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# Reactions to English Language Learning in Chile as a Means for Personal and National Development

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**Reactions to English Language Learning in Chile as a Means for  
Personal and National Development**

A Thesis Presented to  
the Faculty of the College of Letters and Sciences  
Master's Program in International Studies

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in International Studies

By  
Kortnee N. Byrd  
November 2012

**Reactions to English Language Learning in Chile as a Means for Personal and  
National Development**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by

Kortnee N. Byrd

November 2012

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree.

**Approved:**

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Date

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Date

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## **Abstract**

In our globalized world today, English has developed into the worldwide language. Chilean leaders, in connection to their development goals to reach a developed country status by 2020, have highlighted the need for Chilean citizens to become bilingual in order to attract foreign investment and further integrate into the world market. Leaders also highlight how English education will serve as an equalizing measure to combat the socioeconomic inequality that has plagued this country since Spanish colonization. While the economic benefits are clear, questions remain as to what the social and cultural costs will be. This research project presents how a group of Chilean students feels in regards to their leader's goal of creating a bilingual citizenry: do they see English proficiency as advantageous or a threat to Chilean cultural individuality. This thesis answers the questions: (a) do Chilean students agree with the government that becoming bilingual will raise Chile to a developed country? (b) do they think that they will personally benefit from learning English and (c) what changes do they deem necessary if English education programs are to continue in Chile?



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Many economists and politicians commonly cite Chile as an example of a country where the neoliberal development model has worked resulting in rapid and stable economic growth, a dramatic reduction in extreme poverty and an increase public spending and social services. Chile leads Latin America in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, economic competitiveness, income per capita, globalization, economic and political freedom, human development, low perception of corruption, and an overall state of peace (BBC, 2012). Began in the early 1970's, General Augusto Pinochet established an economic plan focused on integration into the world market, attracting foreign direct investment and reducing public spending by privatizing many industries – he wanted to quickly bring the country out of economic chaos and put it on the fast track to economic development. Under these reforms, the overall standard of living in the country increased but the rich felt the benefits of growth more than the poor. As is common in neoliberal development, inequality accompanied economic growth.

When Chile returned to democracy in 1990, many wondered if the new leaders from the center-left coalition, la Concertación, would continue Pinochet's neoliberal economic policies or if they would restructure the system as a whole. Ultimately, the Concertación leaders of the new democracy continued the neoliberal policies of their predecessor while also trying to incorporate some socialist and populist ideology by increasing government spending on social programs to focus more attention on decreasing the country's wealth disparities. For more than thirty years, Chilean leaders have focused on increasing the country's wealth through integration into the world market and then using that increased wealth to invest in the most vulnerable Chileans.



Questions remain as to how successful this has been and whether or not Chile should continue on its current development path.

Those in support of the “Chilean Way” often disregard the negative aspects of this development model: the social costs associated with its implementation under the authoritarian regime of Augusto Pinochet and how the institutional makeup of Chile causes the wealth received from this rapid economic development to be distributed unequally. Despite an overall increase in the country’s wealth and a large reduction in poverty, Chile remains one of the most unequal countries in the world (Contreras, 2007). New democracy presidents’ maintenance of Pinochet’s education reforms – decentralization of the central government’s regulation and provision of public education and the increase in privatization of schools – consistently exacerbate the already-existing division between rich and poor Chileans. Many people blame the structure of the political, economic, and social systems of the country. Those people who call for reform of the Chilean system highlight the education system as one of the greatest contributors to socioeconomic inequalities in the country as a whole. In recent years, the education system has become a thorn in the side of Chilean leaders.

Last year, Chilean high school and university students took to the streets of the capital city, Santiago, bringing the problems in their education system to light for the world to see. Students participated in protests, non-violent marches, and school takeovers for more than six months to demand reform. These students announced and demanded changes be made to the education system, which they believe exacerbates the income disparities between rich and poor Chileans. Elite Chileans have access to the best private schools, then they attend the top universities and after graduation they are offered the best

employment opportunities; in contrast, working-class and poor Chileans cannot afford to enroll their children in high-performing educational institutions, which reduces the possibility of their receiving a well-paying job and often confines them to their low socioeconomic standing. In connection to the protests, the Confederation of Chilean Students Federation (CONFECH) released a proposal – the Social Agreement for Chilean Education – to make their demands public: increased state support for public universities, a more equitable admissions process with less focus placed on standardized testing, free public primary and secondary education so access to higher education does not depend on families' economic situations, creation of a government agency to establish and enforce a law against for-profit schools, strengthening the accreditation process to improve quality and end state support for poor quality institutions, creation of an “intercultural university” for native Mapuche students, and the repeal of the laws forbidding student participation in university governance (CONFECH, 2011).

All of the students' demands directly relate to overall inequality in the education system, which they see as detrimental to Chilean society. The government eventually responded to some of these requests by doubling public expenditure on education and replacing the Minister of Education. In April 2012, Chilean President Sebastian Piñera proposed a tax reform bill to raise income tax rates for companies in order to fund this education overhaul, but he continues to adhere to his belief that eliminating private schools from the education system will damage the quality of education on the whole (Woods, 2011). He views competition as a necessary component of quality. This push from students against the government's interests reveals a rise in civil society as a check on the government. More research must be done to determine if the Chilean

government's goals to defeat underdevelopment properly represent the Chilean people's goals for their country. As the government continuously implements new initiatives to further their development goals it is important to understand the peoples' perspectives.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For more than thirty years, the Chilean government has prided itself on its ability to bounce back from a history of economic chaos and authoritarian oppression. Leaders have used an arguably controversial neoliberal economic policy to change the country's direction and make it into a leader for the rest of the developing world. As Chile embraces economic development more and more a *lingua franca* (currently English) has become more and more necessary in order for the country to participate in the global market. The Chilean government aims to attract transnational corporations and "foreign direct investment and knowledge industries based around the manipulation of information, thus capitalizing on investment in education and skills training. English language skills has been deemed crucial to the successful promotion of trade across language barriers" (Matear, 2008). In connection to this, some scholars argue that Chilean leaders have used education solely as a means to increase economic production and thus have shaped their education policies to reflect this, ignoring how this focus may harm other important goals of education. This global economic focus caused Chilean leaders to search for a way to improve the quality of English education in the public school system in order to establish a generation of people prepared to bring Chile into the developed world.

In 2003, the Chilean Ministry of Education in partnership with the United Nations Development Program established the “Inglés Abre Puertas” Program (English Opens Doors or EODP), aimed at “improving national economic competitiveness and promoting equity by extending English language learning to all students in publicly funded schools” (Matear, 2008). Chilean leaders – recognizing the need for their citizens to have a solid foundation in the English language in order to be more competitive in the world market – established this education initiative to regulate the time Chilean students in public schools would spend studying English and the English language learning materials teachers would use. EODP also uses a volunteer program, which brings native English speakers into the classroom either as teachers or as teaching assistants. Before the implementation of EODP, the majority of English speaking Chileans were elite members of society who had attended private schools or paid for private English tutors. Since speaking English is one factor that typically makes a person more employable in higher-paying industries, those elite Chileans had better access to the best jobs and thus the highest socioeconomic standing while poorer Chileans who lacked the resources to become proficient in English had more difficulty improving their standard of living. When forming this program, the Chilean Ministry of Education sought to reduce the cyclical nature of poverty and the unequal distribution of income in their country while also continuing their economic development goals aimed at defeating underdevelopment by 2018 (Matear, 2008).

The Chilean government invests large amounts of money annually in English language learning with the hopes of making Chileans proficient in English and helping Chile reach developed country status. While many scholars would agree that funding English language education in order to promote economic development is an appropriate

allocation of funds, others often express common concerns with English language programs such as the disappearance of other native languages, the spread of imperialism, an increase in socioeconomic inequality, and the failure to allocate substantial funds to other education programs. The English Opens Doors Program serves as an example of how the Chilean government places economic development at the forefront of many of their education policies, possibly ignoring how this focus may disregard other needs that exist in education policies. Questions remain as to whether or not programs such as EOPD accurately reflect what Chilean civil society deems to be important.

### **Background and Need**

The sharing of information, ideas, and technology on a worldwide scale, also known as globalization, has created a need for a global language. Due to a variety of reasons such as colonization, United States' economic dominance since World War II, and the influence of Hollywood, English has stepped up to fill the need for a *lingua franca*. The hegemony of English benefits citizens of countries whose native language is English, but citizens of non-native English speaking countries do not experience the same advantages. Non-native English speakers who desire jobs in international fields or even domestic fields where English will occasionally be necessary are forced to learn English because failure to do so will disqualify them for employment. In connection to this, governments now sponsor English language programs in public schools for their citizens to be better equipped to function in our globalized world. In the name of development, eliminating poverty, opening the door for foreign investment and reaching first-world

status, governments around the world promote the spread of English and ultimately the creation of a bilingual citizenry.

Many developing countries' governments have chosen to promote bilingual education and English language programs as a means of development and further integration into the world market system. English language education has become one of the most important and controversial instruments of integration for government leaders around the world. The controversy surrounding this issue exists because there are questions as to whether or not English is on the decline, whether or not promoting English education increases the systematic inequality in developing countries, whether or not the funding would be better spent in other areas, whether or not this sponsorship actually encourages citizens to reject their own language and culture, and many more. Scholars have conducted only a few studies to actually measure the effectiveness of these programs and test the concerns, which means that the controversy remains and national and local government leaders continue to struggle with implementing English language education programs. More research is necessary to determine whether or not developing countries, typically backed by the United Nations Development Program, should embrace English education as a course for development.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of whether or not a small group of Chilean students in Santiago agree with their government that English language education will benefit them personally and will assist their country on its path toward becoming a developed country. This project sought to give a voice to university-aged

students - who have in recent months become a loud part of Chilean society - regarding their country's economic development goals and the implementation of public policies as a direct result of these goals. More specifically, this project aimed to evaluate Chilean students' perceptions of English language learning as a means for improving national economic competitiveness and promoting equity throughout society: do these students feel that becoming proficient in English will benefit them personally by providing them with more job opportunities while also benefiting Chilean citizens as a whole by allowing the country to further integrate into the global market and reduce socioeconomic inequality.

