

## 12TH OECD-JAPAN SEMINAR:

### “GLOBALISATION AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCIES: RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY IN LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENTS”

#### COUNTRY NOTE:

#### CHILE

Topic: Status and function of non-native languages (*e.g.*, foreign languages, second languages, English, etc.) as a means of cross-national/cultural communication, and how they are learned and taught.

*The English Opens Doors program is a real opportunity for the Chilean population to have real access to globalisation.*

#### **Background information**

The English Opens Doors Program of the Ministry of Education has the primary mission to help train citizens of the twenty-first century through the significant increase in the ability of graduates from secondary school to communicate in English. Our main idea is that English as a *lingua franca* can open doors and deliver more opportunities for citizens of the world.

The program is devoted to strengthening the capacity and skills of teachers so that they transfer those skills to their students and create a value chain that leads to a country where human capital is the main asset we can have for the future. “The potential for individuals and countries to benefit from this emerging knowledge economy depends largely on their education, skills, talents and abilities, that is, their human capital. As a result, governments are increasingly concerned with raising levels of human capital, chiefly through education and training, which today are seen as ever more critical to fuelling economic growth”.<sup>1</sup>

The relevance of this initiative is, on the one hand, in expanding the coverage of the technical-vocational training in our country, considering that the inclusion of development strategies for managing a second or third language will be a clear incentive to the demand for this type of education. On the other hand, to enrich the regular training of these students, their performance will promote increased competitiveness of labor supplied for incorporation into the productive national and international levels.

#### **English opens doors as an innovation educational policy**

The program was created in 2003 as an innovative initiative to support and strengthen the teaching of English by teachers of language and learning of English by students. From the beginning the interest with then what and how they are taught English, but also the achievement of real learning by students,

Sergio Bitar, Minister of Education in 2003, said: "Although this year a step has already been taken, because for the first time English textbooks have been delivered to all children currently in the fifth and

---

<sup>1</sup> Lifelong learning and human capital. OECD July 2007

sixth grades in municipal and private subsidized schools, along with a tape for each course, there is still a long way to go: just consider, for example, that within the system of public and subsidized education, which accounts for 90% of enrollment, there are only 4 200 English teachers who have the degree”.

After noting that reality, Bitar went on to say that the challenge then is to train more bilingual teachers in order to incorporate this second language within the training of students in their first eight years of education. "The idea is that young people graduate from school being able to chat and read any text with a basic level of English."<sup>2</sup>

### **English diagnostic test (2004)**

In education, it is essential to work with outcome-based research and statistical data. At the moment that we begin any intervention strategy that involves students and teachers, it is important to first know the state of affairs, through a diagnosis. Thus, in 2004, a diagnostic test in English was administered to 11 000 students from primary and secondary education, distributed among 299 educational units. In addition, a questionnaire was distributed to both the students and their teachers, so as to learn what the methodological practices were used in each classroom.

The objectives of this assessment were: 1) to inform the policy of teaching English in Chile; 2) to acknowledge the current level of English of the students to know the characteristics of the students in their English teachers and English classes.

The instruments used were an English Test, a student questionnaire, and a questionnaire for teachers. The Cambridge ESOL Examinations is the institution responsible for administering this test.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1. Test characteristics**

<b>Evaluated dimensions</b>	<b>Number of questions</b>	<b>Score scale</b>
Global understanding of English	60 questions	0 a 60 points
Understanding of written English	40 questions	0 a 40 points
Understanding of spoken English	20 questions	0 a 20 points

The test includes multiple-choice questions with regard to written texts and audio recordings. The same test was applied in 8th and 4th basic medium.

