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Perceptions of the Ethnolinguistic Vitality of the Mapuche Language in the Context of Higher Education in Chile

Postrzeganie etnolingwistycznej żywotności języka Mapuche
w kontekście szkolnictwa wyższego w Chile

Summary: This article is focused on perceptions of the ethnolinguistic vitality of the Mapuche language in the context of higher education in Chile. Data obtained during a questionnaire survey distributed online and face-to-face among students of two private higher education institutions located in Temuco and Valdivia (n = 175) were



processed using Pearson's chi-square analysis and Cramer's V coefficient. Furthermore, factor analysis was applied to the full set of statements. The views on Mapuche language, specifically its status, were found to be different between university students. The major congruence was observed in terms of teaching Mapudungun in schools. Regarding the representation of Mapudungun in Chilean media, a statistically unprovable difference in responses was found, and there was agreement in opinions between the respondents of both groups. Based on the methods applied, it was possible to confirm the hypothesis that perceptions of the Mapuche language and ethnicity are influenced by views on the status and inclusion of the ethnic group within society.

Keywords: Mapuche, language, higher education, ethnolinguistic vitality, Chile

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na postrzeganiu etnolingwistycznej żywotności języka Mapuche w kontekście szkolnictwa wyższego w Chile. Dane uzyskane podczas badania kwestionariuszowego rozpowszechnianego online i bezpośrednio wśród studentów dwóch prywatnych instytucji szkolnictwa wyższego zlokalizowanych w Temuco i Valdivia ($n = 175$) zostały przetworzone przy użyciu analizy chi-kwadrat Pearsona i współczynnika V Cramera. Ponadto do pełnego zestawu pytań z kwestionariusza zastosowano analizę czynnikową. Stwierdzono, że poglądy na temat języka Mapuche, w szczególności jego statusu, różniły się wśród studentów uniwersytetów. Największą zgodność zaobserwowano w odniesieniu do nauczania Mapudungun w szkołach. Jeśli chodzi o reprezentację Mapudungun w chilijskich mediach, stwierdzono statystycznie niemożliwą do udowodnienia różnicę w odpowiedziach, a opinie respondentów z obu grup były zgodne. Na podstawie zastosowanych metod możliwe było potwierdzenie hipotezy, że na postrzeganie języka i pochodzenia etnicznego Mapuców wpływają poglądy na status i integrację grupy etnicznej w społeczeństwie.

Słowa klucze: Mapucze, język, szkolnictwo wyższe, vitalność etnolingwistyczna, Chile

Introduction

This article is focused on perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) of the Mapuche language in the context of higher education in Chile.¹ According to Ehala, the concept of EV can be defined as the ability of the ethnic group to sustain, preserve, and protect its existence in time. It involves the capacity to continue the intergenerational transmission of the language, as well as cultural practices, sustainable demography,

¹ The authors thank Cristina Eftimie, Adrian Silva Pino, and Daniel Alejandro Rozas Vasquez for their help with data collection. The authors also thank the Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies, Mendel University in Brno, for organizing the fieldwork in Chile. This article was also supported by the VEGA grant 1/0203/23 Moral Evaluations of National, Ethnic and Religious Groups in Situations of Endangerment.

presence of active social institutions, and practices supporting social cohesion, as well as emotional attachment to the collective identity of the group.²

The theoretical nature of Ehala's approach is sometimes considered too general. Critics point out that his definition of EV does not always correspond to practical and empirical situations in the field. Moreover, the concept of EV can be seen as static (i.e., it does not reflect dynamic changes in inter-ethnic relations). Ehala's theoretical frameworks should be complemented by empirical studies that contextualize them in specific settings, such as the case of the Mapuche in Chile.

Mapuche is one of 10 indigenous ethnic groups in Chile. Based on available data from the 2017 census, 1 437 308 people, representing 84,8% of the total indigenous population living in Chile.³ Of these ethnic groups, Mapuche have the largest representation in Chilean territory, that is, approximately 1,8 million individuals.⁴ Members of this ethnic group face many problems. Historically, these are long-standing challenges that have been slow to develop in favor of Mapuche communities. This is partly due to migration processes, which in the past have often been the only solution to the social, economic, and/or political problems of the local population.⁵

The migration from rural to urban communities has increased the number of Mapuche who speak Spanish. The migration of the population to cities has caused a loss of opportunities for contact with the mother tongue. If Mapuche children wanted to attend public schools in Chile, they had to abandon it and use the dominant Spanish language. As a direct consequence of the various forms of discrimination against those who taught or communicated in Mapuche, the use of the language in formal education was eliminated.

Inequalities in the Chilean education system are, however, not only caused by political or economic issues but above all by ethnic problems. It was until 2007, when

2 M. Ehala, "Ethnolinguistic Vitality," [in:] *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, eds. K. Tracy, C. Ilie, T. Sandel, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Boston 2015, pp. 6–7; also: E.N. Ravyse, *Revisiting Ethnolinguistic Vitality: Language and Subcultural Repertoires*, Routledge, New York 2022.

3 Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, *Pueblos indígenas. Síntesis de resultados*. Accessed: https://observatorio.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/storage/docs/casen/2017/Casen_2017_Pueblos_Indigenas.pdf 2017 [December. 12, 2022].

