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The circle of non-dialogue: everyday interactions at schools located in vulnerable areas and Chilean educational system

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to understand, through an ethnography, how interactions and dialogue transpire in the classrooms of three high-risk primary schools in Santiago, Chile. We address the problem in an educational model with an evaluation system based on high-stakes testing. The results give an account of interactions do not favour dialogue, there is a prevalence of a sequence of expository class, individual work and monitoring, hurry to cover the curriculum predominate, and the evaluation standards for learning are limited to content tests in the form of a standardised high-stakes test. The rationale behind these classroom practices follows a circular logic where the students are both the cause and consequence of the lack of dialogue.

Introduction

If we consider the fundamental relationship between language, learning, and development, then the interactions that take place in the classroom constitute the core of the formal education (Mercer 2000). Dialogue is a concept to understand these interactions (Howe and Abedin 2013). An authentic dialogue in the classroom requires specific conditions and can vary in different educational contexts (Calcagni and Lago 2018). Among these conditions are from physical space to assessment policies. In this research, we study how classroom interactions unfold in an educational system in which conditions identified as the antithesis of dialogue prevail (Segal, Snell, and Lefstein 2017). Our main purpose is to describe interactions of (non)dialogue in schools where conditions of poverty and an assessment policy based on high-stakes testing are reunited.

Classroom dialogue

The dialogic character of an educational process, in contrast to the monological character, is the unfinalizability and openness to different voices, the possibility of creation and the non-determination of consciousness from static ideals (Matusov 2011).

The main epistemological implication of this perspective about dialogue is there are no unique nor correct answers; there is no authority or authoritative knowledge

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(Wegerif 2007). Nevertheless, it is difficult to carry out this general tenet in education. Segal et al. (2017, 2) call this kind of approach a 'purist dialogic pedagogy', it is necessary to adapt dialogic ideals to their reality.

Howe and Abedin (2013), in a review of classroom dialogue, identified several definitions: from classroom interactions of initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) to dialogue as a multiplicity of voices where the correct answers is not the fundamental aspect – the dialogue depends on providing encouraging and non-judgmental feedback.

Despite many definitions, we understand dialogue in the classroom as a productive context, where multiple perspectives promote learning (Cazden 2001); then, dialogical teaching 'involves students in the collaborative construction of meaning and is characterised by shared control over the key aspects of classroom discourse' (114). Among the benefits of classroom dialogue is critical thinking development (Reznitskaya and Gregory 2013; Walton 1989). At the same time, critical thinking is fundamental to citizenship education and civic participation (Kuhn, Hemberger and Khait 2016).

Despite these benefits for students' development and civic life, the interaction that prevails in most classrooms is not dialogic (van der Veen and van Oers 2017). The reasons behind this lack of dialogue are multiple; among them are the pressure for curricular coverage and for responding to standardised learning results (Calcagni and Lago 2018).

Following Calcagni and Lago (2018), there are three domains for dialogue: teaching-learning domain; assumptions domain; and instruments domain, including assessment. In that sense, assessment policy could become an obstacle to dialogue for several reasons. The first problem is a difference about tenets. To standardise evaluation, especially high-stakes tests, it is impossible to consider multiple correct answers or voices in an endless chain of meanings (Matusov 2011).

The second problem is standardised evaluations emphasise content learning or factual knowledge (Lefstein and Snell 2014), and when they become a systematic educational policy of high stakes for schools, their effects can be detrimental to learning. Evaluation and measurement of learning are related to planning and teaching practices. When they become an end in themselves, they are not a tool for learning anymore, producing what Segal et al. (2017) call 'teaching for the test' and curricular narrowing results. In these contexts, pedagogical relationships limit the students' and teachers' agency who must give priority to the topics covered by tests (Au 2007).

Then, the predominance of these evaluations undermines the complex knowledge with multiple answers, which, in turn, limits the classroom dialogue (Lefstein and Snell 2014). This dynamic generates a non-dialogical environment that inhibits the contrast of perspectives in which students can genuinely share their ideas (Matusov 2011). The perspective of the dialogue contributes to understanding the classroom dynamics; especially in contexts where the broader social conditions are characterised by a lack of dialogue and by the educational standardisation policies, where there is no room for multiple perspectives or autonomy.

Considering the above, it is necessary to understand what happens daily in pedagogical environments where high-stakes evaluation and a lack of teachers' work autonomy prevails, as the case of Chile.

Accountability, standards, and classroom everyday life: the Chilean case

The Chilean educational system has characteristics that are worth mentioning. Some authors describe it as a neoliberal experiment, installed during the civic-military dictatorship of the 1980s, characterised by adopting a voucher financing model and by a provision of mostly privatised services (Verger, Bonal, and Zancajo 2016). The post-dictatorial educational policies have not changed the model, such as financing, private provision, or segregation (Falabella 2014).

