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Bilingual and Intercultural Education (BIE): Meeting 21st Century Educational Demands

Abstract. Bilingual and intercultural education (BIE) is a powerful tool as we strive towards diversity in order to meet the demands of the international community in the 21st century. The implementation of an expanded approach could ensure a sustainable educational future. The fourth objective of the New Sustainable Development Goals 2030 published by United Nations seeks to guarantee quality education among the world population. Bilingual education constitutes an indispensable instrument to reach this objective, as it has proved to improve leaners' access to information and cognitive abilities.

This paper addresses separately the main principles of both bilingual and intercultural education. Then, the strengths, challenges, and opportunities that an integrated approach can bring to diversity within a global society are analyzed. We will focus our study on the concept of competence with reference to the CEFR and the way it addresses the binomial language-culture. Nowadays, there is a necessity for an alliance among peoples and cultures which is only guaranteed if it emerges through a real linguistic and cultural understanding, really necessary for understanding and communication in the 21st century Europe. Intercultural education is not accomplished by the simple addition of culture-related contents to a specific approach. Rather, it entails the specific design of an educational bilingual programme whose main axis is placed on intercultural education (IE). Thus, our overarching conclusion is that bilingual education must include IE within the design of its essential parameters.

Keywords: bilingual education; intercultural education; integrated approach; strengths; challenges; opportunities; educational programmes.

> Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. (UNESCO, *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, Article 1).

Introduction

It is commonly agreed that humankind is both culturally and linguistically diverse. More remarkably, researchers, politicians and educators all stress the essential role of cultural and linguistic diversity.

On the one hand, regarding culture, the following quotations are valid examples from the most outstanding institutions that support it: "UNESCO promotes the fruitful diversity of cultures since the creation of its Constitution in 1945" (http://bit.ly/2ocydh3). Meanwhile, the OECD states: "Schools increasingly need to prepare young people for an interconnected world where they will live and work with people from different backgrounds and cultures" (http://bit.ly/2mMfRXj). The Council of Europe affirms: "We strive towards a Europe where the diversity of cultures, the arts, and cultural and natural heritage are essential to the development of a genuine openness of mind and basic rights, and where open and interactive processes and practices of culture encompass different elements that combine to help us deal with the complexities of living with ourselves and one another" (http://bit.ly/2ocEwBp). Therefore, prominent international organizations address intercultural education (IE) as a priority across all levels (primary, secondary and higher education).

Regarding linguistic diversity, on the other hand, bilingual education could represent a great opportunity for millions of international students. A number of researchers in the last decades have shown the evidence of cognitive (Casanova 1995; Genesee 1987; Zelasko and Antúnez 2000; Bialystok 2001; Castro, Ayankoya and Kasprzak 2011; Jessner 2008), sociocultural (Brisk 1999), linguistic (Cazden, Snow and Heise-Baigorria, 1990), and neurolinguistic (the Brainglot project http://bit.ly/2o1PEUp; Rodríguez-Pujadas, Sanjuán, Fuentes, Ventura-Campos, Barrós-Loscertales and Ávila 2014) benefits of Bilingual Education (BE), as well as an improvement in job-access opportunities for bilingual employees (Schluessel 2007; Tsung 2009; Zelasko and Antúnez 2000). For example, regarding its sociocultural benefits, Brisk (1999, p. 2) puts it this way: "A successful bilingual program develops students' language and literacy proficiency, leads them in successful academic achievement, and nurtures sociocultural integration". Regarding its linguistic benefits, Cazden, Snow and Heise-Baigorria (1990, p. 48) noted:

> […] despite the centrality of language achievements in the developmental agenda of the [child], language issues are rarely in the forefront of thinking about how to plan environments for young children […]. The prevalence of multilingualism in the world adds a particular urgency to the recommendation to attend to the quality of language instruction available to the child.

We must state, then, that BE is one of the international indicators for quality education. Senge (2010, p. 148) stated: "[…] if you believe that the shifts ahead will be cultural, not just technical, the potential role of education looms large".