4 *The Indigenous World 2023*, ed. D. Mamo, The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. Accessed: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/indigenous-world.html> [March. 21, 2019].

5 C. Alberti, J.P. Luna, S. Toro-Maureira, E. Gayo, "The Long Memory of the Land: Pre-colonial Origins of Mapuche Mobilization in Chile," *Political Geography* 2023, vol. 103, no. 102890; M.C. Garrido, A.M. Alarcón, "The Commoditization of Ecosystems within Chile's Mapuche Territory: A Violation of the Human Right to Health," *Health and Human Rights Journal* 2023, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 95–103; P. Di Gimignano, "The Mapuche in Modern Chile: A Cultural History," *Mountain Research and Development* 2015, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 209–210; J. Crow, *The Mapuche in Modern Chile: A Cultural History*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville 2013.

bilingual education was introduced, that there was no apparent progress in the education and teaching of Mapuche. Currently, the major education problems that stem from the asymmetry between the national society and the indigenous population persist in all spheres.⁶

For more than a decade, there has been a movement organized to revitalize the Mapuche language in the Mapuche territory called Wallmapu, as well as in the diaspora. This is in many ways a new phenomenon, unprecedented since the Mapuche movement was founded in 1910. The first steps in this direction were taken in 1996 when the Intercultural Bilingual Education Program was established.⁷ In 2008, activists began to bring Mapudungun into the open. Firstly, it was due to various events organized in Temuco, the capital of the Araucania region, around February 21, the day that UNESCO declared International Mother Language Day to promote awareness of the extinction of world languages.⁸

In the same year, the National Academy of the Mapuche Language was established in Temuco. Since 2012, an annual march has been held here to demand the official legalization of the Mapuche language. To date, however, only two communities (Galvarino and Padre Las Casas) have been successful in pushing for it.⁹

As far as EV of the Mapuche language is concerned, the first references to this concept appeared in the literature in the late 1970s.¹⁰ The article by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor is considered a pioneering work as it introduced the concept of EV into linguistic and sociological studies for the first time. The authors offered a framework for assessing whether a given ethnic group can maintain its language in the face of a dominant culture. The authors defined three key components that determine language vitality: (1) demographic factors, (2) institutional support, and (3) group status. This model has become the basis for many subsequent studies, including research on Mapuche.

⁶ R.D. Quilaqueo, M.E. Riquelme, D. Paez, M.J. Mera-Lemp, "Dual Educational Rationality and Acculturation in Mapuche People in Chile," *Frontiers in Psychology* 2023, vol. 4, no. 1112778, pp. 1–12; J. Castillo, A. Webb, A. Biehl, "Mapuche Transitions from Education to Work: Vulnerable," *Transitions and Unequal Outcomes. Journal of Developing Societies* 2022, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 244–273.

⁷ V.N. Gomez, "Lengua y territorio: relación estratégica para la revitalización del mapuzugun," *Caracol* 2020, vol. 20, pp. 134–165.

⁸ UN, *International Mother Language Day 21 February*. Accessed: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/mother-language-day> [September. 29, 2024].

⁹ V.N. Gomez, op. cit., pp. 134–165.

¹⁰ H. Giles, R.Y. Bourhis, D.M. Taylor, "Towards a Theory Language in Ethnic Group Relations," [in:] *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H. Giles, Academic Press, New York–San Francisco 1977, pp. 307–348.

EV theory has been successfully applied in many cultural and ethnic contexts around the world, attesting to its universal validity. The EV concept initially emphasized measurable factors (demographic and institutional), while later studies have shown the importance of “subjective vitality”, that is, how members of an ethnic group themselves perceive their linguistic situation. This subjective dimension was not sufficiently accounted for in the original theory.¹¹

As Bačová comments, the approach of these authors stressed the importance of language concerning ethnicity and ethnic identity, because language represents the key characteristics by which members of one ethnic community compare themselves with others. Such a perspective is based on the fact that language, in addition to its communicative functions, is at the same time an important dimension of a community's identity.¹²

Lately, there has been a steady increase in the number of research papers on language, ethnicity, bilingualism, and intercultural communication.¹³ According to the concept of EV, there are two types of groups: those with low EV vitality and those with high EV vitality. High-vitality groups can take collective actions to safeguard their interests within their intergroup environment. On the other hand, low-vitality groups lack agency and are more susceptible to assimilation.¹⁴

An obvious reason for the increase in professional interest in EV arises from globalization, which has an impact on the dynamics of ethnic and linguistic communities. On the one hand, increased mobility has caused many different ethnic groups, like the Mapuche, to become vulnerable due to the invasion of dominant languages, cultures, and infrastructures into their previously well-defined territories. On the other hand, globalization has also caused the emergence of ethnic minorities in the territories of previously relatively homogeneous nation states in Europe, America, and Australia.¹⁵

Traditionally, EV research has been used to document that low vitality is related to declining mother tongue use and a shift to the national language. More recently,

11 M. Ehala, op. cit., pp. 6–7.

12 V. Bačová, “Postavenie, vitalita a psychologické charakteristiky etnických minoritných spoločenstiev na Slovensku – pokus o porovnanie,” [in:] *Národ a národnosti na Slovensku v transformujúcej sa spoločnosti – vzťahy a konflikty*, ed. S. Sutaj, UNIVERSUM, Prešov 2005, pp. 76–84.