This research project examined a group of former students' perspectives on English language learning programs in Chile: were they in agreement with the government that English would benefit them immensely by providing them with better job opportunities, what were their experiences in English classes during their primary and secondary education, did they think the creation of a bilingual citizenry would help Chile's economic development, did they believe that English proficiency would reduce systemic inequality, did they have any concerns or fears regarding the spread of English, and what improvements did they think needed to be made to provide more opportunities for personal and national development. Overall my hope was to gain an understanding of whether or not these students (an important part of Chilean civil society) agreed with the government that English in their country was opening the door for the development of an internationally conscious working class with the hope of moving up the social ladder or if they believed that the government should refocus its priorities and reallocate resources towards other education reform programs.

By learning how this small group of Chilean students viewed English education in their country, this project was able to add to existing research on English language learning programs and how they serve to add to a country's economic growth. This research project also provided a space for a select group of Chilean students to express their concerns with their country's development plan by using one education initiative. This study also has implications for Chilean policymakers who work to improve and reform the Chilean education system; it also has implications for Chileans who are currently working to expand their English proficiency with the hope of finding better job opportunities. In a time when Chilean education reform has become a heated topic, it is important to understand how Chilean students feel about the role of English education in their country.

### **Theoretical Framework**

English as a tool for economic development has become a controversial subject in academia today with one side highlighting how knowledge of English increases a country's ability to integrate into the world market and embrace globalization thus raising the country's level of economic growth while the other side adamantly proclaims that English language programs threaten cultural homogeneity and national identities. Those in support of English language development point to past studies that have revealed the correlation between education and economic development (Williams and Cooke, 2002) and argue that the only way for a country to develop in the current world system is to train citizens to participate in the internationalized world (Rohter, 2004). Those opposed to English language development stress how language policies are actually created at the



global level by international authorities whose goal is to reinforce the world's current social interaction by maintaining the global North-South divide:

Throughout the entire post-colonial world, English has been marked as the language of 'international communication', 'economic development', 'national unity', and similar positive descriptions, but these soft-sell terms obscure the reality of North-South links and globalization which is that the majority of the world's population is being impoverished, that natural resources are being plundered in unsustainable ways, and that speakers of most languages do not have their human rights respected (Phillipson, 2001: 6).

Williams and Cooke (2002) argue that this division comes down to the two different definitions of development: development-for-economic-growth verses development conceived of as the meeting of human needs. The Chilean government's rhetoric behind the promotion of creating a bilingual citizenry clearly falls into the development-for-economic-growth category, which Williams and Cooke (2002) define as the view that economic growth will "trickle down" to benefit the poor; the view that has risen to global dominance today believing that "human development ultimately depends on national economic development" (2002:7). As a result of this immense controversy, it is important to continue to study people's perceptions of English language programs in order to ensure that governments' goals adequately reflect the goals of their citizens.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Bilingual education:** for the purpose of this paper will mean English language education

**Cultural/linguistic imperialism:** This term can be defined in many different ways, but for the purpose of this study I will borrow from John Tomilson's book *Cultural Imperialism: a Critical Introduction*. "Cultural imperialism is the use of political and economic power to exalt and spread the values and habits of a foreign culture at the expense of a native culture" (Tomilson, 1991).

**Economic development:** According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "no single definition incorporates all of the different strands of economic development. Typically economic development can be described in terms of objectives. These are most commonly described as the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Economic development can also be described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well being of a community" (OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms).

**Economic/Socioeconomic Equality:** A vast number of definitions for socioeconomic equality exist, as well as views on whether or not governments should strive for equality. The debate particularly arises because of the question of whether governments should strive for equality of opportunity or equality of results (Viñas, 2011). For the purpose of this research project, socioeconomic equality refers to a society with limited variation in income, standard of living, and opportunity.

**Economic/Socioeconomic Inequality:** In contrast to the previous definition, socioeconomic inequality in this research project refers to the large disparity in the income and standard of living between rich and poor Chileans.

**English language education/program:** A government-backed education initiative with the goal of producing a citizenry that proficiently speaks English as a second language.

**Globalization:** In this project, this refers to “the worldwide movement toward economic, financial, trade, and communications integration. Globalization implies the opening of local and nationalistic perspectives to a broader outlook of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers” (Kotz, 2002).

**Knowledge based economy:** This is an expression “coined to describe trends in advanced economies towards greater dependence on knowledge, information and high skill levels, and the increasing need for ready access to all of these by the business and public sectors” (OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms).

**Neoliberalism/neoliberal economic policy:** For the purpose of this project, neoliberalism refers to “a body of economic theory and a policy stance. Neoliberal theory claims that a largely unregulated capitalist system (a ‘free market economy’) not only embodies the ideal of free individual choice but also achieves optimum economic performance with respect to efficiency, economic growth, technical progress, and distributional justice. The state is assigned a very limited economic role: defining property rights, enforcing contracts and regulating the money supply. State intervention to correct market failures is viewed with suspicion... The policy recommendations of neoliberalism are concerned mainly with dismantling what remains of the welfare state. These recommendations include deregulation of business, privatization of public

activities; elimination of or cutbacks in social welfare programs; and reduction of taxes on businesses and the investing class” (Kotz, 2002:1).

**Privatization of education system:** Borrowing from Kishan, this term refers to “the general process of involving the private sector in ownership or operation of a State owned enterprise...the main objective is to reduce governmental control over education. Privatization is intended to improve the efficiency of an organization of educational institutions” (Kishan, 2008).

**Social mobility:** The actual definition varies depending on the study. Here, this refers to “the agreement that social mobility aims to quantify the movement of given entities through the distribution of well-being over time, establish how dependent one’s current economic position is on one’s past position” (Fields, 2000).

### **Limitations**

This study sought to give a voice to Chilean students in regards to their government’s development goals and, more specifically, English education as a tool for economic development. Unfortunately, there were several weaknesses and limitations with this study. The primary weakness of this study was centered on a time limitation. With limited time to conduct the research, I was forced to concentrate my research at one technical institute, which reduced the diversity of my sample group. DuocUC does have a diverse student body coming from a variety of different communities and schools in Santiago with distinct socioeconomic standards, studying a variety of different majors, and having disparate goals for their future careers, but the validity of this study would have increased if I had been able to conduct surveys and interviews with significantly more students from other institutions – especially students from a major public or private

university. In connection to the time restrictions, I also feel that this research project could have greatly benefited if I had extended my research to also include a variety of businesses, both local and multinational. My recommendation for further research in this area would be to access both national and multinational companies and conduct interviews throughout their staff in order to gain an understanding of the differences between employees in these two types of companies and also the difference in opinion among people working for the same company but with separate responsibilities.

Another shortcoming of this study that is important to mention was my limited access to policymakers and administrators directly working for the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). Before I arrived in Chile, I had made contact with various MINEDUC employees and was offered the opportunity to conduct interviews with them, but upon arrival in Chile this became less and less of a possibility due primarily to their busy schedules. This, combined with my limited time to conduct research, eventually made conducting these interviews impossible. In the future, I think it is vital for future researchers to gain access to more people in leadership in order to produce a more well rounded study. It is my hope that future research projects will be able to fill these gaps.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to fully understand the Chilean government's goals regarding national English language learning programs it is first necessary to understand the Chilean government's economic goals and the controversy surrounding them. I will begin this section by highlighting scholarly articles focusing on the successes and failures of Chile's development plan. I will then dissect existing literature on the role English language programs play in economic development – how globalization has caused many countries to promote and fund bilingual education programs. In connection to this, I will examine the main arguments for and against bilingual education programs. Next, I will address the literature that does exist on English language programs in Chile to bring light to ways in which the Chilean government's goals are a direct response to what many scholars and economists recommend as a successful means of national and individual development.

### **The Chilean Way**

After three years of a socialist experiment under President Salvador Allende, the Chilean military led by army chief of staff General Augusto Pinochet staged a coup and established a military government. At the time of the coup, the Chilean economy was in ruins and many Chileans welcomed the idea of a new economic plan (Edwards, 2010). Pinochet's regime opened the door for the Chicago Boys – a group of Chilean economists educated at the University of Chicago under neoliberal economist Milton Friedman – to radically restructure the economic system and change the course of Chilean history forever. Researcher for the Heritage Foundation, Ana Eiras, clearly details how the new economic program focused on increasing GDP by extracting and selling copper on the

world market and then reducing the government's role in the economic system, embracing international competition and promoting foreign direct investment, limiting the power of labor unions, and privatizing social programs such as the education, healthcare and social security systems (2009). Unfortunately, these reforms came at a high social cost. Many scholars are quick to highlight how Pinochet used repressive measures to silence those in opposition to his government, believing that his human rights violations often overshadow the success of his economic policies. In addition to this, many scholars also often point out how Pinochet's nominal spending on social services often meant that poor Chileans lacked adequate access to healthcare, education and other securities. While the standard of living in the country increased overall, the rich benefitted more than the poor, furthering the socioeconomic inequality that has existed in the country since Spanish colonization. Chilean presidents after the return to democracy in 1990 recognized the economic growth the country had experienced (with the exception of a recession in 1982 during the Asian Crisis) and chose to continue the economic plan put into place by Pinochet. They did, however, greatly increase government spending on social programs with the hopes of continuing to decrease the number of people living in extreme poverty and to reduce the country's vast socioeconomic inequality. Scholars and economists today remain in constant debate over whether Chile's development has made it into "Latin America's brightest star" (Edwards, 2010) or whether the vast socioeconomic inequality should delegitimize economic growth (Contreras, 2007).

