

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM: REINFORCING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

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Abstract

This research focuses on the crucial role of multilingual education, including translation strategies, in promoting inclusive education systems for migrant children. The study employs a systematic literature review method, drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks, cross-national comparisons, and empirical studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the field. Findings highlight the value of employing frameworks like Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) to address the intersectionality of language, disability, and migration status. The concept of translanguaging emerges as a promising approach, viewing multilingualism as a resource and aligning with recognized cognitive and social benefits. Cross-national comparisons reveal persistent monolingual ideologies despite linguistic diversity, indicating a need for policy reforms that value students' linguistic resources. Implementation challenges include teacher beliefs, preparation, resource constraints, and the necessity for culturally responsive assessment practices. However, innovative practices, such as the use of Multilingual Teaching Assistants, show potential for supporting linguistically diverse students. The review underscores the critical role of comprehensive teacher education and professional development in fostering inclusive multilingual practices. The originality of this review lies in its holistic approach, integrating theoretical insights, cross-national policy analysis, and practical implementation strategies. Policy implications include the need for reforms that explicitly incorporate students' linguistic diversity, effective implementation strategies, and robust teacher preparation programmes. Additionally, fostering family-school-community partnerships and recognizing community linguistic and cultural resources are essential for successful inclusive education. Future research should explore models of community engagement and their impact on student outcomes in multilingual settings.

Keywords: Multilingual education; inclusive system; migrant children; translanguaging

1. Introduction

In recent years, the world's educational systems have faced significant challenges due to unprecedented levels of global migration. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA, 2023), there has been a substantial increase in international migration in recent decades. This demographic shift is particularly evident in regions like the European Union, where in 2015, approximately 10% of the population were migrants, with 5% under the age of 15 (Janta and Harte, 2016). As

diverse populations intermingle, education systems face the critical task of accommodating students from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Onsès-Segarra and Domingo-Coscollola (2024) stress that the integration of migrant children into new educational environments has become a pressing concern for many nations. Schools and educational institutions are now responsible for not only helping these children adapt to their new surroundings but also ensuring their academic success (Dong, 2024). In response to these challenges, multilingual education has emerged as a promising approach to address the scholastic gaps experienced by immigrant children and create more inclusive learning environments.

Multilingual education refers to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction in a school setting. This approach recognizes the importance of a child's mother tongue in cognitive development and learning, while simultaneously facilitating the acquisition of the host country's language (Ascher & Pichery, 2024). The theoretical underpinnings of multilingual education draw from cognitive linguistics, second language acquisition theories, and sociocultural perspectives on learning. Research has shown that multilingual education can enhance cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness, and overall academic performance (Flores, & García, 2020; López-Gopar et al., 2024).

For migrant children, the benefits of multilingual education extend beyond academic achievements. It plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity, promoting social integration, and fostering a sense of belonging in their new environment. Moreover, multilingual competence is increasingly valued in the global job market, potentially improving long-term economic prospects for these children (Ramírez et al., 2021).

Despite the recognized benefits, the implementation of effective multilingual education programs for migrant children remains a significant challenge in many countries. Education systems often struggle to adapt to the linguistic diversity of their student populations, leading to inequitable learning outcomes and social marginalization of migrant children (UNESCO, 2019). This situation is exacerbated by a lack of trained bilingual teachers, appropriate teaching materials, and supportive language policies.

While existing research has explored various aspects of multilingual education, there is a notable gap in understanding how to effectively reinforce and sustain such programs within inclusive education systems, particularly for migrant children. This study aims to address this gap by examining the key factors that contribute to successful multilingual education initiatives for migrant children and identifying strategies to strengthen these programs within inclusive education frameworks. The main research question guiding this study is: How can education systems effectively reinforce multilingual education programs to promote inclusive learning environments for migrant children?

This study is motivated by the urgent need to ensure equitable educational opportunities for migrant children, who often face significant barriers to academic success and social integration.