13 R.Y. Bourhis, G. Barrette, “Ethnolinguistic Vitality,” [in:] *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. K. Brown, Elsevier, Oxford 2006, pp. 246–249; R. Allard, R. Landry, “Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality: A Comparison of Two Measures,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 1994, vol. 108, pp. 117–144.

14 M. Ehala, op. cit., pp. 6–7.

15 H. Juvin, G. Lipovetsky, *El Occidente globalizado, un debate sobre la cultura planetaria*, Anagrama, Barcelona 2011.

the increase in interest in the study of EV among ethnic groups is related to its impact on interethnic relations. The range of research instruments in this type of research has also been expanding. As Allard and Landry report, the best known in this context are two types of questionnaires: the Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (SVQ) and the Beliefs about Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (BEVQ).¹⁶

In contrast to the approach of Giles, Bourhis and Taylor, which focused on “objective” indicators of vitality, Landry and Allard introduced the notion of “subjective ethnolinguistic vitality”. This approach recognizes that perceptions of vitality by members of an ethnic group are as important as objective factors. The SVQ and BEVQ have become commonly used data collection tools in empirical research, especially in the assessment of the language of endangered ethnic groups such as Mapuche. While earlier EV theory was more structural and focused on demographic, status and institutional factors, Landry and Allard focused on individual perceptions. In doing so, they showed that personal experiences and beliefs can play a significant role in language maintenance. Landry and Allard’s research supported the hypothesis that subjective perceptions of vitality influence individuals’ language behavior (e.g., language use in the family, language transfer to children). This finding has proved crucial for research on language revitalization.

Methods

Data collection

The online questionnaire survey focused on the analysis of perceptions of the EV of the Mapuche language provided by two distinct groups of university students. The research sample was divided into 2 groups including adult Spanish and Mapudungun speakers of indigenous or non-indigenous origin who came from 2 higher education institutions (HEI) from Valdivia and Temuco. The research hypothesis was that perceptions of Mapuche language and ethnicity are influenced by views on the status and inclusion of the ethnic group within society.

The methodology of this research project was quantitative. Data collection was based on a questionnaire survey prepared from the updated version of SVQ, a tool that is available freely online. The SVQ supplemented with a Likert 5 scale, translated into Spanish by the research team, was distributed at each HEI separately. Firstly, face-to-face by displaying QR codes linked to the questionnaire on the screen of mobile phones and later online via university networks.

16 R. Allard & R. Landry, op. cit., pp. 117–144; R. Landry, R. Allard, “Introduction Ethnolinguistic Vitality: A Viable Construct,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 1994, vol. 108, pp. 5–14.

Research sample

A random sampling method was applied. Thus, a total of 175 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey (108 university students were from Valdivia and 67 from Temuco). Overall, among the respondents from both HEIs, women ($n = 111$) outnumbered men ($n = 58$). Only 6 respondents from Temuco did not indicate their gender.

In terms of ethnicity, Mapuche ($n = 72$) and mestizo ($n = 51$) students significantly dominated the HEIs. 52 respondents did not indicate their ethnicity. This ethnic distribution of survey respondents is supported by Sepúlveda and Zúñiga,¹⁷ who report that the regions where Mapuche are most represented are La Araucanía and Los Ríos. Los Ríos is the region located between La Araucanía and Los Lagos.

Data analysis

After the data collection, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each SVQ item, followed by its mean value. As part of the statistical analysis of the primary data, frequency distribution tables were created to assess the accuracy of the responses and to eliminate or correct any discrepancies, particularly on the five-step response scale used. Subsequently, the research data were evaluated using the basic characteristics of descriptive statistics. From the statements that were assessed on the Likert scale, arithmetic averages of the respondents' answers were calculated for the two groups of university students separately, and these averages were displayed in a line graph that facilitated the assessment of differences in the average response of the two groups of respondents.

In the next step, contingency tables were calculated for each statement. The classification term was "university". To determine the relationship between the variables, the survey results were processed using Pearson's chi-square analysis and Cramer's V coefficient. The Pearson chi-square can take on an arbitrarily large positive value. Pearson's contingency coefficient takes a value from the interval $< 0,1$, which depends on the dimensions of the table. The Cramer's contingency coefficient V comes from the interval $0 \leq V \leq 1$, regardless of the size of the table.

Furthermore, factor analysis was applied to the full set of statements. This method allows us to identify the underlying factors that explain the relationship between the variables. Through it, it is possible to observe the attitudes and opinions of the respondents that are not directly measurable. Factor analysis was applied to a series of 26 statements with Likert scale responses, using a principal axis method to divide the statements into 4 factors. Subsequently, the Varimax rotation was used, and the statements were divided into the selected factors according to the factor loadings.

17 B. Sepúlveda, P. Zúñiga, "Geografías indígenas urbanas: el caso mapuche en La Pintana, Santiago de Chile," *Revista de Geografía Norte Grande* 2015, vol. 62, pp. 127–149.