Those in favor of Chile's neoliberal development plan continuously highlight its success at bringing the country out of economic chaos, vastly increasing the country's GDP, eliminating inflation and reducing poverty. Economist Jose Pinera praises these

reforms: “From 1975 to 1989 a true revolution took place in Chile, involving a radical, comprehensive, and sustained move toward economic freedom... This revolution doubled Chile’s rate of economic growth, drastically reduced poverty and introduced several radical libertarian reforms that set the country on a path toward rapid development” (2009:1). The statistics of this rapid development Contreras refers to are emphasized in *Forbes Magazine*: “Between 1988 and 2008 Chile’s economy doubled and then tripled in size, increasing by almost 600% in two decades” (Flannery, 2011). Others point to how Chile’s growth into one of the freest economies in the world today has caused the country to almost completely eliminate aid dependence and instead move to the lending side of foreign loans (Eiras, 2009). In addition to focusing on Chile’s ever-increasing prosperity, supporters of Chile’s development plan also place heavy emphasis on Chile’s strong political institutions since 1990: “This pragmatic policy stance explains why the country stands out in every policy and institutional ranking in the developing world” (Edwards, 2010). Former President Ricardo Lagos, in his book *The Southern Tiger: Chile’s Fight for a Democratic and Prosperous Future*, clearly emphasizes Chilean leaders’ theory of government for the past thirty years: “A good government stands on three legs. In order to prosper, any modern country needs democracy, economic growth, and social equality. Lose any one component, and the whole apparatus could easily come crashing down” (2012:172). In terms of economic growth and promoting democracy, Chile stands out when compared to other developing countries. However, the third element of former President Lagos’ theory – social equality – is where opponents of neoliberalism in Chile direct their focus.



Economists and policymakers who are opposed to Chile's development model commonly point to how the increased GDP is not evenly distributed throughout society; while the standard of living has improved for all citizens, the rich have felt the benefits of growth more than the poor. "*Está mal repartida la torta*" (the pie is poorly distributed)...there are two very different Chiles and looking at overall GDP does not provide an accurate representation of the country as a whole" (COHA, 2011). Dante Contreras (2007), in his article "Poverty, Inequality, and Welfare in a Rapid-Growth Economy: The Chilean Experience," highlights how the lack of structural reforms in the healthcare and education systems after the return to democracy have maintained the same power structure and social exclusion for the past thirty years. Poorer Chileans lack access to high-quality healthcare, which makes them more vulnerable; in addition to this, segregation of the poor into their own neighborhoods means that their children attend poorer-performing schools and thus reduce their chance at attending a high-quality university (Contreras, 2007). Scholars opposed to Chile's development plan also call attention to how the increased government spending on social programs has not been enough and how Chilean leaders must determine how to more equally distribute wealth otherwise their goal of defeating underdevelopment by 2018 is useless. These opponents call for vast reforms of the education system so that a person's education level is not correlated to their parents' income and for the strengthening of a social security network for times when market failures make vulnerable Chileans even more defenseless (Contreras, 2007).

On the whole, these advocates for reform acknowledge the successes Chile has seen in the past three decades, they just demand more: "Despite these dire statistics in

Chile's inequality, the country's prosperity cannot be denied and its steady economic growth is looked upon with admiration during the current financial crisis. Nevertheless, unless it effectively targets high rates of inequality, the majority of Chileans will not take notice when the country reaches a developed country's GDP' (COHA, 2011). Many Chileans have taken notice of these successes their country has implemented but also emphasize how not all citizens have benefitted equally from them. The student protests of 2011 clearly highlighted this when they took to the streets demanding reform of the education system so they had more opportunities for social mobility (Pedigo, 2012). Questions remain as to whether or not these Chileans approve of the neoliberal economic program focused on attracting foreign direct investment and embracing globalization through integration into the world market as long as the government continues to adamantly support social programs that will dramatically reduce inequality so poorer Chileans are not crippled by their parents socioeconomic standing. The main call for reform from both scholars and Chilean civil society centers on reform of the education system, but many people continue to debate what exactly these reforms should include. While not in complete agreement with those calling for the complete restructuring of the education system, the Chilean government does believe that some reforms should be instituted to better the quality of schools and lessen socioeconomic inequality. Typically, the education reforms that the Chilean government establishes focus on creating a citizenry that is more prepared to integrate into the world market and to lead Chile to become a "developed country" (Woods, 2011).

## **Globalization, Neoliberalism and Education**

Throughout history, the development of new technologies and tactics for exploration, colonization, and imperialism have brought about the increased interconnectedness of cultures and countries around the world. Today this interconnectedness – of peoples, cultures, languages, economies, and technology - is often referred to as globalization. While many definitions of globalization exist, I will borrow a definition from Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) to highlight how globalization directly relates to education: “Globalization is a force reorganizing the world’s economy, and the main resources for that economy are increasingly knowledge and information...and if knowledge is fundamental to globalization, globalization should also have a profound impact on the transmission of knowledge” (2).

Now, scholars and educators often debate whether or not globalization has benefited or damaged educational institutions. One side of the debate emphasizes how students benefit from globalization because it encourages the sharing of ideas, theories, technology, curriculum and resources throughout the world; more diversity in resources allows for a broader educational base (Stroud, 2002). The other side of the spectrum emphasizes how globalization tends to spread Western ideologies, meaning that Western hegemonic discourse inundates educational institutions and often prevents students from developing their own opinions and beliefs. This hegemonic discourse, argues Joseph Zajda (2010), promotes the continuation of neoliberal ideology which creates a citizenry whose sole concern is cultivating their profitability: “Today, economic rationalism and neoconservatism have become dominant ideologies in which education is seen as a producer of goods and services that foster economic growth” (144). In connection to the

argument that education now serves to advance neoliberal hegemonic discourse, scholars also highlight how international institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations create programs and projects to assist developing countries in raising their education systems to international standards. Zajda (2010) borrows language from Appadurai to argue that this, in fact, creates tension between “cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” or how neoliberal hegemonic discourse suggests new economic, political, and social dimensions of cultural imperialism. Some scholars argue that the increased sharing of information and the international standardization of education will eliminate the diversity in education worldwide, with all governments embracing neoliberal education reform and allowing education to be strictly a means for economic development. Without a doubt, this debate over the role of education in our interconnected world will continue because there is truth to both sides, but what is important is that educational institutions remain a place for students to grow and develop in order to find their place in society.

### **English and Economic Development**

The sharing of knowledge and technology and the linking of countries’ economies (globalization) has resulted in the development of a common language, a *lingua franca*. Over the past two hundred years and due in large part to British and then American influence, English has become this global language. English today is the most widely taught foreign language and in many countries it has displaced other commonly spoken foreign languages in the process (Crystal, 1997). It did not reach this number because the number of native English speakers increased, but instead it occurred as a result of the

increasing number of non-native English speakers who are studying English as an additional language (McKay, 2003; Crystal, 1997). While there are a variety of reasons people choose to learn English, the most prominent is that the ability to communicate in English allows people to participate more easily in international activities, primarily business.

### **Controversy of English as a Second Language Programs**

English as the global language has caused a restructuring of many foreign language learning programs around the world and it has also caused governments to create and fund English education programs for many if not all of their citizens enrolled in public education. The development of these government funded English as a second language programs has created controversy in scholarship over whether or not governments understand the implications of their support of English education.

Scholars and government officials who champion federally funded English language programs call on a variety of reasons, all falling under two categories: economic development on the macro level and citizens' personal development on the micro level. Those against English as a Second Language (ESL) programs highlight how the promotion of English will result in cultural and linguistic imperialism, the disappearance of native and indigenous languages, and the furthering of socio-economic inequality at the national and international levels. The debate is highly politicized in many countries, but does not always divide across political parties. What side of the debate a scholar or governmental official stands on does not directly relate to their political affiliation. As globalization continues and the borders between countries and people become more and

more hazy, this debate will continue. This is why further research is necessary to dig deeper into the effectiveness of English language programs and the feelings of those students and teachers who have been educated in or taught in these English language learning programs.

Government leaders and scholars in favor of the creation of federally funded English language programs typically call on economic development as the main reason for the promotion of English language learning programs. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) outlines its general education plan in the article “Education in a Multilingual World” by calling attention to the need for the adoption of English as a foreign language in order to participate in the global community while also upholding the cultural diversity of the world. UNESCO works with countries throughout the world, especially developing countries, to write English language programs because UNESCO believes that education is fundamental to economic development and progress (2003). UNESCO also sets the international standards for math and language, which provides further incentive for government leaders to follow their programs. They state that English will be the language for communicating with people around the world while native languages will remain part of a country’s identity. UNESCO states that the proliferation of English will make knowledge more easily accessible since it can be shared from county to country. The sharing of knowledge will gradually open the doors for more and more people to be educated, thus moving towards UNESCO’s goal of Education for All by 2015: “Increased mobility and digital interaction mean that proficiency in more foreign languages and intercultural competence is necessary for communication and participation in many areas” (UNESCO, 2003: 8). The

problem with UNESCO's articles in support of English language programs and bilingual or multilingual education programs lies in the fact that they lack the data to support their beliefs that English language programs help countries "develop" economically. Their documents state that education and bilingual/multilingual programs promote economic development without clearly defining development. If the United Nations is going to advise governments on the educational programs they should initiate, their discourse must provide substantial data and a definition of the ultimate "development" goal.