Therefore, in light of recent events (i.e. increase in terrorist attacks throughout the world), the importance of IE and BE (even separately), to bring about societal change, becomes even more apparent, while the connections between both can signify an educational keystone to address diversity in the 21st century (Commins and Miramontes 2005, p. 109). Nevertheless, a number of scholars have provided evidence supporting the poor job that post-secondary institutions are doing in preparing students for the 21st century (Bok 2006, among others). The next generation will inherit a sense of the world where culture and languages play a leading role, as "language expresses cultural reality" (Kramsch 1998, p. 3). Thus, if they leave their particular educational level (primary, secondary or university) without an understanding of how these two are interconnected, this clearly represents a lost opportunity, resulting in an incomplete education that does not truly prepare our students for the 21st century and beyond. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (CEFR 2018, p. 28) acknowledges the interconnected and essential role of the plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the following way: "Most of the references to plurilingualism in the CEFR are to 'plurilingual and pluricultural competence'. This is because the two aspects usually go hand-in-hand." Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier and Panthier (2016, p. 10) state: "Plurilingual and intercultural competence is the ability to use a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs or interact with other people, and enrich that repertoire while doing so." Moreover, chapter 8 of the CEFR (2018) offers a variety of curriculum examples to promote the concepts of plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

This paper will analyse the main characteristics of IE and BE, to establish the links between them and towards the concept of this plurilingual and pluri-/intercultural competence to present a more valid, research-based and defendable approach to a global education for the 21st century.

Intercultural Education (IE)

Intercultural education is a kind of umbrella term that includes a number of interrelated concepts found in the literature (e.g. *multicultural education, pluricultural education, transcultural education, antiracist education* and *inclusion of diversity*). Basically, the addition of prefixes to the word 'culture' has been the general procedure to describe (sometimes) not-so-different approaches to the same phenomenon. Nowadays, we seem to have reached a consensus regarding the meaning of these: *multi-* and *pluri-* refer to groups of people who, showing a different cultural background, live as separate collectives within the same context (e.g. city, country or neighbourhood) or are taught in the same institution. *Transcultural* indicates the change from one culture into another. The prefix *inter-* in *intercultural education* underlines the interaction among different cultures, which characterises and distinguishes this concept. *Antiracist education* is a concept used only in specific countries (e.g. The UK and Greece), whereas in some others the preferred term has been *inclusion of diversity* (Allemann-Ghionda 2009). Nonetheless, the most usual term in Europe is *intercultural education* whose origin can be traced since the classical Greeks (e.g. Aristotle, whose notion of time is understood from an intercultural perspective by Hengelbrock 1994); the Enlightenment (e.g. Voltaire in the 17th century); and even W. von Humboldt (in the 19th century).

Since the late 1960s, different disciplines have researched the influence of culture to explain a multiplicity of phenomena that account for diversity in the world (from Psychology to Anthropology, and from Sociology to Biology, this not being an exhaustive list). Nonetheless, it was the migration that followed the Second World War which triggered the need among educators to address interculture in a proper way, placing a special focus of interest on second languages. Tomlinson et al. (2008) describe the process undergone in countries that had been former colonial powers (e.g. France, The UK or The Netherlands), where the language of communities along with race were key issues for the design of educational policies. Therefore, IE and languages show an inextricable relation. In this sense, Kramsch (2011, p. 356) speaks about the interdependence of IE, languages and actions beyond words to understand intercultural competence: "If culture is being increasingly viewed as discourse and the production of meaning, the development of intercultural competence is not only a question of tolerance towards or empathy with others, of understanding them in their cultural context, or of understanding oneself and the other in terms of one another.

It is also a matter of looking beyond words and actions and embracing multiple, changing and conflicting discourse worlds [...]."

The three main principles of intercultural education are, according to the *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (2012):

a. "IE respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all." Teaching and learning materials should help students appreciate their cultural heritage and respect other identities, languages and values by introducing learners' experiences and previous knowledge. It also refers to the provision of equal access to education regardless students' cultural background.
b. "IE provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society." It addresses the way IE can improve the education of active citizens.
c. "IE provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations." IE can improve the social values of different cultural perspectives.

Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier and Panthier (2016, p. 10) state:

> Intercultural competence, for its part, is the ability to experience otherness and cultural diversity, to analyse that experience and to derive benefit from it. Once acquired, intercultural competence makes it easier to understand otherness, establish cognitive and affective links between past and new experiences of otherness, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of one's own cultural group and environment.