Results

Overview of response trends

Based on the calculated averages, the responses from each HEI could be divided into three groups. The first group of statements has an average response above 3.5 and thus shows a tendency for respondents to answer more positively (agree to strongly agree). This tendency is exhibited by statements that are closely related to the ethnic pride and identity of the Mapuche indigenous group or their political activism.

The mean response to the statement “Mapuche people value their ethnic identity” hardly differs among university students. The mean values of 4,21 (Valdivia) and 4,22 (Temuco) are the highest mean response values of the entire questionnaire survey. This implies that this is the only statement from the entire questionnaire survey in which respondents had an agreed opinion. In general, it can be argued that the mean response values of the two universities are identical and, with a few exceptions, replicate each other.

In Fig. 1 most of the respondents’ answers have an average value below the threshold of 3 (neutral answer). For respondents from both observed groups (Valdivia and Temuco), 16 statements out of 27 are below the threshold, and the prevailing opinion reflects more disagreement with the individual statements.

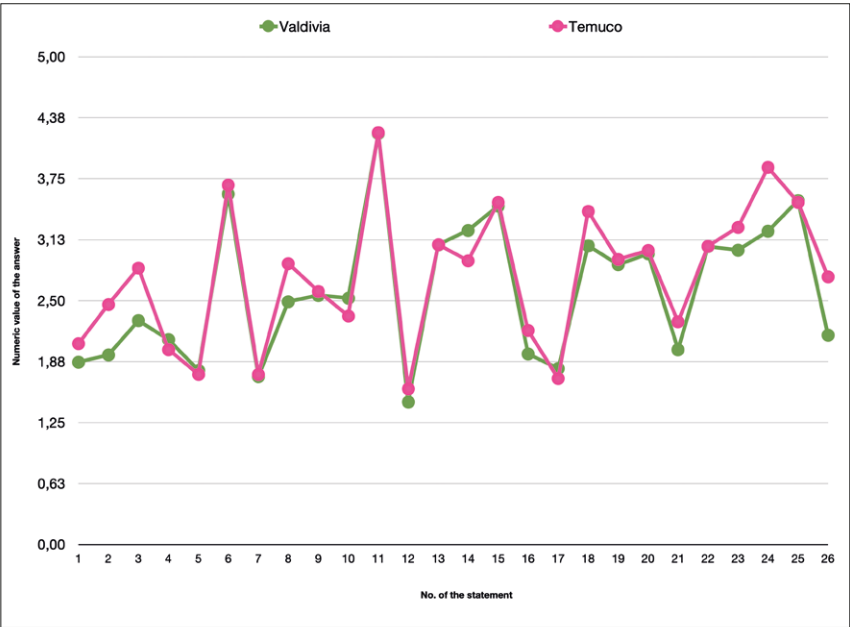


FIG. 1 Average Cronbach alpha values in the questionnaire survey divided according to the HEI (Source: own processing)

The statement “Mapudungun is used in churches and religious spaces” showed the lowest mean response value among the Valdivia (1,46) and Temuco respondents (1,60). The Mapuche ethnic group is among the most strongly religious in Chile, and many Mapuche still perform their traditional rituals. “Especially in rural areas, many families practice Ngillatun (prayer, thanksgiving, or supplication) and Machitun (healing) and turn to the Machi as their primary religious leader.”¹⁸

Other statements that are associated with overall higher levels of disagreement among respondents are the following:

- Mapudungun is sufficiently taught in schools;
 - The representation of Mapudungun in the Chilean media is positive;
 - The way Mapudungun is incorporated in all areas at the national level is sufficient.
- The variation in average responses, although small, can be seen in statements relating mainly to the disparity in the status of Mapuche students, the use of Mapudungun in public spaces, and access to Mapuche language instruction. These claims and issues include:

- Mapudungun is highly regarded internationally;
- Mapudungun is used in the Chilean civil service;
- Mapuche isolate themselves from the rest of Chilean society;
- The experience of a university student varies depending on its origin;
- Mapuche students are discriminated at the university;
- Mapuche students face different problems than other students;
- The university offers customized programs according to cultural identity.

In all the above statements, lower average response rates were found among Valdivia students. This suggests that these students tended to disagree more with the statements than students from another university. There may be various reasons for such a situation. One of them may be the difference in the implementation of Mapuche in the HEIs curricula. This also includes the promotion of interculturality in universities.

Analysis of key statements

To compare the opinions of both groups of respondents, the results of statements that showed statistically significant differences are included below. Among such statements, those whose probability value calculated based on Pearson’s chi-square and Cramer’s V was not more than 0.05, are:

18 National Museum of The American Indian, *Mapuche Machi’s kultrung – Infinity of Nations: Art and History in the Collections of the National Museum of the American Indian – George Gustav Heye Center, New York*. Accessed: <https://americanindian.si.edu/exhibitions/infinityofnations/patagonia/177322.html> [October. 31, 2024].

- Mapudungun has prestige in Chile (statement 1);
- Mapudungun is highly valued internationally (statement 2);
- Mapuche isolate themselves from the rest of Chilean society (statement 8);
- Mapuche are politically active in Chile (statement 14);
- Mapuche students face different problems than other students (statement 24).