Other scholars, economists, and politicians who call for the implementation of nationwide English language programs do so in response to hegemonic neoliberal discourse. In the 1980's and 1990's as many development agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization became involved in the development process for many countries, we see how these developing countries embraced a more neoliberal economic system. This neoliberal economic system emphasizes private capital, decentralization, open markets, individual choice, and competition (Usma, 2009). The neoliberal model values free trade and the opening of borders for capital investment and flow. In the name of economic development following the neoliberal model, governments around the world have sought to increase the English-speaking abilities of their citizens. During this time, education became a tool for establishing an educated citizenry who would prove to be strong workers for multinational companies in a variety of industries, such as banking, tourism and mining.

A sub-section of the neoliberal model of economic development is governments' goals of opening their countries to ever-increasing foreign investment and increased revenues of national companies through their ability to do business on a more global

scale. Speaking specifically about Chile, Delicio (2009) writes, “As the use of English expands around the world Chilean authorities continue to emphasize the importance of English, not only as a communication tool but also as a means for integrating Chile into the global economy” (84). Case studies in a variety of countries by *Euromonitor International* (2010) revealed that the level of foreign direct investment (FDI) is the highest when English is the *lingua franca* of a country. Most national companies require large numbers of their citizens to speak English because it allows them to trade on an international scale. Also, multinational companies are more likely to outsource large amounts of their work if a country has a bilingual working class. Scholars and governments regard offering English to be a “key competitive advantage in difficult employment environments” (Goodman, 2007) and thus choose to fund the long-term investment in English education even when direct economic growth is not immediately visible. Governments recognize that boosting English skills should enhance employment opportunities for citizens from all social classes and therefore the overall standard of living of their country would rise.

Another way the neoliberal model of development manifested itself was in education systems. A large number of governments in developing countries overhauled their education systems in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Privatization became a practical way for governments to reduce their spending as was demanded by international organizations and when complete privatization was not an option governments cut their education budgets. Three neoliberal preferences for educational systems were that it be cost-effective (limit public funding), decentralized (removal of the central bureaucratic control over education) and efficient through increased competition (McNamara, 2007). Students



from wealthier backgrounds attended the better-equipped private schools while those students whose parents could not afford private school were forced into attending underfunded, poor-performing public schools. The private education system was better equipped to provide students with stronger levels of English, which meant that only the rich had access to the country's good jobs (*Euromonitor International*, 2010). By the 1990's, many developing countries moved toward a more egalitarian education system with one of the first reforms focused on improving English teaching standards in public schools with the hope of establishing a citizenry proficient in English (Usma, 2009; *Euromonitor International*, 2010).

Government leaders and scholars also highlight the importance of English education programs for tourism, believing that tourism also increases the wealth of a nation. People who speak the global language can work in hotels, restaurants, and other service industries, which will ultimately increase tourism because foreigners will be more likely to travel to the country if they can communicate with some of the people they come into contact with (Usma, 2009). The strengthening of a country's tourist industry will increase revenues for the country that will (arguably) benefit the country as a whole. In addition to tourism, technological industries have also experienced a rise in the need for English proficiency. Sharing technology across international boundaries allows for improved efficiency and the increasing improvement in the quality of products. English is a tool to obtain a technology transfer from other countries (Delicio, 2009). National and multinational technology companies value workers skilled in speaking English because it strengthens their abilities to work with other companies around the world (*Euromonitor International*, 2012). These factors provide even more incentive for governments to

further English education in their countries in order to gain additional investments from abroad.

Hegemonic development discourse also emphasizes the importance of learning English on an individual level. Supporters of this believe bilingualism improves a person's job competitiveness and provides them with better opportunities in the work force. Former Chilean Minister of Education, Sergio Bitar, clearly expresses this connection between English acquisition and neoliberal development discourse when he states, "We have some of the most advanced commercial accords in the world, but that is not enough. We know our lives are lined more than ever to an international presence, and if you cannot speak English, you cannot sell and you cannot learn" (Rohter, 2004). "English is like the dollar' because it is considered a global language and an important tool for accessing better job opportunities and becoming successful in life" (Delicio, 2009: 84; Mena, 2000). Globalization has made English necessary for individual economic growth. Since companies seek employees with a strong command of English, individuals with good English language skills will often earn more than an employee who does not speak English or has a limited ability (*Euromonitor International*, 2010). The individual reasons for national English language programs focus on the need for all citizens to reach proficiency so they have access to better jobs and high salaries, competitive in the job market and the 'knowledge based economy'" (Usma, 2009:12). While it is commonly accepted that learning English strengthens development – it is fiscally beneficial for society as a whole – in recent years more academics have expressed doubt in regards to the economic value of English and have responded by conducting research projects focused on eliminating general misconceptions. Francois Grin (2001),

in his article “English as Economic Value: Facts and Fallacies,” began his research project on English language development in Switzerland because of commonly expressed concerns associated with the promotion of English as an economic benefit: “the relevance of language as a defining element of economic processes and the acquisition of human capital, language teaching as a social investment, the economic implications (costs and benefits) of language policies, language-based income inequality, and language-related work as an economic sector” (2). Grin found that the economic benefits of English skills directly relate to the level of international trade the country participates in: “the order of the magnitude of the returns on English competence can be expected to become increasingly higher in the future with the global intensification of international trade” (Grin, 2001:11). Grin was also careful to point out how the relative value of English will progressively wear away in the future as competence in English becomes more widespread, which it most likely will in countries where English skills generate higher salaries. He concludes by highlighting how countries must establish language policies based on the fact that currently English is worth learning, but that restricting second language learning to only English will be catastrophic because this would not take into account the basic economic principles of supply and demand and thus would not prepare a country for long-term development (Grin, 2001). As more and more countries embrace national language programs for economic development purposes, it will be necessary to continue to investigate both the economic and social benefits of these programs.

Scholars opposed to national English language programs – or at least opposed to the way in which the majority of them currently function – underscore two categories of problems inherent in this system: cultural and economic. Culturally, scholars worry about

cultural and linguistic imperialism and the disappearance of native and indigenous languages. Economically speaking, scholars concern themselves with the broadening of capitalism, intensifying socio-economic inequality and increasing debt for developing countries. At the very heart of a government's promotion of one foreign language lies the idea of cultural and linguistic imperialism. When a government chooses English over other foreign languages, they acknowledge that English is the global language and in consequence state that English is more important than all other languages in the world (Crystal, 1997), including the national language or languages of that country.

In the name of development and integration into the world market, governments are allowing their culture to be overrun by an outsider and that outsider's culture (Usma, 2009). Katharina Glas (2008) speaking in regards to Chile's English Opens Doors Program illuminates how this focus on English may threaten Spanish and lead to a reduction in Chileans' ability to speak Spanish when, in fact, Spanish is the national language and all Chile's neighboring countries speak Spanish. Glas (2008) continues by discussing the importance of studying other foreign languages for non-economic motivations such as access to diverse cultures, plays, literature and films in their original language, and personal relationships with people from other countries. Questions arise out of this controversy: is a country where everyone speaks English as their second language really worth the loss in cultural and linguistic diversity? In connection to this loss of diversity, scholars argue for the implementation of bilingual educational programs in languages other than English, especially indigenous languages in the specific country. As English spreads to every corner of the earth, indigenous languages face extinction. Jaime Usma (2009), studying Colombia's national English Program, realized that while

the Colombian government promotes a bilingual country by 2019, they are forgetting about the country's indigenous population who already struggles to maintain their languages in the face of Spanish language dominance. "In times in which languages are stratified according to their instrumental value in the job market, and languages such as English gain a higher status based on the assumption that they provide better possibilities for employment and traveling, indigenous languages are deemed to be undervalued and disappear (Usma, 2009:12; de Zárate, 2007). While not completely denying the importance of English language programs, these scholars emphasize the shortcomings of these programs and advocate reforms to promote cultural sensitivity and recognition of other languages.

Those opposed to the spread of English as the global language also commonly underscore how learning English as a second language did not become popular because of the number of people worldwide who actually speak it, but instead because English is the language of influential political and economic institutions.

English is dominant in international politics and commerce, its privileged role being strengthened through such bodies as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and regional groupings such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the European Union...Reference to English as a 'global language' has therefore much less to do with demography or geography than with decision-making in the contemporary global political and economic system (Phillipson, 2001:3).

These scholars see the promotion of English learning programs as a reinforcement of the "developed country vs. developing country" divide that has existed since colonial times,

where developed countries of the northern hemisphere benefit off the work and resources of the developing countries in (primarily) the southern hemisphere (Kotz, 2002). In Grin's conclusion of his research project on English as economic value in Switzerland, he was careful to point out how English language programs could have negative distributive effects: "in short, these effects imply a redistribution of economic and symbolic power from the rest of the world towards dominantly English-speaking countries (and most probably towards the political and economic elite in these countries)...and one must evaluate whether we are really willing to encourage this redistribution" (Grin, 2001: 12). In Phillipson's article "English for Globalization or for the World's People", he stresses how sponsorship of English language programs is a cyclical process that begins and ends with international organizations and multinational corporations who profit off the advancement of English (2001) and ultimately he calls for developing countries' governments to re-examine their motives to ensure that these programs actually benefit their citizens and that English is not impeding on the country's own culture, language and tradition.

Scholars not in support of English language programs also stress the economic controversies within these programs. Left-leaning scholars express concern over the commodization of English and how this reinforces capitalism. Katharina Glas (2008) highlights how this discourse reinforces neoliberal, capitalist, individualistic ideology by changing the fight from the collective to the individual, pitting employees against one another, competing to become more skilled and thus make more money; instead of workers uniting to demand better working conditions and salaries. Glas (2008) also focuses on how this discourse encourages citizens to consume more and more products

by following in the footsteps of the West. This focus on development through neoliberal methods causes governmental leaders to reject progressive ideology, which (arguably) furthers already significant socio-economic inequality in these countries.

