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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Essential Mapuche knowledge for an effective intercultural school education: perspectives of traditional educators

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ABSTRACT

This article presents traditional Mapuche knowledge that has been identified as essential in the pedagogical practices of several traditional educators (Kimche) in implementing the bilingual intercultural education program (PEIB) in Chile. This research is qualitative, and the semi-directed interview is used for gathering information. The information analysis technique is thematic analysis. The main results identify expressions of traditional Mapuche knowledge categorized based on sociocultural practices and spirituality. This knowledge, which is present in the social memory of the Kimche, is considered an essential part of their pedagogical practices to ensure cultural and territorial identity. We conclude that there is a challenge involved in incorporating this knowledge of the indigenous cosmogony and its experiential dimensions within the framework of the PEIB. This knowledge forms the basis of Mapuche experiential and community education, through which it is possible to strengthen the intercultural formation of children and young people by learning indigenous languages and cultures. The intercultural approach promotes a gateway towards engaging indigenous knowledge with contents of the school curriculum that reinforces the sociocultural identity of children through their social practices coherently with the educational pillars defined by UNESCO.

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Introduction

In Chile, as with most of the countries in the Americas, the school curriculum has historically omitted traditional indigenous knowledge from its study programs (Arias-Ortega 2019). This monocultural logic in educational planning stems from the conformation processes of the educational system in the Americas since the nineteenth century, where the selection of the ends, the methods and the educational content to transmit to new generations has been made from a positivist framework (Arias-Ortega 2019). This has been perpetuated in schools over decades, where indigenous language, culture, worldview and sociocultural practices have been overlooked as legitimate components of the cultural superstructure (Gramsci 1999; Delprato 2019). This has brought about the transmission of information in schools that can often be contradictory to the information transmitted in the indigenous community and family, adhering to a logic of colonization and cultural alienation processes (Archibald et al. 2019; Arias-Ortega 2019). School education in the decades following independence has left a legacy of progressive weakening of the sociocultural and territorial identity of indigenous students and low scholastic achievement as a consequence of the contradictions of the school system towards them (Arias-Ortega 2019).

This reality has led indigenous leaders to demand pertinent educational processes and sociocultural recognition for the incorporation of their cosmogony into the schooling process based on their traditional knowledge (Arias-Ortega 2019).

Following several international resolutions (ILO Convention 169 1989; DDPa 2007), in Chile, the claims of indigenous peoples have resulted in the State-led bilingual intercultural education program known as PEIB, which has led to the incorporation of teaching indigenous languages as a vector of cultures in the school for over twenty years (Arias-Ortega 2019). This program involves the creation of plans and programs for teaching indigenous languages from first to eighth grade in schools with at least 20% indigenous population (Chilean Ministry of Education [MINEDUC] 2018).

The implementation of the PEIB involves a pedagogical team made up of the head teacher and a traditional educator who joins the school to collaborate on the teaching of indigenous language and culture, depending on the territory (Arias-Ortega 2019). This opens an opportunity in school education to explore ways of integrating languages and traditional cultural elements present in the social memory and their educational dimensions in the teachings developed by traditional educators. Social memory specifically refers to a set of knowledge on the history, technology, stories, songs, poetry, customs and values in relation to the culture of the indigenous peoples (Mendlovic 2014). Social memory comprises the cultural knowledge that enables subjects to comprehend and give meaning to the past and to connect it to the present and future. However, research results in Chile on the teaching of the Mapuche language and culture in school education show its 'failure' since this linguistic revitalization policy has been implemented for more than 27 years but has not achieved learning and practical use of the vernacular language in the new generations (Arias-Ortega 2019; Del Pino, Cubillos, and Pinto 2022). The specialized literature in the context of La Araucanía Chile accounts for conflicted interethnic relations between indigenous and non-indigenous in the classroom expressing between the teachers and indigenous students. This reality makes it clear that intercultural relations have been characterized by asymmetry, generating practices of discrimination and racism towards indigenous children, which produces ethnic shame and rejection of relearning their vernacular language (Becerra 2012; Arias-Ortega 2019).

In addition, an epistemologically stressed educational relationship is verified between those in charge of implementing the teaching of language and culture in the classroom. Thus, for example, traditional educators express feeling humiliated and diminished in classroom practices; they think a rejection of their presence in school education and invisibility of their role in implementing the PEIB (Arias-Ortega 2019). While the teachers acknowledge not having the knowledge and interest to collaborate with the traditional educator in teaching the indigenous language and culture. They recognize that the practice in the classroom results in an educational action supported by intuition rather than a systematic, planned, and objective process that seeks the revaluation of Indigenous in-school education.

The article presents traditional Mapuche knowledge that traditional educators have declared necessary to incorporate as essential wisdom in the PEIB in three Mapuche schools in La Araucanía, Chile. It explains how traditional educators have been able to objectify their practice as cultural facilitators, identifying historic, symbolic and conceptual markers in the content of their teaching.

