against this background, the participants are appreciative of their school administration as they observe a genuine interest in providing emotional and socio-economic support to these students:

It's the kid who suffers, so one must adapt and make the child feel and understand [communicate] better... Even though English should be a universal language, and everyone should know a little bit of the basics, the younger ones need their mother tongue to communicate (David).

This extract illustrates a clear valuation system in relation to the languages these teachers deal with. In this quotation, the participant claims English should be a universal language, in line with the globalization narrative we discussed earlier. Similarly, all participants appear to agree that English is valuable because it provides students with more work-related opportunities in the workforce, although they also acknowledge that this narrative does not motivate or engage their students as much as they hoped for. They justify this perception through their own understanding of the precariousness these students face, and their inability to foresee a future where they will actually need English. These perceptions also affect these teachers' lives: one participant confessed to having switched from French to an English undergraduate degree for the job opportunities the latter offered in Chile.

Participants agree the school becomes “a refuge” for these children, where “they can socialize, talk [to others], see their classmates, they have food, shelter, the love and attention of their teachers” (Manuela). It is precisely because of this added value that teachers feel abandoned by the authorities as they and their schools resort to their own funds, resources, and expertise to integrate, protect, and care for their students. Granted, these public schools operate thanks to these public funds, but these are clearly insufficient. Most of the time, teachers prioritize emotionally supporting their students instead of devoting time to teach them because of their needs. They understand and approach their vulnerability as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, where basic needs must be met first to teach, an aspect that is suppressed in the PNM document. It appears, then, that the PNM document does not correlate with their actual experiences in intercultural settings, which foregrounds a struggle between ontological understandings of interculturality and epistemological experiences in educational settings. In fact, their practices and their school communities seem to propose the dialogue, exchange, and complementarity of cultures, where cultural differences are articulated in dynamic learning processes.

## Conclusions

This study set out to explore and analyze how interculturality is constructed in the National Policy for Foreign Students (2018-2022) document (PNM) and enacted by EFL teachers' practices and experiences in multicultural educational contexts. The research has not only shown clear inconsistencies between the ontological and epistemological understandings of interculturality, but it has also revealed the added ideological challenges of EFL teaching in relation to the linguistic valuation of languages. On the one hand, the PNM document takes a functional approach to interculturality, in which the coexistence of different cultures is accepted and tolerated, but it does not entail significant changes to the system (Walsh, 2010). The document also appears to favor a *homogenous normality*, that is, a promotion of inclusive practices that normalize the stigmatization of being and/or looking as an other, based on the presumption of a homogenous normality (e.g., Pavez-Soto; Galaz-Valderrama, 2018, p. 75). There are very few instances



in the PNM document that approach interculturality critically, hence proving insufficient to address the socioeconomic, cultural, technological, and linguistic barriers that emerge in multicultural contexts. On the other hand, EFL teachers' testimonies reveal their and their educational communities' efforts to address interculturality as a complex, multilayer phenomena thus promoting a multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1996). Due to lack of resources, these communities favor socio-affective strategies to promote the acknowledgement, respect, and tolerance of cultural differences among their students. While the study only considers teachers' *perceptions* of intercultural practices, it is auspicious to identify practices that problematize the inclusion of foreign students based on the particularities of their specific contexts. Further studies should consider classroom observations and possible interviews to students to identify whether they perceive this multiculturalism the same way as their teachers.

One of the most relevant findings during the interviews is the role of precariousness in these teachers' practices and experiences. They firmly believe that precariousness is a transversal quality of their educational contexts, regardless of nationalities, which demands an effective intervention from the authorities. This precariousness hinders their students' learning processes, in which hunger and abuse emerge as the main challenges these teachers must support their students with. As a result, these teachers' foreground their schools' self-management as the solution to fully include and integrate foreign students in their classrooms (such as the inclusion of linguistic facilitators for Haitian students). From their perspective, the multicultural discourse in educational policies such as the PNM document must not overshadow -whether directly or indirectly- the increasing socioeconomic inequalities and asymmetries that are found across the territory (in this study, the capital and two cities from the South of Chile). There is yet to unveil how these dynamics emerge in the northern area of the country, which is the point of arrival for immigrants who enter the country illegally. More importantly, the lack of resources barely allows educational actors to properly address interculturality and precariousness in their own educational contexts, let alone exert a structural transformation in the educational system more generally.

The stark inequality of the contexts these teachers work and the students' heterogeneity demand structural changes to the educational system that prioritize teachers' experiences and a more integral approach to education. The emphasis on marketization narratives in relation to language teaching not only hinders teachers' experiences but also fosters' identity struggles across students, which might inadvertently promote cultural and linguistic assimilation as opposed to the enrichment of these educational communities and society more generally. Hence, there is a need for clearer educational policies that actively address the multiple layers of interculturality through teachers' experiences to truly guarantee an intersectional approach to the education of an ever-growing multicultural society.

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## Authors' Contribution

Carolina Pérez-Arredondo: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection; Formal Analysis, Investigation, Project Administration, Writing - Original Draft & Editing; Funding Acquisition; Margarita Calderón-López: Conceptualization; Investigation, Analysis; Writing - Review, Supervision, Funding Acquisition; Francisca Arenas-Torres: Investigation, Data Curation.

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