Despite efforts to reduce inequalities in the education system by funding English education programs, private schools and institutions will continue to provide better language programs, which means that elite students will continue to score higher on standardized tests in English and be more competitive in the job market. These governments lack the financial resources to truly compete with those in public schools (Guadarrama, 2006). Now that the government sponsors bilingualism and increased foreign investment, society will become even more stratified based on educational level and socio-economic standing (Usma, 2009). While an unintended consequence, various scholars call attention to how English education programs strengthen the capitalist system and systemic inequality. Instead of funding national English programs, these scholars call for reallocating these resources towards more equitable programs (Matear, 2008). These scholars view inequalities in education as systematic and thus can only be made more equal with changes to the system as a whole.

### **English Opens Doors Program**

With backing from UNESCO and many development scholars, in 2003 Chilean leaders implemented the English Opens Doors Program, which “aims to improve national economic competitiveness and promote equity by extending English language learning to all students in publicly funded schools” (Matear, 2008: 132). In their search for the proper way to develop in the post-dictatorship era, Chilean leaders have used education

solely as a means to increase economic production. They have shaped their education policies to reflect this view instead of recognizing the value of education as bigger societal need.

Specific literature on the EODP has primarily focused on the quality of the curriculum the government sponsors: its successes and shortcomings. San Francisco State University Professor Sandra McKay in her article, “Teaching English as an International Language: the Chilean context” (2003), found that the Chilean Ministry of Education successfully established a way to promote foreign language learning without removing Chilean culture by writing their own curriculum, *Go for Chile*. By endorsing English learning but combining it with the country’s cultural norms, students will be more likely to value this accumulation of knowledge. Rosa Delicio (2009) also studied EODP curriculum, but unlike McKay, Delicio argues that MINEDUC established a receptive language program instead of an active one: “English is only a tool to obtain information or means for technology transfer from others, because in Chile we have nothing to tell the world” (85). While it is important for English curriculum to include Chilean culture it is also necessary that curriculum be broad enough that students are able to contribute to the global system instead of just learning from it.

Moving away from curriculum-focused research on EODP, Dr. Ann Matear analyzes the effects of the program on promoting equitable access to English language learning in all publicly funded schools. EODP’s additional provisions for lower income students in poor school districts should, in theory, decrease the levels of inequality in connection with English language knowledge. Matear (2008), however, argues that motivation levels are not equal across socio-economic levels, which hinders the



effectiveness of the program. Systemic inequalities will not change solely through rhetoric and agendas stressing equal opportunities for all. Matear (2008) concludes by stating that until the Chilean government makes changes to the system, “English is likely to continue to act as a gatekeeper to positions of wealth and prestige, despite investment by the state in language learning, and will open doors for some but not all” (143). More research is necessary to determine whether MINEDUC’s original goals for the EODP are being met in order to understand the advantages and disadvantages of national English learning programs. Globalization has caused governments to promote English language skills in their countries, but questions remain as to whether or not bilingualism increases the economic development of a country and, if it does, whether or not the risks are worth the wealth.

### Chapter 3: Methods

Over the years as countries around the world have become more and more integrated economically, politically, and culturally there has been a rise in the need for a global language. Due to a variety of reasons, English has stepped up to fill that role. This has caused many governments, especially in developing countries, to develop national English language learning programs with the hopes of creating a citizenry who proficiently speaks English and thus can better participate in our current world system. The Chilean government has outlined its beliefs in the power of creating a bilingual citizenry: English proficiency opens the doors for the country's macro-level development and also provides individual opportunities for the Chilean people. Despite the powerful rhetoric of the Chilean government and other development agencies such as the United Nations, many scholars still have reservations about the benefits English language learning programs offer Chilean society.

This research project sought to decipher whether or not a small group of Chilean citizens are of the same mind as the Chilean government; whether or not they deem English to be as vital to their country's development as the government declares it to be. By surveying and interviewing a group of university-aged Chilean students who were educated in public schools around Santiago, my hope was to determine whether or not they felt that English truly opened them up to more opportunities than they would have had if they did not learn English and whether or not they believed that English really benefits the Chilean people as a whole. During my time working with these ninety-eight students, I was able to hear their thoughts and opinions and my hope is that this project

will grant the opportunity for a group of Chilean students to serve as a check on the Chilean government.

### **Setting**

This study took place at DuocUC Plaza Vespucio, a private professional and technical institute in the community of La Florida in Santiago, Chile. There are more than ten DuocUC campuses throughout Chile, but this one was chosen because, as one of the largest sites, it contains a diverse student body from various socioeconomic backgrounds, with assorted academic and work experience and distinct careers objectives. This DuocUC site offers more than twenty specialties within ten departments, such as the school of tourism, the school of business and administration, the schools of communication, construction and design, the school of engineering and the school of information technology. Students at this site come from all over Santiago in order to study in the program of their choice.

The research for this study was conducted both on campus and also in a coffee shop next to the campus. Surveys were administered in the students' English classes. I conducted interviews in both the courtyard of the school and also in a café next to the campus since all that was required was the interviewee, a comfortable place to sit, a quiet environment and my notepad to take notes. I found that when given the choice participants generally preferred the café because they said they wanted to take a break from their schoolwork.

## **Participants**

The sampling used by this researcher was convenience sampling. The participants were restricted to students at DuocUC Plaza Vespucio enrolled in English classes who had been educated at public elementary and secondary schools in Santiago and who were willing to participate in the study. Participants of this study included ninety-eight students from level one, level two and level three English classes who were studying in programs such as business administration, administrative engineering (to be administrative assistants), accounting, publicity, marketing, human resources, and graphic design. The eight students who participated in one-on-one interviews were selected based on how they answered certain questions on the survey. For example, when a student expressed an opinion drastically different from their classmates I sought to interview them if they were willing.

The participants were all between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight, with seventy percent of them being between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. Additionally, all of the participants were Chilean and had at minimum spent their high school careers in the capital city of Santiago. All those surveyed and interviewed had high school diplomas and were enrolled in an accredited program at DuocUC in order to receive technical and professional certificates or degrees. Also, all those surveyed and interviewed had some previous English language classes.

## **Measurement Instruments**

In this research study, I used both a survey and a personal interview. I used the survey to gain an understanding of a larger populations' view of English language

learning in their country. Survey questions first sought to obtain the students' educational background and specifically their past experiences studying English. From there, the survey questions focused on the two areas that the Chilean government has said English education will benefit their country: at the national level and at the individual level. For students' opinions of how English benefits Chile's national level development, the questions centered around Chile's development goals and how English fits together with these goals. These questions also sought to address the students' possible concerns with English language learning in their country; for example, many scholars argue that promoting English causes the spread of foreign culture at the expense of the native culture. Questions surrounding the government's second goal with English language learning in their country – personal development – focused on the students' perceptions of how English has benefited other citizens and how it will benefit them in the future. I also hoped this section would provide a space for the students to highlight their personal hopes and career goals and the role English will play in their personal development. With the survey, my goal was to look for common themes the students mentioned about these two different sections while also highlighting atypical and uncharacteristic answers.

Six students with aberrant answers on the survey were then asked to participate in an interview. I also interviewed two students whose answers to the survey I felt reflected the general responses of all 98 students who I surveyed in order to have a control with which to contrast the aberrant answers. I began the interviews by asking the interviewees to elaborate on some of their answers from the survey and then used the snowball method to gather more information about their views on English education in Chile. Here, I also focused my questions around the two themes the Chilean government continuously

promotes: nationwide development and personal development. Questions about nationwide growth attempted to have the students address their attitude towards Chile's economic development goals and the role that English language learning plays in that plan. Also in this section, I asked questions in order to grasp students' perceptions on what many scholars have called the threat of national English language learning programs. With other questions regarding the students' personal development I sought to tie what students had said about the advantages of learning English to their personal experiences: had the students seen other Chileans' lives improve because they had become proficient in English, did the students believe they would have more job opportunities after graduation if they learned English, etc. In this section, I was hoping to gain an understanding of not only students' opinions, but also their real-world experience. Occasionally during the interviews, students would bring up a new topic that did not directly relate to my questions, but if I felt it was relevant to the study I asked them to elaborate. For example, multiple participants wanted to discuss how the problem with English language learning in Chile was not access, but was actually quality – the steps the Chilean government should take to improve the quality of the programs. This research project did not originally set out to address the quality of English language learning in Chile, but when students brought this concern to light on multiple occasions I decided it was necessary to address.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data were collected through surveys and interviews over a two-month period of time. Surveys were administered in the students' English class after they completed

their first exam of the semester and before they left for the day in order to ensure that classes were not interrupted. The surveys took approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Originally, I hoped to give participants the choice to take the survey in either English or Spanish, but while going through the process of getting my research approved by DuocUC administration the English Director requested that I only give the surveys in Spanish because “the students will not take the survey in English. Do not waste your time or theirs” (Author’s interview August 14, 2012). The interviews were conducted both at the school site and also at a neighboring café in the students’ personal time and did not interfere with their classes or school activities. All eight interviews were conducted in Spanish even though I gave all the participants the choice between English and Spanish. Interviews typically lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour with one only taking twenty minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

All data I collected was analyzed by looking for emergent themes and answers that directly related to the research question. I used a coding method to highlight important themes from the survey and interview data and then to sort it into specific categories. I also selected specific quotations from the students’ answers to survey and interview questions that I felt clearly exemplified the goals this research project originally set out to accomplish.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

### **Introduction to Findings**

This project set out to give a voice to a small group of Chilean students in regards to national English language learning programs in their country. In the past year, Chilean students have become a vocal part of Chilean civil society taking to the streets to demand a complete restructuring of the entire education system. With this project, my goal was to determine if a small percentage of these students also felt that their government's plan to create a bilingual citizenry was also something that needed to be restructured or eliminated.