Teaching language and culture in the PEIB

Language is a means of communication that enables individuals to share information and express their position in the world (Lavoriel 2015). Language therefore enables us to form part of a community and participate in the expression of our identity (Thériault 2007). For example, in La Araucanía, with the Mapuche peoples, speaking *Mapunzugun* doesn't just mean communicating between individuals who speak the same language, but rather, it implies sharing a culture. This aspect allows individuals to comprehend and assign meaning to reality from their worldview

(Arias-Ortega 2019). Teaching and learning indigenous language and culture in the framework of the PEIB implies engaging the indigenous worldview with the school content based on the four pillars of education. According to Delors (1996), these pillars identify the elements that must be achieved in the process of student formation, where *learning to know* implies the acquisition of knowledge in the intercultural frameworks of their community, so that children can get to know the world around them, developing their personal, cultural and academic capacities to communicate with themselves and with others. *Learning to do* implies putting into practice the knowledge acquired in formal school contexts in connection with the family-community environment and the global society. *Learning to be* implies that the processes of teaching and learning the indigenous language and culture contribute to the global development of each person, in which each of the subjects in interaction are able to develop autonomous and critical thinking to determine for themselves what they should do in different circumstances of life in society (Delors 1996; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2015). And *learning to live together* implies that students establish relationships in a context of diversity based on the construction of shared objectives and projects, which give rise a cooperation in the framework of intercultural relationships are of vital importance for the development of citizens from a perspective of interculturalism. The use of the UNESCO pillars is justified since they promote teaching methods and forms of learning that can be articulated with the indigenous-western episteme. This considering because they are based on more experiential and holistic learning in a direct relationship with the territorial context, the family, and the community in which the learning situation occurs. In this way, it implies thinking about the PEIB, the sociocultural frameworks of indigenous knowledge, and the environment in which the work of the traditional educator and mentor teacher is carried out to promote a de facto interculturalism. This would allow the development of values, attitudes, and the construction of knowledge from the consideration of other expertise that enters into interaction, to learn to do, to live, to coexist with the other socioculturally different, within the framework of a relationship of respect and reciprocity for co-construct a common knowledge.

While, teaching indigenous culture in the PEIB implies interacting with another world, where knowledge are transmitted from one generation to the next through the learning that individuals obtain from this (Semin 2009; Arias-Ortega 2019). From the perspectives of Margulis, (2009) and Freimuth (2006), culture is defined as a system of beliefs shared by a given group, which possesses a set of values, customs and crafts that members of society use to interact in their environment. Culture is conceived as a larger system of material, human and spiritual elements, with a common equilibrium, which lets individuals from a specific group cover their basic and instrumental needs to develop the necessary skills to integrate into global society. Arendt (1972) maintains that culture is understood as an activity that converts nature into a place where people can 'live well'.

In the context of the Mapuche peoples, the practice of the vernacular language and the signs and symbols used aim to generate a dense network of interrelations with the social, natural, cultural and spiritual environment. Individuals who participate share the convention of codes and symbols that are accepted in this situation, giving sense and validity to the message as the primary element, which makes it possible to relate thinking to the underlying meaning. By sharing a set of symbols that can be communicated through their use, a community has no limitations on space and time from the perspective of the transmission of the cosmogony. In Chile, the PEIB focuses on three axes: 1) curricular contextualization; 2) community participation; and 3) teaching indigenous languages (MINEDUC 2017). Its objective is to revitalize and strengthen the vernacular language of the indigenous peoples officially recognized by the State (Mapuche, Aymara, Rapanui, Quechua, Diaguita, Colla, Kawáshkar, Yagan and Atacameño, (Arias-Ortega 2019). In addition, it seeks to strengthen cultural aspects within the school as a fundamental factor for developing a comprehensive, quality education with territorial relevance (MINEDUC 2018). The curricular structure of the indigenous language considers three main axes: 1) the axis of orality, which refers to the transmission of indigenous knowledge through narrative; 2) the axis of oral communication, whose purpose is

interactional practice for the use of the vernacular language, progressively including more vocabulary; and 3) the axis of written communication, referring to the development of reading and writing words in the vernacular (MINEDUC 2018). In these context the interrelation between language and culture is clearly inseparable. Cultural competency (in a broad sense) is social, educational and intersubjective, where its objective is to develop a mutual understanding, which tends towards intercultural dialogue (Grenoble and Whaley 2020). The aforementioned is for the reconstruction and questioning of irregularities, convergences and fractures to engage in a learning process, sustained in the recognition and introduction of the individual into global society. This is done in the act of appropriation of knowledge (language) and in the perception of the same object of knowledge (culture) (Windmüller 2015). This provides the opportunity to put into perspective the indigenous knowledge taught in conjunction with the school curriculum based on the contextualization of its ontology.