### ***Results of the evaluation:***

67% of students in eighth year (elementary school) had achieved a basic understanding of the language, compared to 46% for the fourth year of high school students. While these results were expected for the most part, the questionnaires provided information of great importance. One of the most important findings was an indication that those students with higher performance in this assessment were those who receive a class where teachers communicate with them in English.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ceo.cl/609/printer-30705.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/>

**Results in terms of the methodologies of teaching English:**

Most students have teachers with studies in pedagogy English, especially in secondary education. The higher the educational level of teachers, the higher the performance of their students. As all educational research papers and books have shown all over the world: Teaching practices make a difference.

Students with teachers who have higher performance make them talk in English reading comprehension exercise and hearing different assessment strategies used in classroom teacher's role is key to improving the English of students.

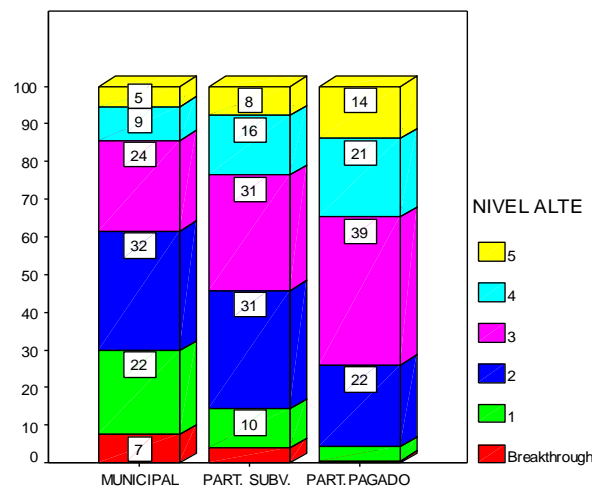
**Results according to socioeconomic level:**

- The higher educational level of parents and family income, the higher the yield. At the levels Low, Medium, Medium and low, students of various administrative units obtained similar results.
- In the High Middle and High levels, students from colleges including students from private subsidized schools obtained scores significantly lower than students from other units. A similar trend was observed in 8<sup>th</sup> elementary grade

**English diagnostic tests for teachers (2005)**

If it was important to understand the English level for students it was also important to get a grasp of the English level of teachers, so we could get an idea of where to start and how to focus the Ministry's efforts. Hence a test was applied to a sample of 2 111 English teachers <sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1. Results for Quick Placement Test:**



- The chart shows that more than half of all the 2 177 evaluated teachers focus on levels ALTE 2 (28%) and ALTE 3 (27%).
- Teachers of English at a level ALTE 1 (17%) and ALTE 4 (13%).

<sup>4</sup> This test is designed by Oxford University Press <http://www.oup.com/elt/catalogue/teachersites/exams/?cc=cl>

- A smaller group of teachers is located in one of the two end-Breakthrough (7%) and ALTE 5 (8%) – with a similar level of concentration.

### **General goals of the English Opens Doors Program:**

The main conclusion was that "the role of the teacher is key to improving the English of students." This has already strengthened the OECD in a number of its investigations, which establishes the importance of retaining effective teachers. UNESCO has also expressed on several occasions the enormous significance that has become good teachers and work for the formal teacher professional development and continuing for them.

It is for this reason that since its inception, the program has focused its work on in-service English teachers. The program has developed many different initiatives to support teachers among these initiatives. In this regard, we can mention English and methodology courses; immersion programs in English; workshops to improve classroom practices; English camps for students of secondary education, English dialogue competitions; and English debate tournaments, among many others.

All these initiatives have the following goals as a general framework:

#### **Year 2011:**

All English teachers from the public and private subsidized Chilean system will have a minimum level of management of the English language performance to ALTE 3.

#### **Year 2013**

All students graduating from eighth grade will have a basic minimum level of performance English language equivalent to ALTE 1.

### **Professional development for English teachers**

#### *Pre-service teachers*

#### *Semester Abroad Program (Semester Abroad Presidential Initiative N° 26<sup>5</sup>)*

Students from the fourth year of pedagogy in English at a university can attend a university in an English-speaking country. This initiative enables prospective teachers of English to improve their language skills in English and to learn about another culture. Upon returning, these professionals are required to work at least two years in a subsidized system, either municipal or private subsidized.