This research was divided into two areas based on what the Chilean government has defined as the two areas that English will benefit the country: national development and personal development. On the national level, the opinions of those interviewed mirrored the views of the government; often the students even used the exact rhetoric of the government. At the personal level, the students' opinions were also closely connected to the government's, but in this section they expressed a significant amount of doubt when prompted to discuss not just the goals but also the results they have personally witnessed. In addition to these two broad topics – national and personal development – students interviewed also added new themes to this research project that will be reported in the pages to follow. Taken as a whole, it is clear that the students who participated in this research project completely agree with (and therefore mimic) the Chilean government's rhetoric regarding English language learning, but doubt whether or not it personally affects them and the time period of its effectiveness. They believe the government on a macro level – the theory behind English as a tool for economic



development - but question its effectiveness on the micro level when programs are implemented.

### **National Development**

For the past twenty years, and arguably longer, Chile has been on the fast track to development. By pursuing market-oriented, export-driven economic policies, Chile has seen considerable economic improvements: a stellar record of sustained growth, limited inflation, and the monetary resources to support developmental programs (Weyland, 1997). Chilean leaders have sought to use this stable economic growth to reduce extreme poverty and help the country reach a developed country status. Despite the success of these economic policies and the significant rise in the overall standard of living for Chileans, many scholars continue to highlight the severity of socioeconomic inequality in this country and how this neoliberal economic plan does not provide an opportunity for the redistribution of wealth and reduction in the wealth gap between rich and poor (Viñas, 2011). Believing that this is a blemish on the country's record, the Chilean government continuously develops programs to lessen socioeconomic inequality in their country without damaging their impeccable economic growth.

The English Opens Doors Program, which seeks to create a citizenry that proficiently speaks English, reflects the government's beliefs that English will help the country's national development by attracting multinational companies and foreign investment and also by further integrating into the world market. Despite the clear economic benefits of creating a citizenry proficient in English, many scholars and professionals have expressed concerns regarding the cultural and social effects English

will have on a country. The first part of this research project sought to determine if a small group of Chilean students were in agreement with the government that the economic benefits are worth the possible social and cultural costs or if they felt that the government should reorganize its priorities.

### Students Agree with the Government

After conducting research with a small sample group of Chilean students, it is clear that they agree with the Chilean government that English will bring great benefits to the country as a whole (See Appendix 3). Not one of the ninety-eight students who took the survey expressed any sort of doubt regarding this. Every single student surveyed stated that more Chileans becoming proficient in English is a necessary part of Chile's continuous development and on countless surveys participants wrote: "el ingles no es un beneficio, es una necesidad" ("English is not a benefit, it is a need"). When prompted to elaborate on this statement in an interview, one participant explained his concern that such a small percentage of Chileans speak the language of the world because "Si nosotros, como Chilenos, no ponemos más atención en aprender el ingles, las empresas y los inversores van a moverles a otros paises donde la gente se habla ingles." ("If we, as the Chilean people, do not make more of an effort multinational companies and investors are going to move onto other countries where the citizens speak English." Author's interview September 24, 2012). There is no question that these students have come to believe the words of their government that English will bring immense economic benefits to the country as a whole because the world has become extremely interrelated through globalization.

### Globalization Cannot be Prevented

Participants often brought up the topic of globalization in connection with questions about Chile's national development. In the surveys, I was unable to have those who mentioned globalization actually define the term in their own words, but in the two interviews where globalization was discussed we defined globalization as the world becoming more interconnected through the sharing of information, technology, culture and people. In every case that students brought up globalization, they discussed it as a force that could not be prevented and thus should be embraced. To these students, Chile's future depends on its ability to integrate into the world market. One of the students I interviewed had a solid understanding of Chile's economic plan and he was particularly interested in discussing how Chile's current focus on mining and exportation has made the country dependent on the world market stating that Chile closing its doors now would be suicidal (Author's interview October 3, 2012). To this student in particular, English went hand-in-hand with globalization because the amalgamation of countries around the world has created a need for a common way to communicate and since Chile has become dependent on this fusion he also believed Chile needed to become dependent on English. Other interviewees had a limited grasp of Chile's economic plan but still expressed their belief that globalization will remain an important element in the world and consequently should be embraced, not avoided.

Due in large part to the positive feelings these students expressed in connection to globalization, as well as, my preliminary research, I felt it was important to discuss the students' feelings about English as a possible linguistic and cultural threat. On the survey,

there was one question regarding English as a threat: “Do you see English as a linguistic or cultural threat to your country? Please explain”. The vast majority of participants responded “no,” and instead stated that English is a need. A handful of students did use this space to discuss their fears of the invasion of American culture (clothing, music, movies) and thus the disappearance of certain aspects of Chilean culture. What was especially interesting was that all of those participants who articulated their concern of American culture becoming dominant in Chile were careful to distinguish between American culture and the English language. For them English was a need that should be embraced by Chileans, but at the same time they affirmed that Chileans should be wary of adopting American culture at the expense of their own culture. In the eight interviews, I adamantly pursued this topic because I found this distinction between language and culture to be interesting, as well as, this fear of the spread of American culture: what specifically did they mean by the spread of American culture, what about this should be feared, and what should be done to prevent it.

All eight interviewees maintained the distinction between culture and language, stating that they believe it is possible to learn a language for economic development purposes – to embrace globalization – without allowing another culture to dominate your own culture. They wanted the economic benefits of globalization without losing their cultural individuality. When asked to elaborate on this theme of the dominance of American culture, these eight interviewees stated they were referring to Chileans primarily listening to American music, watching American movies and television shows and wearing clothes styled in an American way; for them, the lines between American culture and Chilean culture are blurring more and more everyday – “the negative side

effect of globalization” (Author’s interview October 3, 2012). When prompted to discuss what type of music, movies and television shows they preferred, all eight interviewees responded that they preferred American ones. After a lengthy discussion about this, one student finally stated that he believed the cultural invasion was going to occur no matter what because globalization brings variety: “prefiero musica y películas de los estados unidos, son mejores y más populares, y ahora con globalización son una opción pero se necesita encontrar una balanza” (“I prefer music and movies from the United States, they are better and more popular, and now with globalization they are an option, but there needs to be a balance” (Author’s interview September 26, 2012). This interviewee continued to discuss this “negative aspect” of globalization while also maintaining that globalization is a permanent part of the world we live in today and that Chile should continue to integrate. Ultimately, the interviewees all seemed to come to the consensus that steps should be taken to protect Chilean cultural individuality while also remaining open to the benefits of global assimilation; it does not have to be one or the other as long as Chilean society continues to teach and reinforce their own cultural individuality.

#### Quality of Implemented Programs

At the end of the survey, there was a space for students to add any information or themes they felt were important to the study that had not been previously addressed. An overwhelming number of students used this space to discuss how the government’s actions regarding the implementation of English language learning do not always adequately match its rhetoric. More specifically, students used this space to discuss the quality of English teachers and curriculum, how national standardized testing does not include the English language, and how overall the government’s priorities are accurate

but how modifications at the implementation level should be made. This project did not originally set out to study Chile's success at implementing English language learning programs, but since many students addressed these issues it is important to highlight the students' overall concerns.

The most significant point students raised regarding the implementation of English language learning in Chile was quality. They stated that despite significant governmental efforts, English classes in publicly-funded schools in Chile are not up to par with English classes in private schools: teachers often have limited English skills, not enough time is spent in English class, too much focus in English class is spent on reading and writing and not enough on speaking and listening, and teachers and administrators do not reinforce the importance of learning English enough. When conducting interviews, I asked the eight interviewees to express their concerns related to the quality of the English education they received in elementary and high school and all of them highlighted the limited amount of English classes they had per week and the limited amount of English they actually heard once sitting in that English class. One interviewee clearly stated her discontent when she said: “yo aprendí más inglés mirar el televisor que asistir mi curso de ingles” (“I learned more English watching television than I did in my English course.” Author's interview September 24, 2012). Those interviewed highlighted how they, at times, questioned the actual English proficiency of their English teachers because of the limited English that was truly spoken during class time. In response to this, the interviewees emphasized the positive addition that native English speaking teaching aides were in the classroom because they did use English and assist the Chilean English teachers when they had doubts or pronunciation problems. However, interviewees

emphasized how it might have been even better if the native English aids had actually taught the classes instead of just leading one-on-one pullout programs. These one-on-one pullout programs they were referring to are designed for students who are struggling more than others; the native English teachers tutor them one-on-on with the hopes of raising their skills to the class' level. The interviewees policy recommendations in connection to quality control centered on the idea that the Chilean government needs to have a more strict regulation process in order to ensure that English teachers speak English at the highest level possible and that they conduct their classes exclusively in English.

Since many students had expressed concerns about Chile's implementation of English language learning in the last space of the survey, in the interviews I made sure to ask all eight participants what specific alterations they felt needed to be made in order to improve the quality of English education. First and foremost, all eight students declared that teachers and administrators should continuously reinforce the importance of becoming bilingual on a personal and national level. Secondly, those interviewed expressed their belief that all students should attend English classes as much as they attend their other core classes and that English needs to be the dominant language spoken in that class. Finally, students participating in the interview felt that more opportunities and scholarships should be offered to study abroad in English-speaking countries as an incentive for students to actually become proficient in English; lack of motivation is a factor that was addressed on multiple occasions and will be discussed in more detail in further sections on personal development and inequality.