Intercultural competence lies at the heart of otherness and diversity. Intercultural education (IE), therefore, should address the three main areas of the individual that the intercultural competence (as defined above) has underlined: a. Identity; b. Civic education; and c. Social values towards respect.

Intercultural competence is considered as "an uneven and changing competence" (CEFR, 2001, p. 133), so its measurement has been largely

debated in the literature. Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier and Panthier (2016, p. 70) state:

> As for the other cross-cutting competences, there is no model on which there is a broad consensus that would allow a clear definition of target competences to be acquired in order to progress from one level to the next, to be assessed level by level.

Nevertheless, some meaningful models have been designed to measure intercultural competence. The two most outstanding ones were authored by Bennett (1993): The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS); and Chen and Starosta (2000): The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS). The DMIS establishes a six-step system that describes an individual's progression from ethnocentrism (which means the least cultural sensitive degree) to cultural ethnorelativism. Criticism of this model comes from Bennett's linear understanding of the individual's cultural development, where he does not include a natural change among different scales, which is the most frequent evolution. Some years later Chen and Starosta (2000) designed The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS), encompassing five 'factors': 1. Integration Engagement. 2. Respect of Cultural Differences. 3. Interaction Confidence. 4. Interaction Enjoyment. 5. Interaction Attentiveness (ibid. p. 12).

Going one step further in this analysis, Byram (1997) defined the parameters to teach and assess intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in a paper that, nowadays, is considered seminal. His definition has been used as a guideline by a number of scholars to understand and conceptualise intercultural education (IE). Byram's (1997) definition of intercultural communicative competence comprises of 5 factors grouped into 3 main areas: 1. knowledge of self and other; interaction; individual and societal (*savoir être*); 2. skills: a. To interpret and relate (*savoir comprendre*), education, political education, critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*); b. To discover and/or interact (*savoir apprendre/faire*); and 3. attitudes of curiosity and openness; relativizing self, valuing other (*savoir être*). ICC was also described by Deardorff (2006) as a pyramidal model where the attitudinal component constitutes its starting point; then, the acquisition of a specific set of knowledge and understanding (included self-awareness and the individual's own skills) is a keystone, upon which the intercultural competence is dependent.

Therefore, we could state that the main goal of intercultural education is to help the individual be interculturally competent, which entails the

development of intercultural competence, which, likewise, is intrinsically connected to linguistic competence (mainly connected to second language learning) through ICC. The first link, therefore, between intercultural and bilingual education can be established through the development of a set of common competences, all of them interrelated by a key term: communication, which is deeply related to the identity of the individual and his/her social and civic relations (cf. UNESCO 2012).

Bilingual Education (BE)

Bilingual education (BE) is defined by the UNESCO (2003) as follows: "Bilingual and multilingual education refer to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction. In much of the specialized literature, the two types are subsumed under the term bilingual education".

BE shows a long tradition in the world; countries such as The United States of North America and Canada have implemented different approaches of BE across all educational stages along their history (Pérez-Cañado 2012). Regarding higher education, some European universities delivered their teaching in Latin during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance at a time when publications were not even accepted if they were written in vernacular languages (Nastansky 2004 in Coleman 2006, p. 3).

The most extensive approach within bilingual education in Europe is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Pérez-Cañado (2012, p. 317) canvasses the history of this approach that started in 1950 in Canada: "[…] when the impact of French immersion began to be investigated in the English-speaking community in Montréal." The USA also exhibits a demonstrated experience in the implementation of bilingual programmes, which, in addition, have been widely assessed on the cognitive, linguistic, content and attitudinal students' levels. This research, which has evolved towards the CLIL approach through the evaluation of a number of bilingual programmes, confirms Fishman's statement (which is considered nowadays almost an aphorism among bilingual educators): "[…] bilingual education is good for education." (Fishman in Marsh 2002, p. 70).

Bilingual education, therefore, brings demonstrated benefits among stakeholders (students, teachers and even administrative staff) (cf. section 1, paragraph 3). Scholars' views of BE has, nevertheless, evolved through the years. Despite the proven gains that it yields for students, detractors have not been uncommon; the basis of their criticism of these programmes stands on the defence of autochthonous languages and cultures, not forgetting the

historical heritage (which, for example, many American native peoples refused to deny). These were the advocates of the *English only*, a movement which was born in 1948 through the *Defence Education Act* and purports the use of English as the only language for official and educational purposes (Baker 2006).