Indigenous knowledge and relational ontology in intercultural education

The survival of human groups goes hand in hand with approaches that make it possible for new generations to appropriate the experiential and social memory of the previous generations and be open to and adapt to the emergence of new conditions (Gauthier and Tardif 2017). Traditional indigenous educational practices acquire their meaning to help new generations to integrate this social memory in time, in space and through sociocultural practices and spirituality. A holism arises in these experiential educational practices with an infinite number of relations between the past, the present and the future; the visible and the invisible; here and elsewhere; the real and the abstract (Arias-Ortega 2019).

In the North American contexts, the pedagogy and education the indigenous peoples se characterized because the educational act becomes transcendent and also entails an integral vision of the being, of the community (of the other) and of the place to give meaning to the human experience and take on cultural and territorial identity (Cajete 1994; Archibald et al. 2019). Experiential education teaches the individual to model their behaviour with the expression of the characteristics of nature, aware that they belong to Earth and that they must also learn to live and develop with this, which corresponds to the place where they come from, where they belong and where they will go. This education also makes it possible to comprehend and express experiences, feelings and apprehensions about the natural and social environment of life. Learning to live in harmony with one's own family, the social group and the community in the ancestral territory bears the marks of the fusion with nature that becomes one's culture (Cajete 1994). Finally, the educational act makes it possible to conceive beyond its materiality through its spirituality to help to make sense of the intangible, the interaction and the sociocultural practices that express the interdependence between individuals, communities and elements of life. In this way, education transmits culture through its own worldview, which calms and helps to move forward with confidence towards the unknown (adaptation) with this intimate conviction that Mother Earth carries within it the reason of being of everything (Toulouse 2016; Archibald et al. 2019). Experiential educational practices thereby transmit a variety of contents through pedagogical modalities that attest to an attitude of fusion with their environment (Whyte 1976; Toulouse 2016). Relational thinking challenges the essentially naturalist and positivist ontological distinction between subject and object (environment), between the self and others. The relational perspective invites one to rethink the subject from their interactions or relations, and the world as a 'pluriverse' and less of a universe. In other words, a rhizome of interactions and worlds, each committed in a different, relational and situated process of the 'Tout-Monde' (Glissant 1997; Escobar 2014). The relational ontology is constituted in a relationship that interweaves things to provoke a way not only to understand the world, but also to feel it, to feel oneself in it, to express it and mobilize it (Juncosa 2016). These relational ontologies make it possible for a person to exist and play a role in a social group, to know nature and to hear messages from their natural and social environment, to feel, interpret and know their logic

as a way to integrate the worldview and comprehend the logic systems of human beings and societies in their territory (Glissant 1997). In sum, a person understands and gives meaning to life through the relational ontologies that enable them to understand the world and that form the basis of critical intercultural education (Archibald et al. 2019). This implies that subjects can be formed through the interaction between individuals, the social group and the environment. The appropriation of these methods by actors in an educational setting should enable the development of a pragmatic education that is pertinent to the characteristics of the community where it is implemented. The knowledge and abilities to teach are centered this way, around knowledge in language and culture to *learn to know*, *learn to be*, *learn to do* and *learn to live together*, in compliance with the four pillars of education identified by UNESCO (2015).

In Latin American contexts, the intercultural education is in the interface of different educational epistemes and practices (western education and indigenous education) (Arias-Ortega 2019; Dillon et al. 2022). This is introduced into the search for a conciliatory space for a full and critical education to benefit the new generations, thanks to the relational ontologies. The relational ontologies refer to 'being alive' where the subject learns to relate and coexist with their tangible environment (Escobar 2014), for example, with the social community, with physical elements and with the environment. They also learn to live with their intangible environment, for example, with deceased parents, spiritual beings, environments in an intrinsic network of relationships that maintain a balance with their physical and social environment (Escobar 2014; De Munter 2016).

For the Mapuche people in La Araucanía, there is an assumption that knowledge is found in the social memory of the parents, grandparents and the *kimches*. Through family and community education, the *kimches* should transmit their unique episteme to the new generations (Escobar 2014; Arias-Ortega 2022). Traditionally, this transmission takes place through mimicry, orality and in the vernacular tongue in conjunction with the elders and the wise people and is directed towards the new generations (Arias-Ortega 2022). However, with the failing social fabric arising from colonization, the weaknesses of formalized education methods and the new social realities, the presence of the *kimche* in the classroom is justified. This implies the *kimche*'s understanding of the meanings that underlie gestures, rituals and words, for the transmission of the social, natural and cultural dimension or through the teaching of language. In fact, in the context of PEIB implementation in La Araucanía, a command of Mapuche educational knowledge by the traditional educator is a condition that will mediate the implementation of intercultural education (Arias-Ortega 2019). This would make it possible to incorporate this knowledge into school education, in the didactic, pedagogic and cultural dimensions, thanks to the pedagogical team and relational ontologies (Escobar 2014), which would contribute in the contextualization of the intercultural educational processes that make up the PEIB vision.

