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

Alejandro Godino
Antonio Martín
Oscar Molina

Centre national de la recherche scientifique – CNRS
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE I</th>
<th>CASE II</th>
<th>CASE III</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Contact-Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Operators (Painters)</td>
<td>Customer service agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>Spanish and Catalan</td>
<td>Mother tongue, Spanish and Catalan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Inclusion company</td>
<td>Supplier company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>No affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>750</td>
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</tbody>
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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

### Insertion itinerary (2 years)
- Recovery and acquisition of work habits and skills
- Employment contract
  - Development of work tasks
- Social contract
  - Language and job search training
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 on the case

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Taylorism</th>
<th>Suppression of workers' subjectivity</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Posfordism</td>
<td>Management and channelling of the subjectivity</td>
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</table>
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.