In case of the statement 1, negative and strongly negative responses prevail among participants from Valdivia. The neutral opinion was held by 16,67% of the students. In Temuco, the values 1 (strongly disagree) and 2 (disagree) also prevailed. 29,85% of the respondents had a neutral opinion, which is 13,8% higher compared to Valdivia. 4,48% of Temuco respondents agreed with the statement, and 2,78% of Valdivia students strongly agreed. Probability calculation ($p = 0,02318$), based on the Pearson chi-square value (11,32174) and Cramer's V (0,25435), shows a statistically significant difference in the responses of each university.

Regarding Statement 2, the value of Cramer's V (0,24) and the value of Pearson's chi-square (10,12) set the probability value 0.04. This shows that, as in the case of Statement 1, a statistically significant difference can be observed in the responses of the different groups of respondents. The value of Cramer's V confirms the fact that there is a weak dependence between the answers.

First, the most divergent trend in the responses may be observed at value 1 (strongly disagree), with 46,30% of the respondents from Valdivia and 23,88% of the respondents from Temuco. Second, 14,93% of Temuco students and 9,26% of Valdivia students agreed with the statement. Overall, there is a higher trend of disagreement with the statement in the case of Valdivia respondents.

In Statement 8, the responses that represent a neutral opinion (3) prevailed among the Temuco students. The second most frequent answer had a value of 2 (disagree). Strong disagreement (value of 1) was the most common, along with neutral opinion, for respondents from Valdivia. The agreement with this statement was relatively low (in 10,45% of the participants from Valdivia and 12,04% from Temuco).

The difference in responses, broken down by university attended, is statistically significant in this case. Pearson's chi-square and Cramer's V show a medium dependence. The probability value ($p = 0,02$) is low. Although almost half of the Temuco respondents expressed a neutral opinion about the statement, in Valdivia the responses were ambivalent (i.e., both strong disagreement/disagreement and neutral opinion were found).

In the case of statement 14, a neutral opinion prevailed in both groups of respondents. The uneven distribution of the responses was observed especially for the responses with values 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree). The probability calculation indicated a high, but highest, dependence between the variables ($p = 0,01$). It also showed a statistically highly significant difference in the responses of the different groups of respondents. Although Valdivia respondents strongly agreed with the statement (21,3%), Temuco students expressed it only in the minimum of cases (2,99%). The Cramer's V

reached the highest value of all those mentioned in the case of statement number 14, which supports the fact that this is a demonstrable difference in the responses of the respondents.

Statement 24 is characterized by a low dependence between the variables, which was interpreted based on the probability value 0,04. The value of Cramer's V was 0,24 and the value of Pearson's chi-square was 10,10. The discrepancy between strong disagreement and strong agreement is notable in this case. While 43,28% of the Temuco students strongly agree with the statement, 22,22% of the Valdivia respondents have the opposite opinion. The reason why such a significant difference in responses could have arisen is primarily influenced by the fact that each HEI has its curriculum, which differs according to the needs of members of ethnic groups.

Factor analysis of survey responses

Based on factor analysis, individual variables were divided into 4 factors according to their mutual correlation (see Fig. 2). Six statements were included in factors 1 and 3, and seven statements were included in factors 2 and 4. In most of the cases, the statements are related to each other and follow the same domain. However, some do not fit in with the others, either by average or by content. These are reflected in the following separately, together with an explanation of the possible reason for the difference.

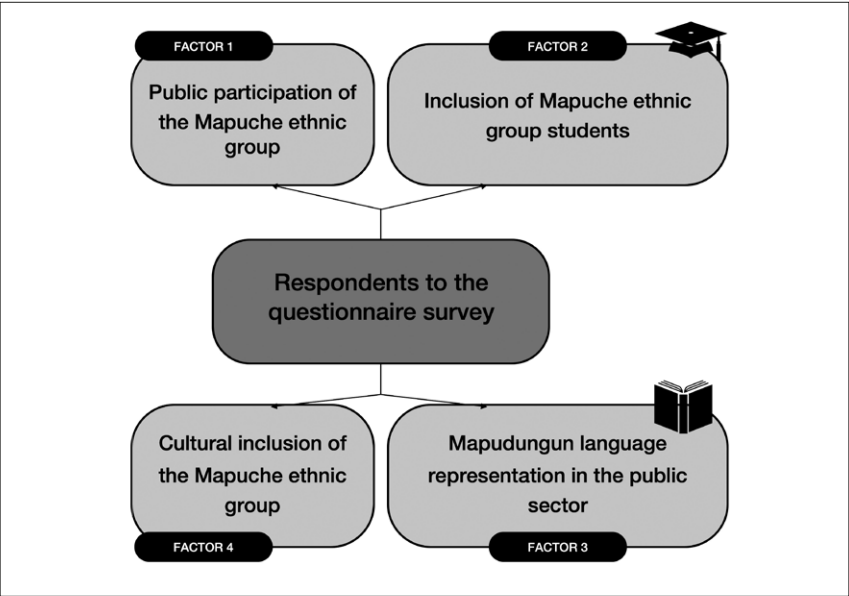


FIG. 2 Subsets of statements from the questionnaire survey falling under each factor
(Source: own processing)

Factor 1 reflects the views of the respondents on variables that focus on the representation and participation of the Mapuche ethnic group in public, political and economic institutions in Chile. At the same time, these are statements for which the mean values of the responses are not significantly different and are similar between the students from Valdivia and Temuco. Overall, among the above-average response values, students' disagreement with neutral opinions of specific statements was prevalent. The only statement in which almost affirmative responses were received was that the political participation of Mapuche will be greater in the next 20 to 30 years.