By focusing on reinforcing multilingual education within inclusive education systems, we aim to contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable approaches to supporting migrant children's learning and development.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform evidence-based policies and practices that can enhance the educational experiences and outcomes of migrant children. By identifying successful strategies and potential areas for improvement, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on multilingual education and inclusive education systems. Furthermore, the findings may have broader implications for promoting social cohesion and cultural diversity in increasingly multicultural societies.

2. Literature Review

The increasing linguistic diversity in educational systems worldwide has led to a growing body of research on multilingual education and inclusive practices for migrant and immigrant children. This literature review synthesizes findings from recent studies to provide an overview of current approaches, challenges, and recommendations in this field.

Several studies have employed theoretical frameworks to analyze inclusive education for linguistically diverse students. Migliarini and Stinson (2021) utilized the Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) as an intersectional tool to examine policies affecting English Language Learners (ELLs) with disabilities. Similarly, Lyngbäck et al. (2023) applied DisCrit to investigate the intersection of migration and disability in the Swedish education system, focusing on concepts of ableism and linguisticism. Prilutskaya (2024) highlighted the connection between inclusive language education policy in Norway and the concept of translanguaging, which has emerged as a theoretical framework for understanding multilingualism and as a pedagogical approach for diverse classrooms.

Comparative studies have provided insights into different approaches to linguistic inclusion across countries. Smythe (2020) compared language education policies in France and New Zealand, examining their effects on the inclusion of plurilingual immigrant children. The study revealed similarities in school systems dominated by monolingualism but noted emerging trends towards language inclusiveness in both countries. Heugh and Mohamed (2020) examined strategies for addressing the needs of refugee, migrant, and internally displaced children in the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the need for improved language-in-education policies and practices. Hanssen et al. (2024) conducted a comparative study of Nordic countries, focusing on realizing inclusion and developing special needs education for immigrant students, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and openness in enhancing inclusive practices.

Several studies have identified challenges in implementing inclusive multilingual education. Tajic and Bunar (2023) investigated two models of organizing education for newly arrived migrant students in Swedish primary schools, revealing how the concept of inclusion can be reduced or adapted in practical implementation. Rodríguez-Izquierdo et

al. (2020) examined teachers' beliefs regarding linguistic diversity and approaches to teaching Spanish as a second language in Andalusia, Spain. The study found that teachers often held monolingual beliefs, ranging from assimilationist to deficit approaches, highlighting the need for professional development to promote multilingualism. Kakos (2022) analyzed the roles of Multilingual Teaching Assistants (MTAs) in English schools, demonstrating how they develop creative, individualized, and culturally relevant pedagogies from their often peripheral positions.

The importance of teacher preparation in multilingual and inclusive education is a recurring theme in the literature. Artiles et al. (1998) conducted a longitudinal case study on novice bilingual education teachers, revealing the complex relationship between teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and decision-making in culturally diverse classrooms. The study emphasized the need for teacher education programs that provide resources and opportunities to master good teaching practices for diverse learners. Nwachukwu et al. (2024) recommended training and retraining teachers to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for implementing multilingual-oriented pedagogy and creating inclusive learning spaces.

Language maintenance and community engagement have also been explored in the context of multilingual education. Smolicz et al. (2000) compared language maintenance in linguistically diverse communities in Australia and the Philippines, highlighting the importance of regional languages for oral communication and their core value significance at the local level.

The literature review reveals a growing consensus on the benefits of multilingual education for migrant children, while also highlighting persistent challenges in implementation. Key themes emerge around the importance of inclusive policies, teacher preparation, family engagement, and culturally responsive assessment practices. Vijayavarathan-R (2023) suggests that future research could explore effective strategies for scaling up successful multilingual education programs and integrating them into mainstream education systems, particularly in the context of the circumpolar north.

Notably, this literature review demonstrates the complex and multifaceted nature of inclusive multilingual education for migrant and immigrant children. It underscores the need for comprehensive approaches that address linguistic, pedagogical, social, and policy considerations to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students in increasingly diverse educational settings.