Objectives:

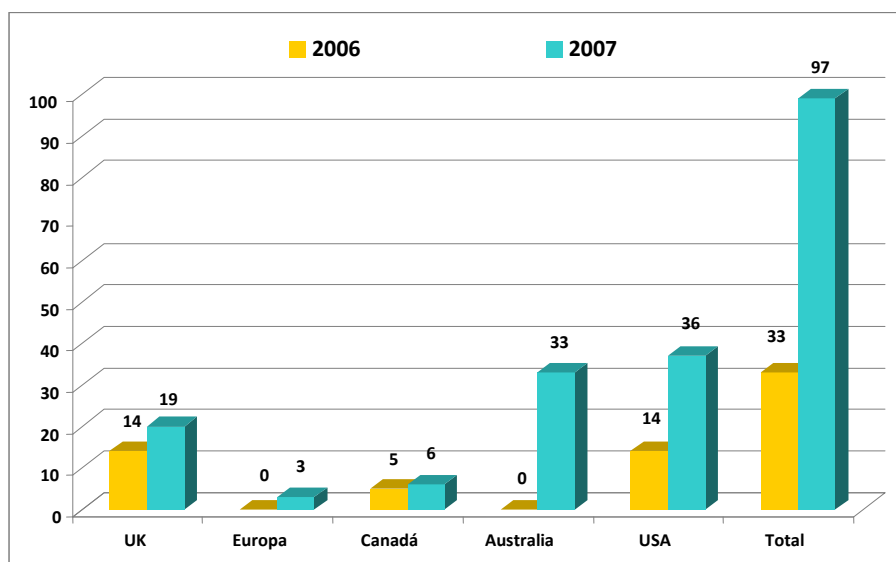
- Support the training of future teachers of English and strengthen language teaching.
- Broaden exchange systems and international mobility.

---

<sup>5</sup> When President Michelle Bachelet started in office, she established 36 initiatives for her 100 first days of government. Two of these initiatives were related to English: Semester Abroad and National Volunteer Center. This means special economic and technical support from political authorities.

- Promote accreditation of universities and supplement programs in Teaching English.
- Provide public educational institutions with education professionals with an optimum level.

**Figure 2. Growth for Semester abroad**



***In-service teachers:***

*English and methodology courses*

The Chilean Ministry of Education in association with universities throughout the country has developed English language and methodology courses, both in urban establishments and among teachers from rural establishments throughout the country.

The program also delivers scholarships to teachers of English in service through fellowships for study of English and methodology abroad, particularly in United States and United Kingdom. For example, in the month of January 2008 this year 120 teachers from across the country

Through a steady sustainment over time, we have achieved significant results in teachers, who have managed to improve their standards of performance in English and who are, therefore, making it possible for students to learn more English and be able to graduate from high school with an acceptable level of ALTE 2, according to the European level which the Chilean Ministry of Education uses.

**Table 2. Evolution of training courses for teachers**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Teachers</b>	501	833	870	1035	1800
<b>Regions</b>	5	11	11	15	15
<b>Number of institutions</b>	11	13	8	14	16