The opinions of the respondents on the statements mentioned above are supported by the fact that the relations between the Chilean state and the Mapuche ethnic group have historically been tense and precarious. "The occupation and diminution of Mapuche land as a result of state expansion, the existence of anti-indigenous discourses by Chilean society, and the implementation of the political assimilation of Mapuche culture" have all influenced this relationship.¹⁹

The political activity of the Mapuche ethnic group is currently heightened for several reasons. In addition to the various movements that call for the establishment of a multinational state and achieve territorial claims, some seek to push for changes to the constitution and the political and institutional framework. Huencho (2021) states that the Mapuche ethnic group aims to build its own social and political institutions that will provide opportunities for its political presentation. Another idea is to seek new forms of participation that would be based on equality and mutual respect.²⁰

The response values, which fall under **Factor 2**, reflect opinions related to perceptions of the Mapudungun language and, more importantly, the general inclusion of Mapuche students within the university environment. In this case, the mean response values were slightly different from those of Factor 1. The disagreeing statements of the respondents were as follows:

- Mapudungun has prestige in Chile;
- Mapudungun is highly regarded internationally;
- Mapuche students are discriminated at the university.

The neutral opinion of the respondents of each HEI was prevalent for the following statements:

19 A. Nanjari Santos, J. Cordero, "Una aproximación al conflicto chileno-mapuche: una nomenclatura sobre conflictos intratables," *Revista Enfoques: Ciencia Política y Administración Pública* 2024, vol. 22, no. 40, pp. 15.

20 V.F. Huencho, *Mapuche Movements in Chile: From Resistance to Political*. Accessed: <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2021/05/21/mapuche-movements-in-chile-from-resistance-to-political-recognition/> [May. 21, 2021].

- The experience of undergraduate students varies by background;
- The experience of students differs according to gender (following the statement: Mapuche students are discriminated at the university).

In this context, it should be noted that the university in Valdivia offers the opportunity to learn the language and culture of the Mapuche people through various courses and didactic materials. Teaching focuses on language skills and cultural awareness, thus contributing to the preservation and dissemination of Mapuche heritage.

In Temuco, this issue is addressed through several initiatives. A major component of these efforts is the new degree program in Pedagogy in Mapuche Language and Culture, which was accredited in 2023. This program lasts ten semesters and graduates receive a Bachelor of Education degree and a professional title as a Mapuche language and culture teacher.

In addition to the teaching career itself, the university has also established the Centre for Documentation, Teaching and Learning of the Mapuche Language – Kimeltuwpem, which supports the teaching and learning of the language through the documentation and archiving of the memory of the oral tradition. This center contains digital and physical archives and is linked to the university library. In this way, the university aims to contribute to the revitalization of the Mapuche language and to promote its teaching not only in academia but also in schools and the wider community. This is the first initiative of its kind in Chile.

The statements included in Factor 3 are focused on the perception, dissemination and enforcement of the Mapudungun language in the public sector. These are statements that determine how and whether Mapudungun is taught, whether it is used in religious spaces, and what the views are on its inclusion in all areas at the national level. All responses to the statements that are linked to the Mapuche mother tongue were of a disagreeing to strongly disagreeing nature. This implies that, according to the respondents, Mapudungun is not sufficiently taught and integrated into public space. The same is true for the representation of the Mapuche language in Chilean media.

The only statement in the Factor 3 file that shows a different trend and does not fit the others is that Mapuche people value their ethnic identity. As mentioned in the first part of the analysis, the statement mentioned above is the only one with which the respondents agreed. This stems from the fact that members of the Mapuche ethnic group are generally proud of and value their identity and language.

Factor 4 links those statements that are related to the cultural inclusion of Mapuche within society. These are mainly statements intended to assess minority issues, cultural identity, public isolation, and integration into Chilean society. For most of the statements, a neutral response prevails among respondents from both HEIs. Only in two statements, out of all those listed, an average agreement was achieved. Specifically, these are the statements:

- Mapuche are considered a minority in Chile;
- The university offers equal opportunities to all students.

To conclude, the values of the responses for each factor were shown separately in the above text. The following graph in Fig. 3 reflects the values of all factors simultaneously for both universities.

