

**THE MANAGEMENT OF MULTILINGUAL
DIVERSITY AT WORK:** A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY
ANALYSIS IN THE SPANISH CONTEXT

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IR - MultiLing 
Industrial relations in multilingual environments at work

CONCEPT OF 'MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY'

- Advisory Group → “Management of diversity” as broader concept
- Definition (Keil et al., 2007):
 - “[...] managerial process of accepting and using certain differences and similarities as a potential in an organisation [...]”
 - “[...] a process which creates added value to the company”.
- The multilingual diversity → origin, ethnic, gender, culture, etc.
 - ↳ Language discrimination: hardly separable from other categories associated with migrant status
- Management of Diversity clauses → 12 pioneers collective agreements

METHODOLOGY AND MODEL

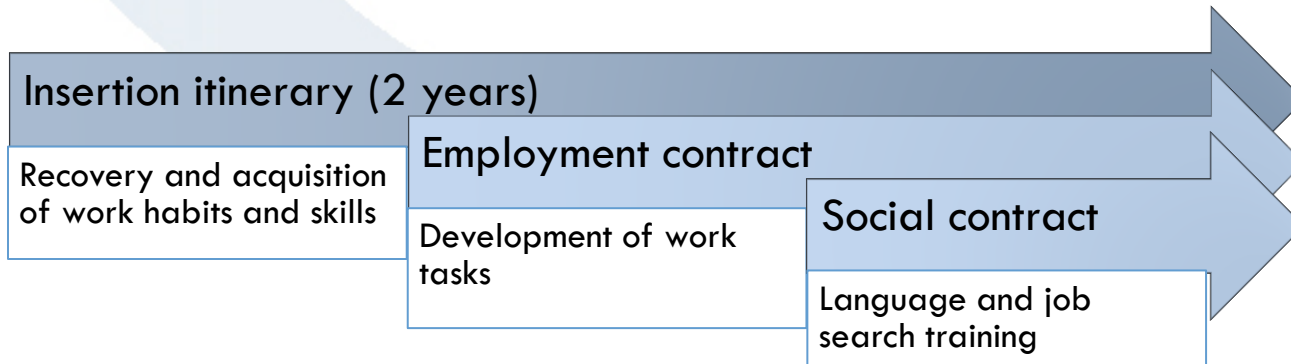
- Organisational analysis → Case study methodology
- Three cases: work centres (Yin, 1994).
- Selection variables:
 - Sectoral level, level of Qualification, the Size and type of Company, Trade union role, Share of migrants and Women.
- Analysis axis:
 - Languages and relations at work
 - Understanding of labour rights
 - Training management
 - Representation and representativeness
 - Initiatives
- 18 interviews:
 - Management and HR (4) | Committee (3) | Workers (11)

CASES STUDY

	CASE I	CASE II	CASE III
Sector	Construction	Contact-Center	IT Development
Position	Operators (Painters)	Customer service agents	Developers
Languages	Spanish and Catalan	Mother tongue, Spanish and Catalan	English and mother tongue
Company	Inclusion company	Supplier company	Start-up
IR	Committee No affiliation	Committee Low affiliation	No committee No affiliation
Size	200	750	43

CASE STUDY I: CONSTRUCTION

- **Sector: declining employment**
 - Collective agreement: multilingualism → Health and Safety issues
- **Company: Convergence between third sector and private sector**
 - 30% of migrants | High rate of men | Low qualified



CASE STUDY I: CONSTRUCTION

➤ Languages and relations at work:

- Spanish as *lingua franca*
- Arabic as the language for verification of information between Moroccan
- Different interpretations between Management and migrant workers
 - Coexistence vs. Flexibility
 - Perception of “ghettos”
- Mild conflicts regarding language
- Use of Spanish as a mechanism of control and mutual respect

➤ Understanding labour rights:

- Interdependence of workmates of the same origin
- Support of the Committee (Moroccan president)

CASE STUDY II: CONTACT-CENTER

- **Sector: Coordination of outsourcing practices at global level**
 - Recognition of diversity in the collective agreement (salary Plus and Non-discrimination clauses)
- **Company:**
 - USA's multinational | Multilingual hub
 - 75 % migrants | 70 % women | Medium qualification
- **Languages and relations at work:**
 - Spanish and English as common languages
 - National distribution of space
 - Cultural and linguistic bubbles
 - Reproduction of linguistic and cognitive frameworks of the country of origin
 - Little interaction between nationalities
 - Exception in the only department without national distribution of the space
- **Representativeness**
 - Lack of representation of migrant workers

CASE STUDY III: IT START-UP

- **Raise of IT Start-ups in Spain → network in Barcelona**
 - Digital business
 - “Pull effect” of international, young and high qualified profiles
- **Company: Start-up focused on the development of on-line interfaces for companies.**
 - 32% migrants | 11% women | High qualification
- **Horizontal corporate culture**
 - No visual hierarchy
 - Opened work space
 - Work dynamics of autonomous and flexible work
- **Self-management of linguistic diversity**
 - Multiple courses of languages per week
 - “Off-site” activities

CONCLUSIONS

- Presence of linguistic pairs → “Catalyst” of the committee as mediator
- Labour conflicts:
 - Contexts with higher religious and cultural differences
 - Networks and trajectories characterized by precariousness
- Qualification as facilitator factor
- Training as indicative dimension of the “MoD”
 - Different levels of adaptability depending of the case

Taylorism

Suppression of workers' subjectivity

Posfordism

Management and channelling of the subjectivity

CONCLUSIONS

I. CONSTRUCTION

Assimilationist model

II. CONTACT-CENTER

Cohabitation model

III. START-UP

Integrative model

CONCLUSIONS

- Assimilationist model: Scenario where a dominant language is implemented by the Management prohibiting or denying the use of the migrant workers mother tongue.
- Cohabitation model: Work environment characterized by the existence of diverse cultural and linguistic communities using their mother tongue but with low interaction between each community due to varied HR strategies.
- Integrative or “Bottom-Up” model: Work scenario characterized by high workers participation in decision making with high flexibility and adaptability in the use of diverse languages during the work process.