Another improvement that students felt could be made in the implementation of English language programs was centered on standardized testing. Chilean students hoping to attend university must take a standardized exam known as the PSU, Prueba de Selección Universitaria, that often determines whether or not they will attend university and what university they will attend (Glas, 2008). This exam consists of two mandatory sections, math and Spanish language, and two additional sections, sciences and history, depending on what undergraduate program the student intends to apply to. Participants in this research project stated that since English language abilities are not measured on the PSU, Chilean students undervalue the importance of learning English. Learning a foreign language must be a priority in order to actually become proficient in it and since English is not part of this standardized exam Chilean students do not make learning English a priority. Two interviewees stated that if they had thought English would help them get into university they probably would have taken their English classes more seriously (Author's interview September 28 and October 1, 2012).

It is important to mention that in the past year, the PSU has become a controversial issue within the Chilean education protests. CONFECH, the Chilean student organization that led the school lockouts and takeovers during the fall semester of 2011 has listed the elimination of the PSU as part of its mandate (Pedigo, 2012). With the two interviewees who stated that they might have taken their English classes more seriously if they had thought it would have better their chances at attending university, I explored this topic of the elimination of the PSU. Both interviewees agreed with CONFECH that the PSU is advantageous for wealthier students who attend private high schools and thus should be eliminated so all Chilean students have equal opportunities to attend the best



universities, but they also added that in addition universities should begin to take English speaking abilities more seriously in the admissions process (Author's interview September 26 and October 1, 2012). It was surprising to learn that even though the Chilean government adamantly supports the creation of a bilingual citizenry, universities do not significantly value English proficiency in the admissions process (Author's interview October 1, 2012). Following this interview, I did independent research and from what I could find speaking English is considered to be advantageous, but definitely not required to attend university (Parry, 1997). Whether it occurs through the PSU or universities themselves, these two interviewees adamantly believed that one of the reasons many Chileans have yet to completely embrace becoming proficient in English is because in high school they do not see the value in it, in terms of university acceptance. These interviewees called on the Chilean government and universities to have their actions match their goals in regards to creating a bilingual citizenry.

### **Personal Development**

In addition to the belief that the creation of a bilingual Chilean citizenry will benefit the national development of Chile, the Chilean government also continuously highlights how English language abilities will also benefit Chileans on an individual level. Speaking English should provide Chileans with more job opportunities and more competitive salaries; speaking English also opens the door for Chilean students to study abroad and travel, to personally integrate into the world through work and leisure. For the Chilean government, there is no question that the average Chilean's standard of living will improve if they can become proficient in English. The second part of this research

study focused on establishing if a small sample group of Chilean students agreed with the government on the topic of personal development; it was my hope to both ascertain if the students believed English would open doors for them in their personal careers and also to determine if these students had already seen the advantages of learning English in their own lives or in the lives of those close to them.

### English Increases Job Opportunities

Not surprisingly, all ninety-eight students answered that yes, being proficient in English increases the number of jobs a person can apply to and these new job opportunities should result in higher incomes and overall better work experiences (See Appendix 3). Just as the students' rhetoric was a mirror image of the governments' in regards to the country's national development, it was the same when answering questions about personal development in general terms. It was clear that the students have been taught that English will open doors for them and at least when broadly answering a question regarding personal development they agree with the government. This was a topic that merited more discussion.

In all eight of the interviews, we spent a sizeable amount of time discussing the Chilean government's promotion of English language learning in order to provide Chileans with better career opportunities. The government encourages these programs stating that they will enhance the standard of living for all participants; therefore, by making English learning available to all Chileans, all Chileans' lives will improve as long as they take full advantage of the opportunities available to them. During these interviews, I first asked the students if they agreed with this idea on the whole and all

eight stated that “yes, English improves your chances of getting a good job in this country” (Author’s interview September 27, 2012) because companies today often do business with other companies around the world. However, when asked to give specific examples of where they had seen this play out in their own life or in a friend’s life only one of the eight interviewees could do so (Author’s interview September 27, 2012).

When an interviewee could not give a specific example of personally profiting from English, I asked if they thought English might benefit them personally after they finish their studies and enter the workforce; three of them said “I hope so” (Author’s interview September 26, September 28, October 1, 2012), three of them said “maybe” (Author’s interview September 27 and October 3, 2012) and two of them said “I do not know” (Author’s interview September 24 and October 3, 2012). It was quite interesting how quickly their answers changed when the question was asked in a more personal manner; the question itself was effectively the same, but what was true for “all Chileans” was not necessarily true for these Chileans. This discrepancy warranted more dialogue time.

When my interviewees began to express significantly more doubt in regards to how English will help their personal development, I chose to blatantly ask them why they were different from the “average Chilean” whose life they thought would improve if they learned English. Upon more discussion, the three participants who said they hoped English would help them in the future and the three participants who said that English might help them all agreed that their doubt exists because they do not have any friends who have become proficient in English and thus they had never personally seen anyone’s life improve. Here, they also added that since the benefits of learning are long-term and not immediate they have more difficulty putting faith in the idea that if they do

everything possible to learn English their life will get better. When asked if their reservations shape their actions vis-à-vis studying English all three confirmed that yes, it is difficult to make learning English a priority because while they can intellectualize how English could help them, in practice it seems significantly less likely that they will reap the fruits of their labor. What originally began as a glimmer of hope that English would better their life, quickly turned into doubt and hesitation.

When I directly asked the other two interviewees why they did not know if English would benefit them, one responded that in fact she did not believe that she could profit off learning English because circumstances in her life made her unable to devote the necessary time to acquire a foreign language: “Generalmente aprender un idioma extranjero dura más tiempo que otros cursos y tengo guagua, trabajo y estudio no tengo bastante tiempo...en realidad es demasiado tarde para mí pero otros Chilenos pueden aprender el ingles y mejorar sus vidas. Esto es la razon que yo dije el gobierno tiene razon, ingles se abre puertas.” (“Learning a foreign language generally takes more time than my other courses and because I have a baby, a job and I am trying to finish my studies I do not have the time...the reality is that it is too late for me, but I do not think it is too late for other Chileans which is why I said that the government is correct, English is advantageous.” Author’s interview September 24, 2012). The other participant who answered that he did not know if English would help him, similarly to the woman discussed above, responded that he did not think he would ever speak English well enough to truly change his life. When asked to elaborate on this, he said that at twenty-three he should already be able to speak English significantly better than he does, but that because he did not learn very much in high school his future was already set and would

be difficult to alter. He also added that his job as a construction manager did not require knowledge of English, which made him even less concerned with improving his English language skills. He, however, did confirm his belief in the advantages of learning English for future generations and said that he will do everything possible to ensure that his children are bilingual (Author's interview October 3, 2012).

One of the most unanticipated parts of my preliminary research on the Chilean government's promotion of English language learning was how adamantly its rhetoric proclaimed that English will benefit all Chileans by opening them up to more employment opportunities with higher salaries. I understand how English can be indispensable for certain people with specific careers, such as those who work in the tourism industry or those who work in multinational corporations and have habitual contact with overseas managers, but it is not clearly evident that every Chilean will have better job prospects solely because they speak English. When one of my interviewees initiated a discussion of this topic, by stating that as someone who works in construction he does not use and probably will never use English in his line of work, I leaped at the opportunity to discuss this in more detail. Originally this student had stated he was in agreement with the government that English could provide immeasurable advantages to the Chilean citizenry as a whole, but later in the interview he stated that the benefits of English were directly related to ones line of work. I began to search for an explanation of his change in opinions and to understand the implications of this change. After a short discussion, it became clear that he did not actually change his opinions but instead saw this as a question of personal choice. He believed that all Chileans should be introduced to English in primary school and then as they have a clearer understanding of what career

path they want they should be free to choose whether or not to continue their English studies. When asked how this system differs from the current one, he responded that the only difference is that during the last year or two of high school and especially once they began studying at a university or technical institute, students should no longer be required to take English classes if it does not relate to their career. This student highlighted his beliefs in the importance of providing immense opportunities for Chileans to learn English, while not restricting students' right to choose whether or not English will benefit their personal life. This prompted a discussion about motivation and inequality that will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

### Systemic Inequality

The common theme throughout the discussion of improvements that should be made to English language learning in Chile was inequality. This did not come as a surprise because inequality is a common topic whenever discussing development in Chile. While Chile's economic growth in the past twenty-five years has been impressive, many people feel that only a small percentage of Chileans have felt the benefits of this growth. There is no reason to believe that English education would be any different. In fact, part of the government's statement on the English Opens Doors Program is to extend English language learning to all Chileans and to reduce inequality in the country. In all eight interviews, participants expressed their concerns about the systemic inequality that exists and how structural changes must be made in the country to reduce this problem. In regards to English education, all eight interviewees emphasized how Chilean students from wealthier families typically speak English better than students from poorer

families and how the government must do something to alter this situation. When I proposed how the government's goal of implementing English classes in all public schools was a direct attempt to reduce inequality, all eight interviewees responded that yes, it was a good start but many other changes needed to be made and from here the topic of inequality evolved into a discussion of motivation, more specifically how motivation levels often change depending on the socioeconomic standing of the family.

One interviewee was especially passionate about the connection between motivation and inequality, adamantly believing that one of the greatest problems with the implementation of English language learning in Chile was that poorer Chileans will continuously struggle to benefit from English for a variety of reasons, despite increased opportunities. First, he stated that Chilean students from poorer families lack the ability to invest a sufficient amount of time to learn English because their socioeconomic standing causes them to have priorities, obligations and limitations that wealthier Chileans may not have. The example that he used to support this belief was that poorer Chileans typically have to work multiple jobs in order to care for their families and thus have less time to devote to investing in their children's education; children from poorer families cannot value education as much as those from wealthier families. Secondly, the interviewee pointed to how richer Chilean students probably have parents who already speak English and thus they have already witnessed how English is advantageous and thus are more motivated to learn English themselves. For this student, wealthier Chileans benefit from learning English because they have the motivation to learn while poorer Chileans struggle to appreciate the advantages of English since they lack clear examples of where it has been valuable.