To be a bilingual speaker, as Byram (2011) states, is much more than just speaking a second language (referring here clearly to the need of including the intercultural axis within bilingual education). Pavlenko (2005) affirms that being bilingual has a positive impact on critical and flexible thinking. Lindholm-Leary (2001) demonstrated that bilingual programmes improve academic performance and instil positive effects into language learning. Objective data, in addition, help to support the defence of these programmes: Kroll and de Groot (2009) maintain that the almost 6000 languages of the more than 200 countries in the world will positively contribute to the real bilingualism of (at least) most of its inhabitants in the 21st century. European educational policies are very clear on this: BE is a priority for the Council of Europe (Ó Riagáin and Lüdi 2003, p. 23) as they recognise the efficiency of bilingual programmes: "In dealing with different models of bilingual education, it should be borne in mind that this form of education has proved its effectiveness in numerous situations throughout the world. This concerns the proficiency in both languages (L2 only in transitional programmes) as well as the results in the different topics taught through another language."

Therefore, BE is well supported by both the research community and education practitioners (cf. section 1, paragraph 3). BE offers equal access opportunities, which, in any other context, would be difficult to achieve; we refer here to the possibilities it opens for bilingual university graduates who will be able to apply for a position in the international arena (Zelasko and Antúnez, 2000). To have a bilingual background opens not only one's mind but also one's possibilities of getting a job in the labour market. In addition, in the multicultural and plurilingual society of the 21st century BE plays an essential role as the construct through which real understanding among peoples can be built. Europe cannot achieve real unity if it is not constructed upon differences that must be respected and preserved (at least, this is the main conclusion that can be drawn from the recent striking events that have destabilised the most essential of European foundations). Deep understanding can only be reached through the code of the other, that is, through the command of second languages and cultures.

Nevertheless, in spite of the several attempts to build an integrated and solid approach to intercultural and bilingual education in several

Latin American countries[1], BE still lacks a clear and real integration of the intercultural axis into its main precepts. Our next section will state the opportunities that we, as second language teachers, need to establish, if we are to take advantage of and contribute to this common goal: the implementation of a BIE approach within 21st century education.

Bilingual and Intercultural Education (BIE)

The intrinsic relationship between language and culture stands at the basis of any scientific discussion on bilingual or intercultural education. Byram (2012, p. 5) confirms the strong relationship between language and culture learning and teaching by concluding that: "[…] in the best cases, language and culture teaching produces, through the development of linguistic and intercultural competence, alternative conceptualisations of the world and contributes to the education/*Bildung* of the individual in society."

CLIL is the newest approach to language and content learning, being implemented in most European bilingual schools and across most of their educational stages (early childhood education is the least popular cycle to present). CLIL integrates the concept of 'the four C's' (Coyle 2008), which stand for *Cognition, Culture, Content* and *Communication,* and whose effective interaction makes the learning of contents through a second language real and meaningful. This philosophy, which is appropriate and feasible according to its main precepts, still lacks major research (Coyle 2008; Dalton-Puffer and Smit 2013; Pérez-Cañado, 2017) on which CLIL must necessarily build its future development. *The European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education*, (2001, p. 3) states: "This European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education aims to provide a set of principles and ideas for designing CLIL professional development curricula". Nevertheless, the word 'interculture' (and the ones derived from it) only appears 3 times in this document, as opposed to the 12 occurrences of the word 'cognition' and its

[1] For example, in Argentina we can find the placement of an intercultural and bilingual education programme in 2004 under the supervision of the National Office of Compensatory Programs at the Department of Equity and Quality, cf. Carolina, 2004; in Bolivia, López and Küper 1999 describe a 21st century programme where all Spanish-speaking pupils and students are to learn at least one indigenous language; in Peru, the Peruvian indigenous teachers' association criticizes the implementation of intercultural and bilingual education programmes in Peru as a bridge to castellanization and monoculturalization. They argue that the education of indigenous people should be under their own control and that of their communities, cf. ANAMEBI 2009.

derivations (such as 'cognitive' and 'cognitively'); the words 'communication' and 'communicative' appear 7 times; and the word 'content', which appears 42 times (not including here the 2 occurrences for the explanation of the acronym). Surprisingly, therefore, one of the four main axes of CLIL (which is interculture) is almost overshadowed in a document which aims to be the primary reference for European CLIL teachers. Furthermore, the intercultural axis of CLIL is still underdeveloped, as the literature affirms (Griva and Kasvikis 2014, among others).