Similarly, teaching policies have been characterised by accountability and by the predominance of summative evaluations linked to student learning, measured through standardised high-stakes tests (Falabella 2014). For the assessment of learning at a national level 'SIMCE' (National Quality Measurement System), a census-type test that measures curricular progress, has been used. This test has become an essential component for the educational market and educational accountability policies in Chile (Gysling 2016).

The effects of SIMCE have been similar to those described in other countries with high-stakes tests, such as England, Australia, and the United States (Lingard, Thompson, and Sellar 2016). While there are variations, some fundamental purposes are shared as prioritising measurable contents and the preparation of the test, narrowing the curriculum (Stobart 2008). Besides, we can sum an effect of segregation when are the same social groups, and the same public schools that present low performing throughout years. In that sense, Knoester and Au (2017) state African American students concentrate in low performing schools in United States. But in Chile, the system is segregated by social classes.

International literature focusing on the reconfiguration of everyday life and school culture in these scenarios has described adverse effects. In Australia, Howell (2017) showed how primary school children experienced a national test in a predominantly negative way, confusing their purposes and associating their results with a supposed high impact on their future.

Also, in a primary school, Lunneblad and Asplund-Carlsson (2012) studied classroom practices during the application of national tests in Sweden. An interesting finding was both teachers and students acted *as if* in daily practices, that is, although the actors claimed that the test did not measure knowledge nor was the most important issue, they acted as if the test were a measure of real knowledge.

In Chile, public schools have been the most affected by the implementation of competition policies, facing adverse conditions, such as low enrolment, care for students in conditions of poverty, and lack of means (Falabella 2014). The pedagogical practices in this context reproduce social relationships in which the excluded groups identity is reaffirmed; groups that do not participate in the educational processes within the classroom nor citizen practices in society (Luna 2015). Adults in these communities also live these conditions with discomfort, with adverse effects on the practices and teachers' subjectivity (Acuña, Assaél, Contreras, and Peralta 2014).

Another problem in Chile is the autonomy of teachers' work. Analyses of the educational policy that regulate teaching work show a minimum margin for teacher decision making (Cornejo et al. 2015). Likewise, teachers perceive the education system conditions do not allow them to establish the appropriate bonds with their students (Albornoz, Cornejo and Assaél 2017). What happens with dialogue in the in this scenario?

The purpose of this study is to address dialogue in the classrooms' daily life in primary schools in contexts of educational standardisation and poverty. Our objective is to understand and describe these interactions and the meanings that the actors build about them.

Methodology

The ethnography, throughout a detailed explanation and meaning construction in the research process, allows a thick description of the practices in the classrooms (Clifford and Markus, 1986). As Hammersley (2006) states, ethnography 'emphasises the importance of studying at *first-hand* what people do and say in particular contexts' (p.4). In this way, ethnography was fundamental to address our research problem. Specifically, participant observations and fieldnotes were relevant techniques for the study of real educational contexts, focusing on discourses and meanings that emerge from the school experience and classroom practices.

Research contexts Selecting

The studied contexts were three public schools of Santiago, Chile. They were selected for a larger project by the next inclusion criteria: public schools, where the accountability policy has more negative consequences (see Falabella 2014); elementary schools – since at this level, there are two moments of standardised testing: 4th grade and 8th grade; and schools from a vulnerable sector of Santiago.

These schools share characteristics: all of them are located in high-risk sectors; they serve vulnerable population; their enrolment has decreased considerably in the last two decades; they face a lack of resources from the public system; they are constantly pressured to improve their results in student learning; and they have been classified according to the performance categories, built mainly from the SIMCE results and other indicators in relation to the students. However, these schools also have particularities that make them interesting case studies:

(1) **Sur**. The school vulnerability index in 2017 was 85.1%, considered high. As with most public schools in Chile, enrolment has dropped by more than 70% in the last 20 years: from 701 students in 1998–195 students enrolled in 2018. Currently, it is classified at the 'medium-low' level. The school has an interdisciplinary team belonging to the 'PIE' (School Integration Program), which supports students with special educational needs. The fourth grade observed had 17 students (9 boys and 8 females). The teacher in charge of the class, nicknamed Margarita has five years of professional experience. In some observations, Teacher Violeta, a member of PIE, also participated in support of certain students in the classroom. Only half of the chairs and tables were used due to the class size – the classroom had a capacity for 36 students.