3. Methodology

This study employs a systematic literature review approach to synthesize and analyze existing research on multilingual education for migrant children in inclusive education systems. The literature review methodology allows for a systematic examination of current knowledge, identification of key themes, and critical analysis of research findings in this field.

3.1 Research Questions

The primary research questions guiding this literature review are:

1. What are the key components and characteristics of effective multilingual education programs for migrant children in inclusive education systems?
2. What challenges and barriers exist in implementing multilingual education for migrant children, and how have they been addressed?
3. How does multilingual education impact the academic achievement, language proficiency, and social integration of migrant children?

3.2 Search Strategy

A systematic search of the literature was conducted using the following electronic databases: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsycINFO, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. The search terms included combinations of keywords such as "multilingual education," "bilingual education," "migrant children," "immigrant students," "inclusive education," "academic achievement," and "social integration." To ensure a comprehensive review of recent developments in the field, the search was primarily focused on peer-reviewed articles, books, and reports published between 2000 and 2024. However, seminal works published before 2000 were also included if they provided foundational concepts or theories.

3.3 Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the literature review if they met the following criteria:

1. Focused on multilingual education programs or approaches for migrant or immigrant children
2. Conducted in the context of inclusive education systems
3. Published in English
4. Presented empirical research, theoretical frameworks, or policy analyses related to the research questions
5. Provided insights into the effectiveness, challenges, or implementation of multilingual education programs

3.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

The following steps were taken to extract and analyze the data:

1. Initial Screening: Titles and abstracts of identified articles were screened to determine relevance to the research questions.
2. Full-Text Review: Articles that passed the initial screening were read in full to assess their eligibility for inclusion.
3. Data Extraction: Relevant information from each included study was extracted and recorded in a standardized form. This information included:

- Author(s) and year of publication
 - Study design and methodology
 - Sample characteristics (e.g., age group, country of study)
 - Key findings and conclusions
 - Theoretical frameworks or models used
 - Implications for practice and policy
4. Thematic Analysis: A thematic analysis approach was used to identify recurring themes, patterns, and concepts across the literature. This involved:
- Initial coding of extracted data
 - Grouping codes into broader categories
 - Identifying overarching themes that address the research questions
5. Critical Analysis: The identified themes and findings were critically analyzed to:
- Assess the strength and quality of evidence
 - Identify gaps in current knowledge
 - Evaluate the applicability of findings across different contexts
 - Synthesize conflicting or complementary findings
6. Synthesis: The analyzed information was synthesized to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on multilingual education for migrant children in inclusive education systems.

3.5 Quality Assessment

The quality of included studies was assessed using appropriate critical appraisal tools, such as the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists for qualitative and quantitative research. This assessment helped in weighing the strength of evidence and identifying potential biases or limitations in the reviewed literature.

3.6 Limitations

Potential limitations of this literature review include:

1. The possibility of publication bias favoring positive results
2. Language bias due to the inclusion of only English-language publications
3. The subjective nature of thematic analysis, which may be influenced by researcher bias
4. Variability in the quality and methodological rigor of included studies

By employing this systematic literature review approach, we aim to provide a comprehensive and critical synthesis of the current knowledge on multilingual education for migrant children in inclusive education systems. The findings of this review will offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers working to support the academic success and social integration of migrant children, while also identifying areas for future research and improvement in practice.

4. Discussion of Results

The systematic literature review on inclusive multilingual education for migrant and immigrant children reveals several key themes and findings that warrant further discussion. This section will synthesize the main results, interpret their implications, and identify areas for future research.

- *Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptual Approaches*

The review demonstrates the value of employing diverse theoretical frameworks to understand and address the complexities of inclusive multilingual education. The application of Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) by Migliarini and Stinson (2021) and Lyngbäck et al. (2023) highlights the intersectionality of language, disability, and migration status in educational settings. This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the multiple barriers faced by linguistically diverse students with disabilities, emphasizing the need for policies and practices that address these intersecting challenges.