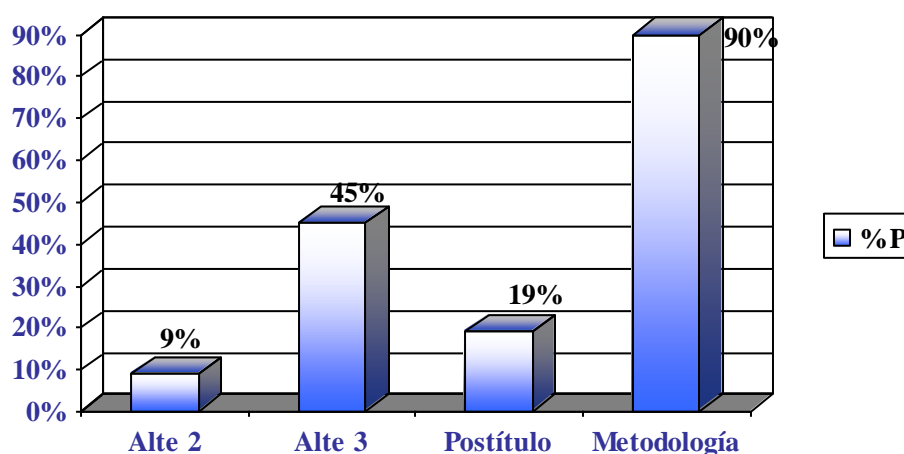
*Michigan Test*

This evaluation was conducted in June this year and included about 800 in-service English teachers.

The objectives were to provide teachers who participate in courses with an international certification; to understand better the quality of professional training delivered by the institutions hired by the Ministry; and to acquire an understanding of the areas where more support is essential in order to improve results.

The results were very promising: **8 out of 10 teachers (80%) can communicate orally in English.** If teachers can communicate in English, they may also conduct their classes in English and this, according to the findings of the diagnostic test, will improve the results achieved by students.

**Figure 3. Test results according to course taken**



**Table 3. Results for teachers attending ALTE 3 courses, Methodology and specialization course**

	Number of teachers	% Pass
PASS	285	55%
FAIL	230	45%
Total	515	

## **Local English Networks**

The program also provides support for the ongoing professional development of **English teachers: Networks and Communal Educational Workshops** through budgetary support for the development of projects, exchange of scholarships for teachers abroad (Fulbright), coordinating and organizing lectures on teaching English as a foreign language directed by national and international experts, and offering total immersion in English programs (Total immersion in English) as English Summer Town, which took place in the years 2005, 2006 and 2007.

At the moment there are 110 English Networks actively working and acting as real professional communities, organizing activities and learning from projects they design. The communal educational workshops are 42 and are distributed all over the country, mainly working with elementary teachers who need to improve their English so they can teach better.

## **Initiatives to reinforce oral English (Speaking and Listening)**

### ***Public Speaking in English***

On the other hand, both students of elementary education on average have received support from the Ministry of Education through activities that help them further develop their skills in oral language.

Public speaking, dialogues and debates are not new in the educational system. Before 2003 they were reserved to private schools, where rich families send their children to study. Now all these strategies are available for students from public schools, we are giving the same opportunities to rehearse and practice their English and they are getting unexpected results in terms of motivation and in terms of actual accomplishments. We have proved that it was just a matter of giving them the chance.

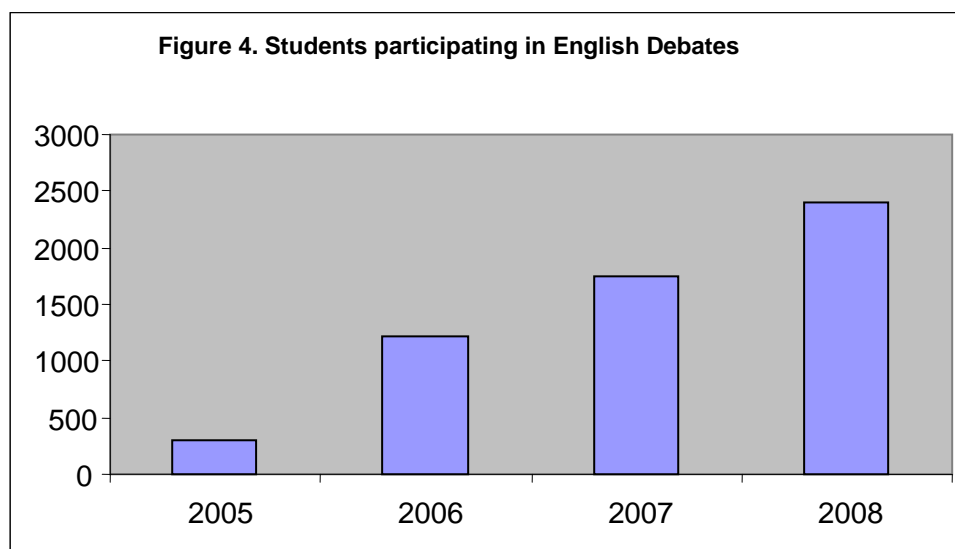
We have divided the activities between elementary and secondary school:

Since 2005 all students in the eighth elementary grade have the opportunity to participate in the skills of oratory and public dialogues in English. We have achieved the participation of up to 600 municipal and private subsidized schools in this initiative.

For their part, students in secondary school can participate in English debate tournament, the initiative also launched in 2005, involving more than 400 schools and subsidized private schools, which means more than 2000 students communicating and arguing their ideas in English.

### ***English Debates Tournament***

This activity is organized every year for secondary students who are between the ages of 15 and 19 years old. They debate in English with given topics, taking one of two possible sides. They have reinforced their oral English and also their argumentative techniques. The increase in number has been impressive, since this is a very complex activity. However, each year we get more registrations and more interest in the tournament.



## **Initiatives to create an English immersion environment**

### ***National Volunteer Center***

Realizing the significance of the ability to communicate in English in a globalising world, the Chilean Ministry of Education took the initiative in 2003 to establish the English Opens Doors (EOD) Program, an innovative program devoted to improving English teaching and learning in public schools throughout Chile. One of the program's main projects is the EOD Volunteer Program, which was founded in 2004 as a joint effort between the Ministry of Education and the United Nations Development Program – Chile. Since its founding, the EOD Volunteer Program has facilitated Chilean student's English language learning by giving them the chance to interact with a native speaker.

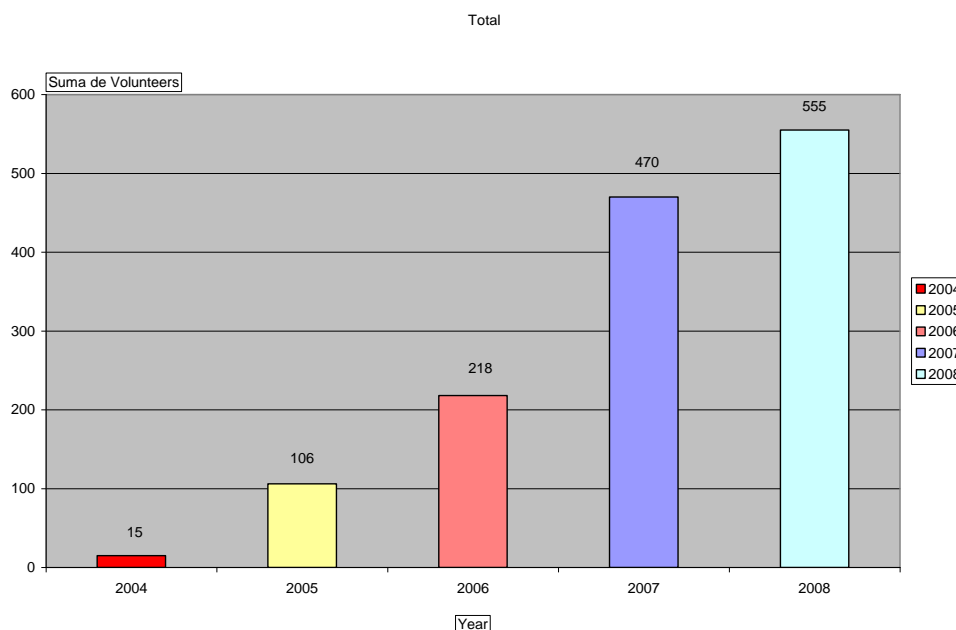
During 2004, the EOD Volunteer Program piloted a Full-Time Volunteer Program, designed for recent university graduates and/or professionals who desire to make a difference in the classroom and become involved in a school community through an immersion experience lasting several months. That same year, the Full-Time Program placed 15 volunteers in Antofagasta. In 2005, the Full-Time Volunteer Program placed a second group of 15 volunteers in Antofagasta. Also in 2005, the EOD Volunteer Program launched a Part-Time Volunteer Program, which was conducted in two urban regions, and with the goal of providing the 120 participating international university exchange students with the opportunity to assist in Chilean public schools.