(2) **Novo**. The school vulnerability index was 92.5% in 2017. Enrolment decreased by more than 70% in the last 20 years, from 938 students in 1998–260 students in 2018. Currently, it is classified at the 'medium-low' level. The observed 4th grade was composed of 20 students. The teacher in charge, Teacher Emilia, has several decades of professional experience, and she will retire soon. The school has an interdisciplinary team from the PIE programme.

(3) **Francia**. Its vulnerability index was 74.15%, considered slightly less vulnerable than the other schools, and it has 570 students enrolled. It is an exceptional case, since after several years of progressive decrease in enrolment, this school has managed to increase the number of students and improve their test results. Currently its category is 'average' performance, which has given greater autonomy to the management team. There are two 4th-grade classes: 4A and 4B, with 25 students in each. Teacher Carla was in charge of 4A, while 4B was Teacher Paulina class, with five and six years of experience, respectively. During the observed classes, Teacher Laura was also present, a member of PIE who supported the pedagogical work.

For this study, we observed Math and Language (Spanish) classes because they are the subjects with more hours taught per week – 8 and 6 h, respectively – and they are the main areas considered by the SIMCE test. We decided to observe 4th-grade classes because this is one of the levels at which the test is administered.

Fieldwork process and data analysis

The findings refer to the period between March – the beginning of the school year – and September – just before the SIMCE test – of 2017. During this period, four members of the research team attended the schools 34 times to observe the classes and to conduct interviews with teachers and school authorities. Each research member was in charge of one school, except in Escuela Francia, where there were two members to observe two classrooms.

We analysed records of 34 classroom observations that include dialogues literally transcribed. In addition, these records included descriptions of places and conversation tones. In every visit to the schools the ethnographers took fieldnotes, which were discussed in team research meetings weekly. At the end of the fieldwork, there were 48 fieldnotes. Besides, four semi-structured interviews with teachers. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and were conducted after observations since they considered questions on classroom practices. The total of 466 pages of recorded data was the subject of analysis.

The data analysis started in the weekly team meetings, there the data reading outlined the main lines of the next phase. The second phase was conducted by the first and second authors inductively based on grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). Successive readings of the material were made as it was produced. Subsequently, open coding was carried out and then an axial coding to make way for categories, some of which aligned with the theoretical framework and others were new, which allowed us to address the research aim.

The main categories were organised first presenting a general description of the class; secondly how teacher manage the class' timing; and the third category was a zoom on the assessment. The first and the second categories emerged from the analysis process, and the third one tried to answer our research question.

The larger project that includes this study was approved by the ethical committee of the sponsoring university. All participants in this study were volunteers. Since participants were children, they gave informant assent, and their parents signed an informed consent document. All real names were modified to preserve anonymity.

Results[1]

Results are organised in three sections. First, a description of general interactions in classes, focussing on teacher-student interactions. Then a description of classes' rhythm and the rationale behind the time management in each school. The last section focuses on learning evaluation throughout a type of assessment which is related to classes' dynamics.

Classroom general interactions

The most common class sequence at the three schools began with an expository class, followed by students' work while the teacher monitors and answers questions. During the expository class, the teacher presents the contents, usually standing in front of the class, while she writes on the board or does dictation for the students to copy in their notebooks. A common scenario is a Math class:

Teacher Emilia:	The geometric body has volume (she stands in front of the students, takes a cube and holds it while talking). From here to here …
Student:	Width.
Teacher Emilia:	From here to here?
Students:	Height … Length.
Teacher Emilia:	(She draws a cube on the board and begins to dictate) The geometric shapes: polyhedrons or round bodies. We are going to write it down … round bodies. What are the round shapes? The cone, the cylinder Period. Next paragraph. The round shapes … Sphere, cylinder and cone. (Classroom record *Novo* 18:29).

Teacher Emilia asks students to answer the same at the same time 'From here to here … length, from here to here … the width', followed by questions that she answers herself and dictation to students write in their notebooks. This interaction is a typical class in three schools, where we cannot see open-ended questions or individual feedback to students' answers. In these interactions (predominant in *Escuela Novo* and *Escuela Sur*), the feedback to students' responses does not allow for a dialogical environment (Lefstein and Snell 2014). In that sense, what really happens in those classrooms is not different from previous studies' results (van der Veen and van Oers, 2017).

Both at *Escuela Sur* and *Escuela Francia* teachers belonging to the PIE programme participate in the class. At *Escuela Sur*, Teacher Violeta supports the students who belong to the integration programme, helping them individually. In this school, it is not observed communication between the regular teacher and the PIE teacher.