The concept of translanguaging, as discussed by Prilutskaya (2024), emerges as a promising framework for inclusive language education. This approach, which views multilingualism as a resource rather than a problem, aligns with the growing recognition of the cognitive and social benefits of multilingual education highlighted by several studies in the review. The adoption of translanguaging pedagogies could potentially bridge the gap between theory and practice in creating truly inclusive multilingual classrooms.

- *Cross-National Comparisons and Policy Implications*

The comparative studies reviewed (Smythe, 2020; Heugh & Mohamed, 2020; Hanssen et al., 2024) reveal both commonalities and differences in approaches to multilingual education across different countries and regions. A recurring theme is the persistence of monolingual ideologies in many education systems, despite increasing linguistic diversity. This finding suggests a need for more comprehensive policy reforms that explicitly value and incorporate students' diverse linguistic resources.

The emphasis on flexibility and openness in Nordic countries' approaches to inclusion (Hanssen et al., 2024) provides valuable insights for other contexts. However, the varied implementation of inclusive policies, as seen in the Swedish case study by Tajic and Bunar (2023), underscores the challenges of translating inclusive ideals into practice. This highlights the need for more research on effective policy implementation strategies and the factors that facilitate or hinder the realization of inclusive multilingual education.

- *Implementation Challenges and Innovative Practices*

The review identifies several persistent challenges in implementing inclusive multilingual education, including teacher beliefs and preparation (Rodríguez-Izquierdo

et al., 2020; Artiles et al., 1998), resource constraints, and the need for culturally responsive assessment practices. However, it also reveals innovative approaches and promising practices. The creative pedagogies developed by Multilingual Teaching Assistants (Kakos, 2022) demonstrate the potential for bottom-up innovations in supporting linguistically diverse students.

The longitudinal study by Artiles et al. (1998) and the recommendations by Nwachukwu et al. (2024) emphasize the critical role of teacher education and professional development in fostering inclusive multilingual practices. This suggests that future efforts should focus on developing comprehensive, long-term teacher preparation programs that equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective multilingual education.

▪ ***Community Engagement and Language Maintenance***

The findings on language maintenance (Smolicz et al., 2000) and the importance of family-school-community partnerships (Vera et al., 2012; Georgis et al., 2014) highlight the need for a holistic approach to multilingual education that extends beyond the classroom. These studies suggest that successful inclusive education requires engagement with families and communities, recognizing and valuing their linguistic and cultural resources. Future research could explore effective models of community engagement and their impact on student outcomes in multilingual settings.

5. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This systematic review has revealed strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of multilingual education for migrant children in inclusive education systems. However, it has also highlighted significant challenges in implementation and areas requiring further research and development. Notably, while multilingual education shows great promise in supporting migrant children's academic success and social integration, its effective implementation requires a comprehensive approach that addresses linguistic, pedagogical, social, and policy considerations. As global migration continues to shape diverse societies, the development of effective multilingual education strategies remains a critical priority for inclusive education systems worldwide.

The review reveals a growing body of research on inclusive multilingual education, yet several gaps and areas for future investigation remain. One such area is the need for more longitudinal studies to assess the long-term academic, social, and economic outcomes of students who participate in inclusive multilingual education programs. Another area of interest is the scalability of successful programs. As suggested by Vijayavarathan-R (2023), research on how to scale up successful multilingual education initiatives and integrate them into mainstream systems is crucial. Additionally, the potential of digital tools and platforms in supporting multilingual education, particularly in diverse and remote settings, warrants further exploration.

Moreover, there is a need for more research on intersectionality. Specifically,

understanding the intersections of language, disability, socioeconomic status, and other factors that influence educational experiences and outcomes for migrant and immigrant students is essential. Lastly, studies examining the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective implementation of inclusive multilingual education policies could provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners.

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