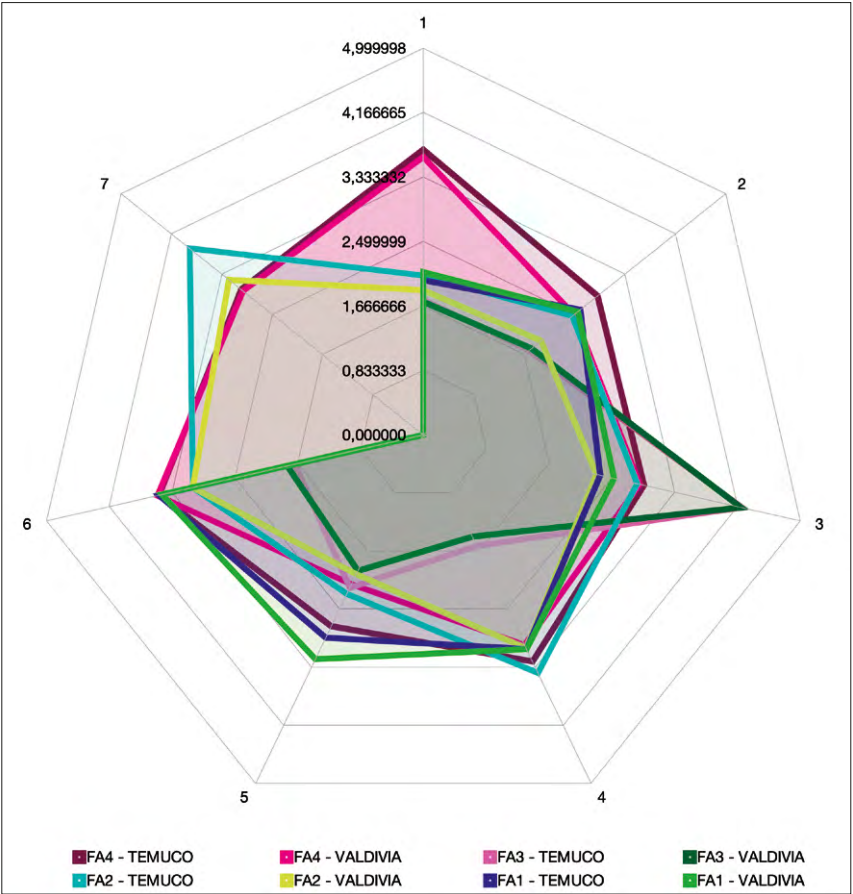


FIG. 3 Radar chart showing the values of the responses based on the membership of each factor (Source: own processing)

The graph in Fig. 3 reflects the values processed by factor analysis for all groups of factors. The data are displayed through the mean response value and are distributed among the different groups of respondents. The graph highlights the fact that the individual statements in the factors are similar in their response values and tend to replicate each other, as evidenced by the individual lines. Points 1 to 7 show the statements that fall under a particular factor in the distribution.

Although the response to the statement “Mapuche value their ethnic identity” does not agree significantly with the mean values of the other statements, when comparing between the groups of respondents, the mean values of the responses are almost identical (see Fig. 3, line FA3 VALDIVIA and FA3 TEMUCO).

The greatest difference in responses is observable between the FA2 VALDIVIA and FA2 TEMUCO lines, specifically at item 7. The observed difference reflects the difference in the mean values of the responses to the statement “Mapudungun is highly regarded internationally.” The statement also shows one of the highest statistically demonstrable differences in responses.

In general, it can be confirmed that statements with statistically demonstrable differences in responses are visible in Fig. 3 through the differently constructed lines. On the contrary, statements with high agreement in the responses between both groups are shown on the graph by lines with a copying character. Fig. 3 also clearly illustrates how respondents tend to agree/disagree with the statements. Most of the values remain below the 3,75 threshold, which reflects the fact that respondents disagreed with the statements or chose a neutral opinion.

Discussion

The perception of Mapudungun has historically been influenced by colonization, forced assimilation and repressive policies. Today, it is seen as a symbol of cultural identity and resistance to state power, but also as a language that needs to be revitalized. Current support for linguistic diversity and international pressures for recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights are contributing to its revival, yet challenges of stigma and lack of political support remain.²¹

Mapugungun is sometimes seen as a symbol of “rebellion” or “resistance” to the state. This political context may influence how the language is perceived by non-Mapuche populations. However, at a global level, there is a growing awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity. In Chile and Argentina, initiatives have emerged to promote the revitalization of Mapugungun, such as language classes, media campaigns and cultural festivals. Modern technologies such as social networks, online courses and language apps are enabling young Mapuche to rediscover their language and incorporate it into audiovisual media, including film, music and literature.

Based on the research conducted, several practical implications about the current perception of Mapudungun EV in the context of higher education in Chile

21 H. Nahuelpán, J. Antimil, K. Lehman, “Mapuchezugun Ka Mapuche Kimün: Confronting Colonization in Chile (Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries),” [in:] *Handbook of Indigenous Education*, eds. E.A. McKinley, L.T. Smith, Singapore 2019, pp. 63–83.

can be discussed. For practical purposes, these implications were divided into the following six areas:

