

September 7-9, 2021

Weblink: <http://cdltr.uohyd.ac.in/icei>

Abstract



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### Multilingualism: A Challenge For The Chilean Reality

Multilingualism is a common phenomenon all over the world, given that there are almost 7,000 languages in the world and about 200 independent countries (Lewis, 2009). Approximately half of the world's population is bilingual (Grosjean, 2010). Bi- and multilingualism are also the reality in North and South America. In this context, Chile is often regarded as a homogenous and monolingual Spanish-speaking nation (Cancino, 2013), especially when compared to other countries in South America. The Chilean state legally recognizes the presence of nine *etnias* or *pueblos indígenas* (indigenous ethnicities or peoples), which offers a multilingual setup. However, surprisingly there is a limited amount of language legislation (Leclerc, 2015) most of which focuses on governmental plans to make Chile bilingual by 2030 (Minsegres, Mineduc and Minec, 2014), through the teaching of English, the only foreign language taught in public schools since 2010. The aim of this study is determined by an ongoing debate on languages and rising movements of indigenous groups in Chile, and at the same time, languages and language-related issues, which have long been overlooked in sociolinguistic research on the Chilean context. Whilst the questions of national and ethnic identity in Chile have been researched from the anthropological and historical perspectives (Larraín, 2001; Donoso, 2004), there are very few studies to date that have addressed the role of languages, national, indigenous and foreign, in the political and social dynamics in the country. In the Chilean context, the use of indigenous languages is not regulated, and Spanish is the *de facto* official language. In view of such *laissez-faire* regulations of Chile's linguistic setting, it is crucial to explore public domains beyond language policy to explain the ongoing minoritisation of indigenous languages and the growth of the dominant languages. Indigenous languages are made invisible while English and Spanish occupies Chilean's elite bilingualism dream, which is not in tune with UNESCO's proposal or for that matter IFAP on multilingualism. The present study is a systematic review on this important topic in which the discussions and analysis will be carried out through a comprehensive literature review and integrating an interdisciplinary approach to look at this issue, both from the philosophical perspective and from the socio-political policy framework of government.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, Chile, language policy, indigenous languages, literature review



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