Methodology

This study is qualitative, with an exploratory and descriptive character (Archibald et al. 2019). The research sought to identify and comprehend the senses, meanings and definitions attributed to the indigenous knowledge taught in the framework of the PEIB from the very same framework of reference of the traditional educator (Arias-Ortega 2019).

The research context corresponds to three primary schools in a rural setting, located in three Mapuche communities in La Araucanía. Each school includes the participation of the traditional educator who is responsible for implementing the indigenous language course as part of the pedagogical team with the head teacher, generally in multi-level classes. Participants were selected from among traditional educators who volunteered to participate and who have between five and ten years of experience in schools in this role. Traditional educators are those who have been recognized as cultural leaders by the Mapuche community they identify with. The PEIB good practices guidelines require that they have a command of *Mapunzugun* (Mapuche language) and have a command of the Mapuche wisdom and worldview, product of their experience in social, cultural and

Table 1 . Characterization of traditional educators.

Years of experience	School	Sex	Age	Sociocultural identity	Command of Mapunzugun	Educational level
5 years	Padre Las Casas	Female	45–55	Mapuche	Speaker	Primary education complete
5 years	Galvarino	Female	45–55	Mapuche	Speaker	Secondary education complete
10 years	Saavedra	Male	45–55	Mapuche	Speaker	Tertiary education incomplete

spiritual practices on both a family and community level (See [Table 1](#): Characterization of traditional educators).

The data and information collection instrument is the semi-directed interview, which consulted the indigenous scholars about the Mapuche knowledge that they consider essential to incorporate into school education, to favour the teaching of the indigenous language and culture in the implementation of the PEIB. The semi-directed interview guideline asks about dimensions associated with the cultural transmission of Mapuche knowledge in the framework of sociocultural practices and spirituality in the Mapuche context (Arias-Ortega 2019). Before each interview begins, the researcher restates the conditions, the acceptance to participate and also the option to back out regardless of the stage of the interview or participation in the study. The analysis techniques and procedures correspond to the thematic analysis that is defined as a method for the treatment of the information to make it possible to identify, organize, analyze in detail and report patterns or issues that arise from a careful reading and re-reading of the information provided by the study participants (Mieles, Tonon, and Alvarado 2012; Esgin et al. 2018; Smith, Devine, and Preston 2020). This is based on the need to preserve and respect the subjectivity of the participants and the recognition of the context of time and space in which the phenomenon is being studied. The thematic analysis was applied *verbatim* with traditional educators, which made it possible to identify recurring issues that arose on indigenous knowledge, which have been incorporated into their pedagogical practices. The thematic analysis considered the phases proposed by Mieles, Tonon, and Alvarado (2012): 1) Familiarization with data – information; 2) Generation of initial themes or codes to organize the information into groups with a similar meaning that can be considered as significant in relation to the study theme; 3) Review of themes through recoding and the discovery of new themes; 5) Definition and denomination of themes that are definitively identified; and 6) Production of the final report that constructs a narrative sustained in the argument that is derived from the comprehension and interpretation of the information gathered.

Mapuche educational knowledge

The results present the central category on Mapuche educational knowledge incorporated into the PEIB that emerge from the discourse of traditional educators. The central category on Mapuche educational knowledge is conceived as an epistemic structure, which is constructed on a relationship of interdependence of the human being with the sociocultural, spiritual, natural and territorial environment (See [Table 2](#): category on Mapuche educational knowledge).

Table 2 . Category on Mapuche educational knowledge.

Knowledge subcategory	Key contents
Mapuche sociocultural practices	Wiñol xipan antü (new sun, winter solstice); Chalintukuwün/pentukuwün (Mapuche customary greeting); epew (founding stories) purrún (Mapuche dance)
Mapuche spirituality	Gen espacios territoriales (Gen of the territorial space); gen vegetales (Gen of plant life); Gen de animales (Gen of the animal world)

This knowledge sustains the sociocultural interaction processes of the members of the family and community group and organizes the life experiences of people in relation to social memory (Arias-Ortega 2019). Educational knowledge ensures that people can comprehend the key concepts of the Mapuche language and can explain the world from their culture of reference. In the school context with the PEIB, this transmission of Mapuche educational concepts and contents is assumed to be transmitted by the traditional educator, in a pedagogical team with the head teacher. The head teacher engages the didactic and pedagogical dimension of school knowledge with Mapuche knowledge. Based on the treatment of the discourse of traditional educators, the essential Mapuche educational knowledge transmitted in the PEIB are related to UNESCO's four pillars of education: *learn to be*, *learn to do*, *learn to know*, and *learn to live together* (UNESCO 2015). These pillars of knowledge emerge in relation to the learning of the Mapuche language and culture with the themes of: 1) Mapuche sociocultural practices; and 2) Mapuche spirituality or through their conceptual networks and notions as educational content. Next, the categories of native knowledge essential to incorporate in the school according to traditional educators are discussed.