As outlined above, IE is not accomplished by the simple addition of culture-related contents to a specific approach. It rather entails the specific design of an educational bilingual programme whose main axis is found in intercultural education. Its main goal should not be conceptualised as 'learning a second language' and then 'learning the second culture'. Instead, the main aim should be re-formulated as: 'learning a second culture through the language that conveys it'. It involves the design of an approach where culture is at the very centre of learning, which articulates and vehicles contents.

Gundara and Portera (2008, p. 465) are convinced that: "In multilingual contexts this necessitates the development of intercultural bilingual education to enable first languages of learners to be used to develop the learning of second and other languages. Multilingual educational contexts necessitate intercultural bilingual competences to enhance better communication across linguistic and national divides. In developing measures of multilingualism and non-centric curriculum, educational provision needs to become more accessible to larger number of students and lead to greater levels of equality in educational terms."

Therefore, the strengths of this approach are multiple. On the one hand, most international institutions such as UNESCO, OECD and the European Commission, as seen herein (not to mention the numerous national or regional ones, such as most European Ministries of Education or the Autonomous Communities of these countries), have already designed appropriate educational policies and specific plans (e.g. *Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de las Lenguas en Andalucía. Horizonte 2020*, 2017) both of which maintain either bilingual or intercultural education as one of its main precepts. To receive the support of international policies is a privileged situation that education has not frequently enjoyed throughout its long history. This unique opportunity undoubtedly needs to be taken because today is the appropriate moment for bilingual and intercultural education. The pioneering words of contemporary world leaders serve as reminders of the importance of education (e.g. Nelson Mandela's: "Education is the

most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world"); about the importance of bilingual education (e.g. The Council of Europe's: "Because of its efficiency, bilingual education is increasingly replacing traditional forms of language teaching"); and about the importance of intercultural education (e.g. UNESCO's: "Intercultural Education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all"). All this makes it undeniable that we are in the right place at the right time. On the other hand, the strength of an integrated approach relies on the quality and the plethora of researchers, coming from different and complementary disciplines, who contribute to the enrichment of this approach with their data and ideas on how to improve it (research on the action). The variety and complementarity of their views can make the integration of bilingual and intercultural education (BIE) real. We are convinced that such an approach is only possible if it emerges from the synergy of disciplines and methodologies, which will offer the necessary respect to the diversity of all the world and its peoples.

The opportunities of BIE come, once again, from two different sources. On the one hand, BIE must contribute to the social development of the individual, not forgetting their linguistic, academic or personal facets. This can only be done through the enhancement and improvement of their intercultural and plurilingual competence. Such social development must focus on the improvement of social capacities and abilities, empathy and, probably above all, the real experience of the otherness. On the other hand, BIE can help to improve employability of university graduates in the international job market (Schluessel 2007; Tsung 2009; Zelasko and Antúnez 2000), as many companies demand an intercultural and multilingual profile for the staff they hire, in addition to the competences which are specific to the job these will develop. Intercultural and plurilingual competences can only be gained through an integrated approach: bilingual and intercultural education.

Finally, the major challenge of BIE is to arrive at a model which offers each student the opportunity for integral development. Some plausible approaches can be mentioned here: CLIL, and the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education* (http://bit.ly/2F3Ry0h), published in 2009 by the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, further cooperative and coordinated work is needed to design an integrated approach to BIE.

As a concluding line, we must say that this is a high-levelled aim: the design of a model striving towards the education of 21st century citizens, capable of preserving and respecting diversity and, above all, encouraging the development of citizens who respect such diversity as the only means

towards personal development. Understanding can only be achieved through a real commandment of the language and the culture of the other. It means, therefore, education which promotes diversity by inclining itself to otherness (cf. Byram 1997). The CEFR (2018, p. 27) states: "Seeing learners as plurilingual, pluricultural beings means allowing them to use all their linguistic resources when necessary, encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures."

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Webgraphy

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