1. Support for language policy and educational reforms. The results show that there is a consensus among students regarding the importance of teaching Mapudungun in schools. These findings can support policies to expand bilingual education not only in primary and secondary schools but also in universities. Findings about the low presence of Mapudungun in Chilean schools and universities may lead local educational institutions to increase their efforts to train teachers who can teach in Mapudungun.
2. Improvement of access to higher education for Mapuche students. Research indicates that Mapuche students face various challenges at universities, including discrimination. This may prompt HEIs to implement specific support programs (e.g., scholarship funds or mentoring) for students from indigenous communities, and thus may promote their inclusion. The finding that students from Valdivia and Temuco have different perceptions of the Mapudungun may lead to a revision of the curricula and to the unification and standardization of approaches in higher education.
3. Support for Mapudungun language revitalization. The finding that students perceive a low presence of Mapudungun in Chilean media may prompt media, cultural institutions and non-profit organizations to increase their support for Mapudungun content. Data on the perceived prestige of Mapudungun (low international and national prestige) could support demands for official recognition of Mapudungun as one of the official languages of Chile.
4. Promotion of cultural identity and social cohesion. Research shows that students from both groups (Valdivia and Temuco) value their ethnic identity, which may lead to a greater emphasis on protecting Mapuche cultural values. This may include the promotion of cultural festivals, events and activities aimed at preserving the cultural heritage. The results can also be used to advocate for Mapuche cultural and linguistic rights at national and international levels.
5. Changes in employment policy and public administration. The fact that Mapudungun is not widely used in the public sphere (e.g. in government offices) may lead to political pressure to introduce bilingual services in public institutions, especially in regions with a high Mapuche population. Furthermore, promoting the teaching of Mapudungun in universities may increase the demand for staff proficient in the language, especially in institutions involved in intercultural communication (e.g. schools, NGOs, media).
6. Academic and research implications. The research opens space for further studies focusing on factors that influence perceptions of Mapudungun vitality in other social and age groups. The use of tools such as the SVQ can be adapted and applied to other ethnic groups and languages, leading to a better understanding of

the relationship between language and ethnic identity. In our opinion, the results of this research can support changes in Chilean education policy, strengthen the revitalization of Mapudungun, promote the cultural and ethnic identity of the Mapuche, and improve inclusion in the education system and the labor market. The findings can inform cultural and linguistic inclusion policies and contribute to the protection of indigenous peoples' linguistic rights.

Conclusions

The research showed that the perceptions of the respondents from Valdivia and Temuco do not differ much from each other. In this section, it is particularly important to note that the statements where the main congruence was observed are related to the teaching of Mapudungun in schools. Specifically, it is related to the following statements:

- Mapudungun is sufficiently taught in schools;
- The state subsidizes the teaching of Mapudungun in public and private education;
- The way Mapudungun is incorporated in all areas at the national level is sufficient;
- There is an access to education in Mapudungun at the university.

Data processing based on Pearson's chi-square and Cramer's V showed that there are statements where the answers show a statistically significant difference between the groups of respondents. Views on Mapudungun, specifically its status, are different between university students in Valdivia and Temuco. Statements referring to this fact include:

- Mapudungun has prestige in Chile;
- Mapudungun is highly regarded internationally;
- Mapuche are isolated from the rest of Chilean society;
- Mapuche are politically active in Chile;
- Mapuche students face different problems than other students.

However, in terms of the representation of Mapudungun in the Chilean media, a statistically unprovable difference in responses was found and there was agreement in opinions between the respondents of both groups. This is also true for the statements: "There is access to teaching Mapudungun at the University" and "The way Mapudungun is included in all areas at the national level is sufficient." All these statements have a probability value calculated based on Pearson's chi-square and Cramer's V of greater than 0,05.

Statements that show no statistically significant difference are mostly related to the Mapudungun language, its inclusion in public areas, or the integration of Mapuche students into university life.

Applying factor analysis to the set of statements resulted in their division into 4 groups, according to the tendency of the responses from the university students.

On this basis, it was possible to confirm the hypothesis that perceptions of the Mapuche language and ethnicity are influenced by views on the status and inclusion of the ethnic group within society.

The research on the perception of Mapuche language EV in the context of higher education in Chile has several methodological limitations that are important to consider when interpreting the results.

First, it was focused only on students at two universities (in Temuco and Valdivia), which does not reflect the perception of Mapudungun in Chilean society as a whole or among students at other HEIs. Respondents from other regions of Chile (e.g. Santiago) may have different views on the prestige and status of Mapuche language.

Second, the sample included only university students, which excludes other important population groups such as native speakers of Mapudungun who are not involved in higher education, public institution staff, or the public. This makes it difficult to generalize the results to the entire Mapuche population or Chilean society.

Third, the use of an online SVQ-based questionnaire and analysis using Pearson chi-square and Cramer's V coefficient provides quantitative insight into perceptions. An in-depth qualitative analysis of the phenomenon under study could provide a deeper understanding of the motives and context of the responses in the future.

Finally, the research conducted only provides a snapshot of Mapudungun perception and does not examine the changes in perceptions over time. This is important because perceptions of EV can change due to political, educational and media influences.

These limitations could be overcome in future research by a wider geographical scope, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, and incorporating a longitudinal approach to measuring perceptions over time. It would be useful to include students from multiple universities and other population groups (teachers, parents, public officials). Use in-depth interviews and focus groups that can shed light on the reasons for differences in perception. Finally, it would be desirable to measure not only subjective perceptions but also objective indicators (e.g., use of Mapudungun in schools, media presence, etc.).

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