Mapuche sociocultural practices as educational content

Traditional educators identify four sociocultural practices that can be engaged with school knowledge and language acquisition.

A) *Pentukuwün* (Mapuche customary greeting)

This concept refers to the Mapuche customary greeting, which underlies the *chalintukuwün* (introductory greeting) and takes place in the context of social relations in the family and community environment. The *pentukuwün* there by constitutes a discursive-type greeting that follows strict protocols that respond to the hierarchical order, the social character and the cultural framework of a community. Through the *pentukuwün*, it is expected that children and young people will learn that the processes of social interaction are built through a series of cultural standards and patterns that they must *learn to know*, respect and then *learn to do* and practice every time the opportunity arises.

In this sense, the knowledge associated with the *pentukuwün* is acquired through participation in social and cultural practices, in which the child is initially an observer and as the child progresses in their formation, they become involved in sociocultural practices, to experiment with wisdom and reflect their community belonging (*learn to do*). In relation to this educational content, a traditional educator indicates: 'we go to the visit with the children, so they can learn the *pentukuwün*, at least that is how it should be. So the young people learn about this, then they continue with more traditions, then they repeat the tradition' (ET1LH [482:482]). Based on the testimony, by participating as observers in sociocultural practices, children receive not only the vocabulary associated with the concept of *pentukuwün*, (*learn to know*) but they are also able to acquire the symbolism and educational contents underlying each of the practices in the conceptual, procedural and attitudinal dimensions (*learn to be*, *learn to do* and *learn to live together*). From this perspective, another traditional educator adds that: 'yes, the main thing is that [the students] must learn to greet, the greeting, the presentation and the *pentukuwün*, this is the first thing that all children are taught at home' (ETN [343:343]). From the testimony of traditional educators in the *pentukuwün* (customary greeting), as an educational concept, the *chalintukuwün* is implicit in this, a process in which children must learn to ask for their close and distant relatives, who make up the parental branch of the family and the community, providing a common thread in both family and school education. The *chalintukuwün* (introductory greeting) is the initial part of the *pentukuwün*. A traditional educator indicates that: 'the *chalintukuwün* is a necessary educational concept to teach students in language acquisition, since it is a procedural and attitudinal aspect that children and young people in the community must master in their formation process' (ETN [163:163]). In relation to this, another

traditional educator adds that: ‘well, now I arrive with a friendly greeting for the children, with a smile, asking them how they are, how their health is. That is how you reach the children’s hearts, through the greeting’ (ETW [505:505]). In terms of the testimony, we can observe that through this type of practice, the traditional educator uses kindness in the greeting to transmit emotionality and establish a positive interaction with the students, sustained in affection, associated with *learning to be*. In this sociocultural practice of *chalintukuwün*, children and young people are taught the value of respect toward the other, as an educational content that responds to the unique cultural framework, thanks to the language acquisition as a subject who belongs to a territorial collective, learning to live together thanks to their culture in their social world.

This implies that people should be able to recognize their *tuwün* (maternal territorial and parental origin) and their *küpan* (paternal territorial and parental origin). The capacity to observe and involve people in social and cultural practices emerges as a reference to teach the Mapuche language and culture and also to build the intercultural relationship.

In this sense, children who acquire knowledge associated with the *pentukuwün* are capable of progressively discerning the underlying vocabulary and educational content in each of the epistemic practices in which they participate. As an educational method, this enables the revitalization of language, of Mapuche educational knowledge, because it is the children who will continue with this practice in the future. In this context, the practice of greeting constitutes a key component in the educational relationship to generate bonds of trust and respect with the other (*learn to live together*).

B) Epew (founding stories)

The concept of *Epew* refers to stories from the Mapuche oral tradition as an educational method to *learn to know* the value of relatives, people in general and to *learn to live together* in a balanced relationship with nature. Knowledge that is essential to children and young people is transmitted through the *epew* to support their formation process in the procedural and attitudinal aspect, also in connection with *learning to be*. The *epew* are generally represented by animals, where history and their behaviours are associated with characteristics that can be acquired by human beings, such as the sight of the condor, the speed of the puma, the malice of the fox, the agility of the *xegül* and the protection of the ostrich. Through the acquisition of language and culture, this aims to construct characteristics in children and young people that let them live in fusion with nature and their community.

A traditional educator adds that: ‘the *epew* for example, the same stories, left their teachings. This work lets them listen to more stories of animals; they are able to identify the teachings that these leave us ...’ (ET2LH [37:37]). A traditional educator adds that: ‘the *epew* is a story that I invent or I try to create through the message, which is where I draw my inspiration’ (ET4RP [191:191]). Based on the testimony, through the *epew*, students are able to concentrate and receive messages and values that promote contents associated with *learning to be* to have good behaviour and with this they *learn to live together*, which is reflected in being good people.