On the other hand, at *Escuela Francia* the presence of Laura – supporting teacher – is permanent, and she works with all children without distinguishing between them. Also, coordinated work is observed between the regular teacher and the PIE teacher. Interestingly, although the school integration policy does not command the PIE teacher must work with everyone, the coordinated work between both teachers emerges as an action aims to re-organise the pedagogical practice. Likewise, this school combines individual work with group work; games are a resource for competition with the use of small, individual boards distributed among students:

Teacher Laura:	I will give you the multiplication (…)
Teacher Paulina:	I am going to dictate … 45 × 4. I am writing it down … are you writing it down? And then detail how you solved it; if not, we will not know what happened. Whoever has it ready raises the board.
Teacher Laura:	45 × 4 (Student Matias finishes and raises his board. Teacher Paulina arrives at his seat.)
Teacher Paulina:	How much is 45 × 4? (she sees an incorrect number in Matias' board). Think again (Classroom record 4B *Francia* 2:58)

Also, in *Escuela Francia*, two coordinated teachers walk around the classroom and give feedback to students. In this case dictations are used in the context of game with multiplications, differently to aforementioned the *Escuela Novo* fragment, where teacher dictates curricular contents.

While students worked individually and teachers monitored, the observation focused on feedback or evaluations of student responses. The way in which this feedback was carried out is particular to each of the contexts. Sometimes at *Escuela Sur*, the feedback of teacher included personal comments about the students:

(Student talks to the teacher):	'*Tía*, I cannot find Dadiva … '
Teacher Margarita:	No, it is not 'Dadiva,' it is 'Deriva' … you do not know how to look up words … and the worst of all is you are slack, and you want me to look it up for you. (Classroom record *Sur* 27:98) (A student shows his notebook and book to the teacher)
Teacher Margarita:	You should have breakfast … you are letting yourself go … Juan. (Classroom record *Sur* 25:62)

In *Escuela Sur*, these comments to students are common, to call to a student as 'slack' because she does not find a word, makes impossible openness to different perspectives. Besides, it is interesting the association that teacher Margarita makes between not have breakfast and let himself go because breakfast is an activity made out of school and actually, she does not know what happens in children's home. It is no possible to know what the teacher was thinking, but the reference to children's homes meals is an attribution about his family. Assumptions domain, about students and their families in this case, permeates how teacher set a (non)dialogic environment (Calcagni and Lago 2018). Meanings about the other in school culture disposes conditions to participation, and in this way to citizen education (Kuhn et al. 2016; Luna 2015).

Something similar was observed at the *Escuela Novo*, where Teacher Emilia reproached a student for not reading at home:

A student begins to read aloud while the teacher is tidying up the books from the shelf. At one point the student pauses, and everyone falls silent, but when she continues, they talk again, muttering to each other. The student ends reading.

Teacher Emilia: (Addressing the student) Your reading was much better before. You need to read at home. It shows … instead of improving, you are going down. (Classroom record *Novo* 16:7)

In *Novo*, Teacher Emilia said to a student his reading is going down because he does not read at home and she assumes a causal relationship between not reading at home and

going down in reading at school. Further, she does not explain what the specific problem in reading or feedback about how the student could improve is.

In the previous fragments, no feedback about specific aspects to be improved was observed; rather, a kind of moral reproach to the students became patent, either because one of them is 'a slack,' because another is 'letting himself go,' or because a third one 'does not read at his house.' These comments from the teachers to students, risk the necessary environment to underpins dialogue, that requires support and includes the affective dimension in the interaction.

The rationale behind these interactions can be understood from the conception that Teacher Emilia has about the students:

> [On learning strategies] I am old-fashioned, I do not consider learning without discipline, okay? And don't even mention me the discipline of today … Because it does not work, with vulnerable children like the ones we work. Discipline works. Why? Because the child has patterns in his home. (Interview with teacher Emilia *Novo* 41:1)

Here, the teacher associated learning and discipline, and she attributed characteristics to the students due to their family origin. She refers to a specific kind of children: 'vulnerable children like the ones we work.' To her, what they bring with them – these family patterns – interfere with learning and, therefore, to maintain a learning environment, discipline must be imposed – a discipline that leaves those patterns aside. These class dynamics, in *Sur* and *Novo*, seems a conflict between different social groups' identities, on the one hand, teacher and her social position and, on the other hand, students and families' identities (Knoester and Au, 2017; Luna, 2015).

Unlike what happened both in *Sur* and in *Novo*, in *Francia*, the teachers encouraged to the students when they did well:

> Teacher Laura: Remember that 45 times 4 … how much is four times five?
>   (Meanwhile, Teacher Paulina walks around the classroom)

> Teacher Paulina: What are you doing, boy … you are only messing up (she does it in a friendly tone) … Some of you took the long route. (Classroom record *Francia*, 4B 2:58)

Teacher Paulina said 'Some of you took the long route,' that seemed friendly to the observer. That is an example of indirect feedback that indicates the mistake differently from the previous observations of *Escuela Sur* or *Escuela Novo*.