The success of the pilot programs led to dramatic program expansion in the following years. In 2006, the Full-Time Volunteer Program expanded to seven regions and included sixty-two volunteers. In 2007, this number increased to 181 Full-Time Volunteers as the EOD Volunteer Program continued to partner with other recruiting organizations in order to bring volunteers to all regions of Chile. In 2006, the EOD Volunteer Program also piloted a Summer Volunteer Program with five volunteers from Utah State University and, due to its success, expanded the program to almost fifty participants in 2007. Recently, this program has gained more momentum with the addition of an academic credit option through a partnership with Montana State University. The Part-Time Volunteer Program has also enjoyed sustained growth, with 287 exchange students participating in 2007.

Since its founding, the EOD Volunteer Program has brought more than 800 volunteers to public schools throughout Chile. The importance of this Program in contributing to Chile's future is evident from

strong governmental backing from both the Ministry of Education and President Michelle Bachelet, who supports the EOD Volunteer Program through her Presidential Initiatives. Thanks to this support, the Program plans to confidently move forward and expand ambitiously in the upcoming years.

**Figure 5. Number of volunteers working in Chile**



### ***English-language immersion camps***

Finally, the program also has organized two-week long English immersion camps for students in winter and summer. This strategy rewards the talents of those who excel in the subsector and want to learn more. The Ministry has set as its goal not to lose any of our talented students, regardless of the socio-economic context in which this talent becomes apparent. This new initiative by the English Opens Doors Program was developed as a tool to support high school students with special talent and interest in learning English as a foreign language.

### **Awareness for public institutions in the country**

The English Opens Doors Program is a presidential priority which has been developing for five years now. The program has worked hard to strengthen the language skills of teachers and their methodologies in working with students. We have gone abroad to learn from other nations, and we have also provided opportunities to professionals who are in charge of public system education to attend meetings abroad and understand how other nations have developed national plans to enhance the teaching and learning of English as a foreign or second language.

More and more private and public institutions need to show their support to this strategy, they must believe that English opens doors and make of this goal a national one. Only then we will be able to get real results within all our sectors: schools, factories, banks, universities, etc.

## **Some of the future challenges**

While the program has shown significant successes with different stakeholders, much remains to be done and there remain interesting horizons to explore, which can enrich and focus better the work already done with the school community.

In today's world it is important to communicate confidently and with cultural sensitivity in more than one language. This ability expands one's experience and vision of the world. The study of languages and their management develops the intellect and invites critical reflection on the world and the many cultures of the world.

Chile is interested in strengthening the capacities of its citizens in English as a foreign language and also enhancing their technical skills in various work specialties. Our educational system has to be able to provide opportunities for students so they can have the best preparation available to face the economic and social challenges the future will bring.

On the other hand, although the work has been arduous and has been distributed throughout the country, there are still many teachers and schools who are not familiar with the work being done by the program. Since the year 2009 we will be working with establishments and with teachers who are not yet convinced of the importance of English. The Ministry should develop creative mechanisms to commit and engage them in this work in strengthening the human capital to this group in Chilean society.

Through attending seminars and international meetings like the one that the OECD organizes, Chile hopes to learn from the experience of other countries about how to strengthen skills and to raise awareness of the positive experiences that Chile has had in this regard, so as to complement and enrich the strategy.

Santiago, Chile

October 2008