C) Purrün (Mapuche dances)

The vocabulary and educational content associated with the concept *purrün* relates to the Mapuche dances that are held as a way to give thanks to the superior spiritual being, *Günechen*. By learning the concept of *purrün*, birds such as the *xegül* (southern lawping) and *choike purrün* (ostrich) are imitated. These dances are carried out by the men, who thank as they dance around the *rewe*, which follow procedures such as appearing and resting in relation to the circles danced around the *rewe*. For example, in the ceremony of the *gijatun* participants dance the *purrün* from right to left, alternating rows. In other words, when one group moves to the right, the other moves to the left. The total amount of circles depends on each territoriality, although they must always be even numbers.

This *purruin* is danced to the beat of musical instruments played by participants who are adept at playing them. During the *purruin*, participants carry a bouquet of maqui (Chilean wineberry), cinnamon, laurel and quila (a perennial bamboo) in their hands, which they move to the beat of the music. This is called *jaf-jaf*, and it is done to ward away negative spirits from the space where the *gijatun* is conducted. According to a traditional educator:

‘... yes, this is done because the *choikes* (ostriches) are resting. They first dance four or six circles, then they leave and when they return, they start the prayer. This involves kneeling down in *ñuke mapu* (Mother Earth) and asking for good things for people. The prayer continues until the *choikes* have danced all the circles they need to dance ...’ (ET6T [277:277]).

Learning to know the symbolism and knowledge that underlies the *purruin* is part of the Mapuche educational content that the traditional educators consider important for the students to learn to know and do to learn to live together with their community. They justify this in their pedagogical practices at school.

D) Wiñol xipan antü (new sun, winter solstice)

This practice [*wiñol xipan antü*] refers to the change from one space in time, when a new cycle begins, bringing with it the renewal and sowing processes. In relation to learning this sociocultural practice, a traditional educator shares the following:

‘In the celebration [*wiñol xipan antü*], we try to lean more towards tradition with a *jejipun* (Mapuche prayer). The night before, we tell the children stories, we tell them that in the past the *fuchakeche* (elders) would get up really early in the morning to bathe in the river before the sun came up, to renew energies, then they would wear new clothes (...). In the *wiñol xipan antü* a new cycle is drawing near, where everything is renewed. We pray next to a *foje* (cinnamon tree), we ask *Günechen* to give us energy, we pray for good crops, good health and we give thanks for our health, for the air, the water we are given that lets us live. We also do a *choike purruin* (ceremonial dance), and then we move on to a *mizawun* (shared food), we share food with the family, the community and guests’ (ET1LH [232:232]).

According to the traditional educators, once the ceremony is over, this sociocultural practice also includes *learning to know*: founding knowledge about geography and Earth movement from the Mapuche traditional perspective. In this process, they share food and the joy of having finalized a renewal ceremony and the new life cycle, in which they hope to maintain a balance between the human being-nature relationship, which implies both *learning to be* and *learning to live together* with the Mapuche culture. Through this process they better understand how and why it is important to share food within both the family and community context and finally why and how these social practices change over time.

Mapuche spirituality as educational content

The theme of *Mapuche spirituality* incorporated into pedagogical practices in the implementation of the PEIB stresses the importance, according to traditional educators, that children and young people *learn to know* different concepts associated with indigenous spirituality due to their importance in the worldview with relation to its symbolism. On the one hand, this is a way of improving the relationship between human beings and their natural environment, and on the other, it is a way of reversing the unfamiliarity that students have with Mapuche culture and spirituality, and this has historically been addressed from a prejudiced standpoint considering that most of Chilean society associates themselves with the Christian religion.

The analysis of interviews with traditional educators stressed the need to teach children and young people that in the Mapuche worldview, spirituality is connected to the relationship with the balance and harmony of human beings with the elements around them. Traditional educators maintain the belief that the relationship between humans and different superior beings that inhabit the territorial spaces constitutes vitally important indigenous knowledge according to this Mapuche

worldview. This allows new generations of children and young people *to know* the importance of maintaining a balanced relationship without transgressing the spaces and their spiritual beings, to learn to live together with the community, which believes that this is the way to avoid the environmental and health problems that affect human beings.

A traditional educator maintains that spirituality is associated with the central concept of *Gen* based on three main dimensions: 1)

‘the relationship that the human being establishes with the divine and earthly sphere. The divine refers to the different spiritual beings that are // fill this sphere with their presence (inhabit the space), known as *gen*. The earthly refers to the Mapuche social and cultural organization in their space (as subjects / servers of the *Gen*)’ (ETL [3000:300]); 2)

‘a command of the *Mapunzugun* language as a tool that gives meaning and significance to Mapuche spirituality, sustained in orality that enables the transmission of the cosmogony, from the same framework of reference’ (ETL [305:305]); and 3) ‘educational content referring to spiritual beings that live in the space and that are responsible for taking care of the *Mapu* (Earth), giving life, protection and food to people’] (ETL [308:308]). Specific subthemes emerge out of this, related to the territorial *gen*, the plant *gen*, the animal world *gen* and the *gijatun* (Mapuche socio religious ceremony).