In all three schools, the interactions between teachers and students have a common sequence of content exposition, individual work from the students, and monitoring and feedback from the teachers. That is similar to previous findings (van der Veen and van Oers 2017). However, different types of feedback to the students and environments are distinguishable in the three contexts: both in *Escuela Sur* and in *Escuela Novo*, a pedagogical environment is developed with a focus on maintaining discipline to try to leave behind the classroom the 'family patterns' and where feedback is based on emphasising the students' mistakes. In that sense, in the eyes of the observer (Fieldnote, *Sur* 29:4), the environment is unfriendly and does not allow active participation of students nor a diversity of possible answers. Such an environment can hardly allow the diversity of perspectives necessary for dialogue; the response to students does not encourage them to improve. Instead, it is judgmental with their answers (Howe and Abedin,

2013). In other words, there would be a predominance of a monological environment where only one vision prevails (Matusov 2011).

On the other hand, *Escuela Francia* exhibits an environment characterised by frequent support of the students, with a positive handling of their answers and a greater focus on learning from mistakes. Although the sequence of the class and the prevalence in individual work both limit the interaction between peers, there is room for students' participation, and the environment generated by teachers allows dialogue. Although it is no possible to observe multiple perspectives and the teacher's voice predominates, in *Francia*, the teachers provide encouragement and feedback, both critical conditions to dialogue (Howe and Abedin, 2013).

Focus on speed and delays: 'If we fall behind you are the ones that lose the most.'

As we saw in the interactions between teachers and students, in all cases, the class rhythm was defined by the teachers. A constant speeding up was observed when the teachers point out the times of the class, something that becomes exhausting, even in the observer's eyes. The emphasis on speed appeared more frequently in *Escuela Sur*, where falling behind appeared as a threat to the process. The following fragment shows how a common situation in public schools, namely the low attendance of students during winter is a cause for 'delay' according to the teacher:

> Teacher Margarita: (She counts the children in the classroom. There are eight of them) Children, when it is cold, or it rains outside, you still have to come. You are the ones who receive a lesser education if you do not come, and also, we fall behind. (Classroom record *Sur* 25: 4)

This rationality could be support by the attendance, which has become a big problem in Chilean public schools since most of the resources they receive depending on how many students attend classes daily (Verger et al. 2016). Attendance policy, especially in schools where attendance is low (*Novo* and *Sur*), reduces teachers' decision space on how to organise their work. Then, politics not only does not establish spaces for autonomy (Cornejo et al. 2015) but in its prescriptions, it annuls the possible spaces could emerge.

Furthermore, curricular coverage's delay is associated with negative effects for the students, who, from the teacher perspective, already have a disadvantage: 'You are the ones who receive a lesser education.' She states indirectly the students are at a disadvantage and the delay in coverage would increase that disadvantage. Likewise, progress in the curriculum coverage becomes an imperative, which the Escuela Sur teacher thinks is threatened by other factors, such as the students' behaviour:

> Interviewer: How are your classes developed, to cover the contents … ?
>
> Teacher Margarita: Well, you cover the contents … Well, depending on the curriculum, you either go through it in a partialized manner and.(…) I mean, that is something that is structured since the beginning of the year, that is planned … It is true that time is wasted sometimes, especially with these children … Sometimes there are 10, 15, 20 min that suddenly go by in a class (…) you sometimes waste 20 min because, I do not know, Juanito and Pedrito fought, and the chairs were thrown away … You have to call the principal. (Interview with teacher Margarita *Sur* 43: 1)

This sort of accountability toward the students for the delays also become apparent when some students are singled-out, like the ones who have fallen behind and the ones who the rest of the class cannot always give time to catch up:

Teacher Margarita:	(She walks asking each child) Where is your notebook? Do you have your notebook, your pencil, your eraser? Faster … children, faster. (…)
Teacher Margarita:	(to another student) You checked the objectives! Who wrote it already? Children hurry up. All right children, are you finished? Teacher Margarita to student José: José, I cannot always be waiting for you to write it down. (Classroom record *Sur* 26:32)

The pressure on the curricular coverage and the 'hurry along curriculum' is not new (Dadds, 2001)). The feeling of limited time and too much curricular contents is an important issue for teachers (Segal et al. 2017). However, what is interesting here is how teacher Margarita put responsibility in students and their familiar origin. In *Escuela Novo*, the speeding up in the class rhythms is combined with reprimands, individual observations and reproaches to the students for wasting time:

Student:	*Tía*, is it the whole exercise?
Teacher Emilia:	Yes, all of it, just as I taught you … Do you realise that every day I lose … Every day we waste time. (Some children are standing)
Teacher:	(To a student) Can you shut up? (with an annoyed tone of voice) (Classroom record *Novo* 18:14)

It is interesting the answer of Teacher Emilia to student's question about a class maths exercise because she said 'yes … just as I taught you', but she then talks about wasting time as if the question could be wasting time. So, questions, an important part of learning become something limits the class advance. When asked about the rhythm of the students, Teacher Emilia mentioned some conditions that would prevent feedback:

Here, we cannot offer feedback because planning is a daily process. As there is a daily lesson planning because you have to accomplish the goals that are already set. Where does feedback take you … You have to plan again, and there is no time for that. So, in the end, what does one do? I do not even have time to yawn, so what can one do? Oh, I am not going to offer feedback (Interview with teacher Emilia *Novo* 41: 2)

For this teacher, daily lesson planning and the goal of achieving daily objectives prevent the offering of feedback to students because there is not enough time. It is interesting the Teacher Emilia's explanation for two reasons: (a) the attributed place for planning, a tool for student learning becomes an end in itself, must be fulfilled; and (b) the lack of autonomy in her work. It means Emilia seems not to be able to decide about her feedback to students because it is more important to fulfil the lesson planning. The planning becomes a device that regulates the pedagogical practice; it is intertwined with the meanings that she attributes to the planning goals and defines the class rhythms. The actors' subjectivity is inevitably transforming into this dynamic of management of pedagogical practice (Ball, 2003).

Besides, the interactions are mediated by a moral reproach to the students, who, according to the teachers, are already at a disadvantage: they are the ones who 'lose the most.' They are those who are falling behind due to their characteristics. They are

de specific kind of children: 'vulnerable children'. The meaning that emerges from this dynamic is: students are at a social disadvantage, which becomes wider as they fall behind in the curricular coverage. In other words, there is a call to the students to advance quickly and not to stay behind, but in a race that has already been lost. In this context, meaning about teaching and the work loses sense to teachers (Albornoz et al. 2017).

At *Escuela Francia* the teacher also highlighted speed and the need to accelerate the rhythm of the class. As shown in the following observation, she used a timekeeper as part of an activity. However, unlike what happens both in *Escuela Sur* and *Escuela Novo,* the teacher from *Escuela Francia* used other strategies to maintain discipline during the interaction in the context of game-based learning:

Teacher Laura:	multiplication with three digits … Quick, because there are a lot of things to do, quick … Do note that it is not written with 'j.' It is with 'g.' '*Dígitos*' (She emphasised the 'g' pronunciation.)
Teacher Laura:	If it has an accent mark on the letter 'i' (referring to '*dígitos*'), which kind of word would this be?
Student Ignacio:	*Esdrújula*! [In Spanish, accented word on the penultimate syllable]
Teacher Laura:	Good! (Teacher Laura's cell phone sounded. She had set a timekeeper to establish the time the students had to copy their assignment.) Eyes here. Your little eyes here. All eyes here! Here we have our strategy (She stops talking.) No, we are not at a fair (Classroom record 4A *Francia* 3:27)

In this game-based environment, with the use of the individual boards and with the indirect calls for the students' attention – 'Eyes here. Your little eyes here. All eyes here!, we are not at a fair' – speed appears as a necessary characteristic for the competitive nature of the activity. In that sense, the teacher sets an accelerated rhythm explaining, 'there are a lot of things to do,' but that rhythm, being part of a game, does not appear as a burden in the context of classroom observations but as a tool in the context of a pedagogical activity.

To summary, in two of three schools, there is an accelerated rhythm set by the teachers, and the meanings associated with that rhythm seem to follow circular reasoning: students are at a disadvantage and their behaviour, in addition to certain contextual conditions, expand that disadvantage. In that sense, acceleration appears as a solution that does not, in any case, achieve the goal of reducing this disadvantage, but that it is nevertheless intended. In the third school, the teachers' strategy in some way reverses the circular logic of 'disadvantage-extended disadvantage' and accounts for a different environment.

Learning evaluation: according to what and Whom?

About the evaluation of learning, something relatively common in all three schools is observed. An evaluation format is predominant: content tests. The objective of these tests is to measure the students' individual progress about to the curriculum. Teachers give general instructions to the students, ask for total silence, distribute the sheets of paper, usually read the test aloud, ask the students to read the questions comprehensively, and then the students answer. The following example from *Escuela Sur* was repeated in all schools:

Teacher Margarita:	(To her students) All right, we are going to start the test. First, I will distribute them … You put your name, class, date, then I will read the text … What happens is that you hurry too much … Understand the question well. We are going to read it. We are going to analyse it, and if there is any doubt, you have to ask before answering. I want you to give a good test. You have to pay attention. Do not hurry to finish quickly. (Classroom record *Sur* 30:12)

While the students answered their tests, the teachers typically did other activities, such as tidying up their materials or revising assignments until the students begin to hand over their answered tests. It is worth noting what happens when the students hand over their tests: the teachers insisted that they revisit their answers before submitting them, sending the students back to their seats. This was observed in *Escuela Novo*:

Teacher Emilia remains in her desk doing other tasks, such as evaluating assignments, while some students approach her. After 10 min, some began to submit their tests, and the teacher insisted that they recheck their answers; in some cases, after taking a look at the answers of certain students, she warned them of mistakes and returned the tests to them.

Teacher Emilia: (To a student) go check [the test].

Another student stood up and left his test on her desk. Then another student stood:

Student: '*Tía*' (He shows his test to the teacher from his seat).

Teacher Emilia: Okay, leave it there. Did you check? Are you sure? (Classroom record *Novo* 15:9)

The same happened at *Escuela Francia*, where after giving a glance at the students' answers, the teacher returned their tests and directed them to go back and review their answers:

As several children approach the teacher to show her their tests, she points out:

Teacher Laura: If the answers are wrong, I will give the tests back just once. After that, I will not return anything because we studied for this, and the test is very easy … . All right, everyone in silence. If you have finished, check again. Check that the full answer is correct (Classroom record 4A *Francia* 8:20)

These tests, as indicated by the teachers from *Escuela Francia* and *Escuela Novo*, are experienced with some discomfort on the part of the teachers (see Albornoz et al. 2017), especially because in their opinion, they hinder a class that respects the rhythm of the students:

Each one at their own pace. But that can only happen. It happens when I have the tools to do it. But when you're alone, moving in an environment that is not pleasant, you are done. You have to take the test, *pum*, and the one who answered it, answered it, and the grade, it's just that, because you do not have any more tools (Interview with Teacher Emilia *Novo* 41: 2)

Similarly, there is a so-called 'level test' at *Escuela Francia* that is managed by the school, which is taken at the end of each month and aims to evaluate the curricular progress in every subsector. About this evaluation, the teacher pointed out:

> [The level test] did not offer me anything as a teacher. It did not shed any light about the children. Nothing. Tests from the UTP (Pedagogical Technical Unit) are no good for me. I think that no, they are out of place. We were not consulted, and it is not right. (Interview with teacher Carla 4B *Francia* 39: 3)

At this school, this type of tests would serve as preparation for other evaluations, specifically for the SIMCE test, as pointed out in the following excerpts:

> Teacher Laura: (addressing the students during a test) We already said that in this classroom, the noise is more noticeable, and there are some of your classmates who are being evaluated. Remember that during SIMCE, it will be the same. If you finish the test, you will have to remain silent until everyone finishes. (Classroom record *Francia* 8:22)

> I ask her (to the teacher) about the level test (…) she tells me that she wrote the test and that she made it difficult, that the class did very good but that in the SIMCE trial tests it is not the same (Fieldnote *Francia* 5:6)

On a visit to the school, the observer witnessed when one of these tests was performed. When she asked the principal about the time spent on this activity, the answer alluded to the fact that the time that could not be lost was math and language 'some teachers don't want to waste time on math and language' (Fieldnote, *Francia* 5:1). In other words, the main focus is on only some subjects.

Although the preparation for SIMCE was mentioned only on some occasions at *Escuela Novo*, teachers from *Escuela Francia* constantly refer to this trial tests to recreate the real situation of the SIMCE. Despite the predominance of preparation for the SIMCE, teachers see these evaluation policies from a critical perspective:

> Teacher Carla: I believe that SIMCE is a punishment both for children and for the teacher, honestly … . But I feel that it measures all the students in the same way, and I think that there lays the conflict because not all children learn in the same way, know the same things, have the same rhythm of learning. And that to me, that is what it most, as a teacher, it bothers me, because even though the principal or the school might say, 'We do not care that much about SIMCE,' we do care, because how they measure us, that is how they classify us (Interview with Teacher Carla *Francia* 38:1)

Despite the discomfort, pedagogical practices constantly alluded to this type of evaluation, similar to the *as if* suggested by Lunneblad and Asplund-Carlsson (2012). Thus, although the discomfort perceived by the teachers about standardised testing, they worked a significant amount of time for preparing students to test as if it were the most important. Because they could not decide. As previous studies state, there is a lack of autonomy of teachers' work (Cornejo et al. 2015). This situation, besides the teachers' conception about students' disadvantage, seems a chain of meanings of resignation in front classroom practices. In these conditions, it is difficult to think of dialogue as an ideal for pedagogical practices (Segal et al. 2017); especially in front of meanings that point more to resignation than to the emergence of practices which could be against the broader monologic educational system.