A) Gen of the territorial space

In the same sense, the three traditional educators maintain that in school education, children should be taught the concept of *gen* that from Mapuche spirituality is constituted as entities that protect spaces. A traditional educator indicates that these can be:

‘the *gen ko*, spiritual being of the water, the *gen lasken*, spiritual being that protects the sea, the *gen mawiza*, spiritual being that protects the mountain, the *gen lewfü*, spiritual being that protects the river, the *gen wigkul*, spiritual being that protects the hill’ (ETL [431:431]).

The traditional educators reinforce the idea that, by teaching language, children *learn to know* and to give meaning to the entities that are believed to inhabit the territories and are protectors of them. From the standpoint of the traditional educators, learning to know this vocabulary of the Mapuche language and its symbolism enables them to learn to transform relationships between human beings and the territorial space in a way that is transcendental or fused and alongside this, improve care for the environment.

B) Gen of plant life

Traditional educators recognize that the *gens* of plant life exist in the territory for food and medicine. A traditional educator mentions: ‘the *gen foye* is a spiritual being that protects the cinnamon tree, the *gen xiwe*, spiritual being that protects the laurel tree, the *gen güyu*, spiritual being that protects the chupón fruit (*Greigia sphacelata*), etc.’ (ETL [433:433]). These plants have multiple uses in cooking, medicine and the well-being of Mapuche people. From the testimony of traditional educators, it is important that children and young people *learn to know* beyond vocabulary, to know the relationship between humans and different spiritual beings that are believed to cohabit and regulate native vegetation. This makes it possible to protect and preserve medicinal plants that are used by the *machis* (people with knowledge of ancestral medicine). Likewise, the wisdom of Mapuche spirituality makes it possible to *learn to be* Mapuche and *learn to do* cooking, drinks, medicine. Likewise, they will learn to know activities and ways to conserve these plants, which are also used in socio-religious cultural practices and in healing ceremonies with members of the family and community, in relation to the balance of the mind, body and soul. Due to this, traditional educators stress the importance that children have knowledge of these themes as a way of reversing the consequences and imbalances that they may bring to them, the family and the community, as a result of transgressing these spaces and with this the symbolism of the spiritual beings that protect them.

Furthermore, the testimony of the traditional educators stresses these contents of the indigenous spirituality associated with language acquisition, which lets children *learn to know* the flora from their territory, associated with natural medicines provided by these, which are primarily used by *machis* and elders.

C) *Gen of the animal world*

The traditional educators mention the existence of the *gen* of animals or birds existing in the territory. A traditional educator indicates that these can be: 'the *gen ko üñüm* with water birds or *ko kujin* with water animals. These *gens* are spiritual forces that protect the creatures of nature. This is why you should ask permission to enter a given place' (ETL [437:437]). The three traditional educators reinforce the idea that this knowledge around spirituality enables children and young people to *learn to know* that in the Mapuche culture, there is a shared understanding of spiritual beings or owners that protect the animals, because they contribute to the well-being of the family and the community, in relation to domestic activities, and in the balance with the environment and the material beings that inhabit it. Likewise, it enables the engagement of school concepts with the Mapuche and territorial culture so that children and young people can *learn to know* the fauna in their territory, associated with the work in health and natural medicine provided by these, as well as how to feed and care for these animals in the territory. They also transmit certain announcements interpreted by the *machis* and *kimches* in the community.

D) *Gijatun (Mapuche socio-religious ceremony)*

Traditional educators declare that the *gijatun* is a sociocultural practice with a high spiritual component, which enables a set of relationships with *Günechen* (superior spiritual being), the universes of the *gens* (territorial, plants and animals) and to maintain a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature.

Therefore, *learning to know* the *Gijatun* makes it possible to establish a relationship not just with people (*Che*), but also with the natural world (*Mapu* or environment) and the spiritual world (*Gen*), to build a relationship of balance and good living with the environment. A traditional educator indicates that: 'the *gijatun* involves a prayer by the family and members of the community to thank the spiritual forces for maintaining the balance with all the beings around us and with whom we share the universe' (ETW [656:656]). Likewise, the student *learns to live together* through the *gijatun*, where they not only pray for good crops but also for good health and food in both the family and immediate community context, asking for the world and for humanity, which stresses the importance of learning to live together.

According to a traditional educator, the *gijatun* celebration involves the following: 'several Mapuche communities generally participate in the *gijatun*, and together they ask *Günechen* to watch over their crops, to ensure a good growth, which is reflected in the sprout or fruit that these give' (ETW [921:921]). In this sense, it doesn't just occur in the family context, but also in the community context, where people are reciprocally involved in teaching and learning the framework of reference of this ceremony.

The celebration of the *gijatun* is held in a specific space (*gijatuwe*), in which flags are raised¹ in different colors, depending on what is asked of *Günechen*. A traditional educator indicates that: 'if you want to ask for good weather, you have to wave a white and blue flag. And in drought, if you want rain, the Mapuche has to place a white flag and a black one ...' (ETN [347:347]). The concept of the *gijatun* and its practice aims to raise the subject of the challenge of balance in the relationship between humans and nature and their social, natural, cultural and spiritual environment.

The traditional educators mention that most of the participants in a *gijatun* are adults who have a particular location in the territorial space where the ceremony is celebrated. On the other hand, the participation and role held by children depends on the particular context of each territoriality.

Likewise the socio-religious practice of the *gijatun* taught conceptually in school makes it possible for the traditional educator to illustrate the contextualized vocabulary and the Mapuche educational content that is incorporated into school education. The traditional educator aims for the students to be able to *learn to know* the vocabulary and its symbolism, *learn to be* part of the Mapuche community and *learn to live together* with the elders, the family and the community of the Mapuche territory in the framework of the educational content associated with the ceremony of the *gijatun* that is recreated at school. Therefore, in the future they can contextualize this practice alongside other socio-religious practices in the global society. In short, the results that emerge in the study from the voices of Mapuche scholars allow us to verify that, in general, there is a base of own knowledge that it is desirable to incorporate into intercultural education since it would allow training the new generations of children and young people from an intercultural approach that recognizes and values indigenous and school knowledge for understanding and explaining the world.

This set of knowledge that has been identified from the testimony of indigenous scholars is consistent with the educational content of other indigenous peoples, in which a strong relationship with the tangible and intangible elements of the natural environment is assumed as the knowledge that allows forming the indigenous sociocultural identity as the basis is their worldview. The findings of this study allow, at the same time, to reveal indigenous knowledge associated with the territory and nature as essential to revitalize the Mapuche sociocultural identity, which accounts for this strong relationship of the Mapuche with their land as an element that allows them to maintain the balance of his body, soul, mind with the natural environment, constituting themselves as indivisible subjects with the material and immaterial world.

Conclusions and perspectives

The results of this research sustain that in the implementation of the PEIB, traditional educators incorporate expressions of Mapuche traditional knowledge in their pedagogical practices. Traditional educators use their pedagogical practices to reinforce the learning of the Mapuche language and culture as a way to develop the indigenous sociocultural identity based on the acquisition of intercultural communicative competencies. These competencies can help to create awareness in all students about the existence of other languages and cultures in society in general, which furthers an understanding of the social realities of their community, of Chile and of the world from an intercultural epistemological pluralism. In the processes of teaching and learning within the framework of the PEIB, learning the indigenous language and culture invites us to rethink social and cultural realities from another regulatory framework that incorporates other worldviews. This offers us new spaces to learn other linguistic and cultural parameters that are developed through language.

We maintain that in Chile, it is urgent to advance in the decolonization of the PEIB, in which the teaching of the indigenous language and culture is adjusted to the own educational methods to transmit indigenous knowledge. This implies incorporating essential knowledge of indigenous education in the school curriculum, such as spirituality and the senses and meanings that underlie it, since the training of new generations should be developed according to their epistemic framework. Thus, thinking about the PEIB from a decolonial perspective would make it possible to generate a breaking point in teaching an indigenous language and culture in the classroom, breaking with the hegemony of Western knowledge and excluding the indigenous from the school environment. Likewise, it is urgent that the actors of the educational environment, such as teachers, acquire a social and ethical commitment to the formation of the new generations from an intercultural perspective. In this way, the PEIB should be conceived as a decolonial project of intercultural education based on a proposal of interculturality from below so that indigenous educational contents, methods, and purposes are essential to rethink the PEIB. The preceding implies linking with the social and cultural environment, such as the family, school, and community, to rebuild their intercultural education project, which generates a sense of belonging for the school and the territory. This, in the context of Latin America, implies assuming that there is other knowledge that can be incorporated

into school education, which must necessarily be developed in joint work between indigenous and non-indigenous actors who share a common educational space. In this way, it is necessary to think in Latin America in educational programs from a critical interculturality that emerges from the territory's needs and not as the State's impositions. This case has occurred with the PEIB in Chile, which generates a rejection of the intercultural, for thinking from above and in a practical way to the interests of non-indigenous people.

Within the framework of the implementation of the PEIB traditional educators go to great efforts to give meaning to the vocabulary of the Mapuche language through sociocultural practices and spirituality to help the new generations to integrate the Mapuche culture. This makes it possible to think of the social and cultural realities with their representations and to progressively advance toward the formation of new citizens from a relational and critical interculturalism. This interculturalism is relevant to *learn to know* the vocabulary and its symbolism, *learn to be* part of the Mapuche and Chilean community, and finally *learn to live together* with elders, family and community in the Mapuche territory in the framework of the indigenous educational content that is recreated in school and in the school system.

Note

1. We specify that the use of flags in the ceremony of the *gijatun* depends on the territoriality in which it is developed, and it is important to have knowledge of the territorial context in which the school is situated.

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