Following Calcagni and Lago (2018), the assessment domain, seems essential to give shape dialogue in the classroom. In these cases, there is a type of predominant evaluation permeates the daily school life in all three contexts. It here appears as a sort of suspension

of time in which speed stops, the students are limited to answer, and the teachers insist on calm reading and reflection, which allows students to achieve the correct answers. The predominance of this type of evaluation seems to undermine dialogical interactions in the classroom, something that is observed both at *Escuela Sur* and *Escuela Novo*, and in a more nuanced way at *Escuela Francia*.

In other words, the learning process is hurried when there is a big amount of content which is necessary to cover, but when testing itself is given, there is a suspension of time: speed and progress are no longer what matters because the testing process requires careful and critical thought to be accurate. Then is difficult to promote collaborative construction of meaning in classrooms or participation (Cazden, 2001) to promote citizenship education (Kuhn et al. 2016). The same routine was interrupted by the trial tests for SIMCE, which were more frequent at *Escuela Francia*, where *level tests* were added. In this school, we can see what previous studies have already described as *teaching for the test* (Segal et al. 2017).

The institutional discourse about SIMCE is not common in all three schools. At *Escuela Sur* and *Escuela Novo*, regarding the classroom interactions and the teachers' vision, the tension is related to things outside the school – the students' patterns, their lack of discipline, and their wasting time – that lead to insufficient results. In these two schools, the differentiation observed by Luna (2015) between the school and the identity of the excluded in the students seems to be reaffirmed, but in the daily pedagogical practices and not only concerning their behaviour. Namely, students and families' social conditions and social identity are in tension with SIMCE.

We can see a similar phenomenon in Knoester and Au (2017), in our case the segregated people are not African American but poor people or 'vulnerable children' who are not appropriate for the system. We can see a triple mechanism to segregate: an educational system, an standardised testing assessment policy that reaffirms this system, and the everyday practices and meanings that reinforce the segregation scenery.

Conclusions

Our purpose was to understand dialogue in the daily life of classrooms under conditions of standardisation in learning, and social vulnerability. The three contexts share characteristics but also have peculiarities and their school everyday classroom practices are produced with nuances and different meanings.

Despite the shared characteristics, there is an individual agency that varies among teachers. While in *Novo* and *Sur*, teachers seem to be immersed in a chain of meanings associated with resignation about students and their work; in *Francia,* there is a higher margin for the work organisation – due, in part, to its classification according to the policy – and the classroom dialogue. The conditions the educational system provides for teaching and learning processes are interwoven with meanings and practices that tend to reproduce segregation. While the schools with less autonomy try to keep up with the pace of standardisation policy, less space opens up for dialogic practices in the classroom. In the case of the school with a slightly higher margin for autonomy, more spaces seem to open up for a different type of interaction between teachers and students. Educational actors are trapped in this fabric of practices, meanings and prescriptions of the daily life of schools.

Although the results are coincident with previous research, the interesting issue here is the rationale behind the classroom practices in the contexts studied. This rationale emerges from the pressures for learning outcomes in high-stakes tests, teachers' meanings about the speed needed to achieve those results, and the disadvantage that appears as if it were inherent to the students. Under this logic, we understand 'the vicious circle of monologue in the classroom,' in which students appear as the cause and consequence of practices that limit dialogue.

Finally, everyday practices work as a mediator of the educational policy – accountability and standardised testing in the Chilean case – and the classroom environment, either throughout a monological or a dialogical learning process. The most crucial tension observed in this mediation is between what the educational policy imposes and the level of agency of the actors, who in unfavourable conditions seem to reproduce practices that hinder dialogue. That is, if there are broader social conditions that do not aim to generate dialogue in the classroom, chains of teacher resignation meanings seem to emphasise that lack of dialogue. On the contrary, in spaces of higher autonomy in the organisation of work, this chain of meanings seems to be modified at some level.

In this study we addressed teachers' meanings, but it would be important to consider students' meanings about dialogue within the classrooms in the future.

Note

1. To classify the citations, the following nomenclature was used: type of record (classroom record or fieldnote) followed by the pseudonym of the school (*Francia, Sur* o *Novo*); and finally, the record number and the citation number within the record (according to the hermeneutical unit in software Atlas.ti).

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