In the third part of this discussion, the interviewee brought up how students from wealthier families had better opportunities to establish a strong foundation in English because these students typically attend private schools where the quality of English classes and teachers is better and more focus is placed on the importance of learning English. When asked how he thought this could be altered, he expressed little hope that these circumstances could be changed. His response prompted me to explore the following idea: if poorer students are not going to learn English because their circumstances do not allow them to invest enough time to actually become proficient and the quality of the classes that are offered does not meet the standards set by private schools, then why invest in national English language learning programs at all. This interviewee paused for a minute to consider the question and then said “pues, tiene razon...no...pienso que el gobierno necesita encontrar una manera para cambiar la mentalidad de estas personas. Ellos necesitan cambiar su pensamiento y encontrar la motivación a mejorar sus vidas.” (“You have a point...no...I think the government needs to find a way to change the mentality of these people. They need to change their thinking and find the motivation to better their lives.” Author’s interview October 3, 2012). It became clear after further discussion, that this student’s perceived lack of hope was actually discontent with how poorer Chileans could not take advantage of the opportunities the government was making available to them. He felt that poorer Chileans were forced into being inferior at speaking English because of forces outside of their control. Even though the government does what it can to alter this by making English language learning programs widespread it seems highly unlikely that these circumstances will change until poverty is eradicated and those poorer Chileans no longer have to



dedicate so much of their time to survival. This prompted me to ask whether or not he felt that English could be a tool for poverty reduction; he responded that it could be only successful for poorer people who have the time and motivation to dedicate to learning English, but that it cannot be considered a universally effective tool (Author's interview October 3, 2012). In the end, this interviewee concluded by expressing hope that as time goes on and English becomes more prevalent and its benefits become more visible throughout society that poorer Chileans would also be able to profit from learning it.

One other interviewee was notably eager to discuss socioeconomic inequality in Chile and her belief that the education system was a significant part of the problem. Since education reform in Chile is a hefty issue and this discussion could continue for hours, I chose to redirect her focus to discuss how English education fits into the matter. Initially she hesitated stating that she lacked the knowledge to discuss how the Chilean government hopes to use English education to reduce inequality in the country, but after a bit more exchange she began to express her belief that government programs attempting to deal with inequality may only disguise the problem instead of actually fixing it. When asked to clarify what she meant by this, she responded by stating that government programs provide some improvements but until the education system is completely restructured – by this she meant completely eliminating for-profit private schools so everyone has access to the same education – socioeconomic inequality in Chile will remain a problem. While the elimination of for-profit schools is an argument I am familiar with, I followed this statement of hers with a question about the quality of English education that exists in public schools in Chile today with the hopes of understanding how she thinks that eliminating private schools would improve the quality

of English classes in public schools. She responded by articulating that eliminating private schools would eradicate the advantages wealthier students have because their parents can afford to pay for higher quality schools. In connection to English education, she maintained that since wealthier students typically profit off their superior English language proficiency, balancing out the playing field by eliminating private schools should create a more egalitarian society. From here, I again asked about improving the quality of English language learning in public schools and she responded that the government should continue to invest in enhancing English teachers' abilities and the curriculum used in classes. When I called attention to how the English Opens Doors Program seeks to do just that, she declared "Sí, es un buen programa con este y la eliminación de escuelas privadas pienso que el sistema va a ser más equitativo." ("Yes, it is a good program, with it and the elimination of private schools I think the system will become more equitable." Author's interview September 27, 2012). For this student, equality is what the Chilean government should continuously strive for and they should do whatever possible to make this a reality, even if it comes at the cost of quality. We were forced to end the interview here because she had a class and I was hoping to continue it at a later time. I felt that she expressed widespread views present in Chilean society, but this proved to be impossible.

With both of the interviewees that were particularly interested in discussing socioeconomic inequality, I tried to find a way to link this to inequalities in English speaking abilities. English is, without a doubt, a classist subject in this country and I thought it would be interesting to discuss these students' ideas regarding this issue. For me, this brings up an important question directly related to development and reducing

systemic inequality in Chile: is the Chilean government promoting national English language learning programs in order to provide equal access to all Chileans or is it their hope that funding English language learning programs in public schools will result in all Chileans benefiting equally. Another way to address this topic: are the Chilean government's development goals regarding English a question of providing equal access to all Chileans or bringing about equal results throughout the country? Is Chile's drastic inequality an inequality of opportunity or an inequality of results? I specifically wanted to understand if they felt the inequality was a result of lack of access or lack of results: do students from lower social classes speak English worse than those from upper social classes because they do not have sufficient opportunities to learn English or because of other factors?

The female interviewee who had adamantly proclaimed her belief that equality could only be reached with the elimination of private schools clearly felt that inequality was more related to access than results, stating that right now wealthier Chileans have better access because they are capable of paying for the best English classes or schools for their children. To her, establishing a more egalitarian society can only be achieved if you take away this unfair advantage and put every student on equal ground from the inception. Having heard this argument many times while living in Chile, I was interested in determining her opinions on how motivation factored into this: did she think that starting on equal footing would produce equal results and, if yes, would these equal results require a reduction in performance levels? When I asked her this, she responded, "Por supuesto que no. No todos los estudiantes se realizan examente el mismo – todos somos diferentes – pero al menos eliminará clasicismo." ("Of course, not every student

will perform exactly the same – people are different – but at least this will eliminate classism.” Author’s interview September 27, 2012). For this interviewee, the government is making a significant effort to provide equal opportunities to all Chileans, but until leaders also eliminate the perks that wealthier Chileans have, inequality cannot be eradicated. The male student had provided three causes for this inequality and all three of them were more a question of motivation than anything else. He never stated that the poorer Chileans lacked the prospect of learning English, but instead highlighted how circumstances in their lives often rendered them unable to make the most of existing opportunities. For him, improvements need to be made at the implementation level of English language program provision, but the opportunities exist. The inequalities pertain more to results. For both these participants, the Chilean government is successfully increasing access to English for all Chileans, but inequality will remain in the results until the government either eradicates private schools or determines a way to motivate Chileans from lower socioeconomic standings.

## **Conclusion**

On the whole, this research project sought to determine if a small group of Chilean students agree with the government that creating a bilingual population will be advantageous to the country as a whole and to Chileans on a personal level. The surveys and interviews revealed that overall this sample population does believe that English will benefit the national development and personal development, but that many improvements need to be made before Chile will reach its full potential. The participants were careful to highlight the importance of maintaining Chilean cultural individuality in spite of pressure

to embrace other cultures as a result of globalization. They also pointed out that the government's priorities are correct, but that upgrades need to be made on the implementation level of English language learning. Finally, participants emphasized that socioeconomic inequality in Chile is a dire issue that must be addressed before it becomes even more severe and how English language programs in public schools are a decent start but not enough. In the following chapter, I will analyze the arguments the participants brought up in the surveys and interviews with the hope of adding to existing literature on English language programs as a lucrative part of economic development.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

For more than fifty years, Chile has embraced a neoliberal economic development plan focused on specializing in mining and agriculture, integrating into the world market, attracting foreign direct investment and opening the door for transnational companies to conduct business, privatizing many once-public industries, and reducing public spending on social programs such as healthcare and education. In economic development terms, these policies have been extremely beneficial for the country: Chile's gross domestic product has grown on an average of five percent per year and the poverty level has reduced from 38.6 percent to 15.1 percent (Woods, 2011). Despite this stunning record, many scholars often use Chile's development as an example of how neoliberalism can result in unequal growth, with a small percentage of the population reaping the greatest portion of benefits. Since 1990, Chilean leaders have established public policies and social programs hoping to both continue the impressive growth while also spreading the increased wealth throughout Chilean society.

The Chilean government's focus on creating a bilingual citizenry, through national English language learning programs such as the English Opens Doors Program, clearly points to their motivation for increasing economic development while also providing broader opportunities to decrease the socioeconomic inequality in this country. This research project sought to provide a space for a small group of university-aged Chilean students to express their agreement and discontent with the Chilean government's promotion of English language learning: do Chileans really believe that learning English will open doors for them personally and for the country as a whole. In the end, the students were in agreement with the government when discussing the big,

long-term picture. However, when asked to specifically detail how English skills would improve their personal standard of living, the students were more apprehensive: English is without a doubt a need in Chile according to these students, but most of them felt that wealthier Chileans were the ones who reap the benefits and that poorer Chileans may eventually be able to profit from learning English, but this will only happen in the distant future. They also felt that if significant improvements were made at the implementation level of English language education then over time future generations would be able to take advantage of these opportunities and better their lives. In sum, these students believe English is necessary for Chile and will continue to be beneficial in the future, but it is too late for them and most Chileans out of school. While their viewpoint is completely understandable, if this is an accurate representation of how most Chileans feel in regards to English education in their country then the Chilean government needs to re-evaluate their goals and how Chilean citizens are perceiving its goals. Ultimately, inequalities and problems with English education in Chile are not a result of a complete lack of opportunity, they are more about a lack of hope that translates into a lack of motivation and in order to amend this situation the government combined with educational institutions and the people must make different choices.

### **New Marketing Plan**

Currently, the Chilean government's marketing plan for promoting English language learning in their country is clearly reaching a large number of people; months spent living, working, and doing research here have made me aware of how many Chileans deem English to be important for personal and national development. The

problem seems to be how Chileans are receiving the message and how they then respond to it. Despite efforts to use English education as an equalization tool in terms of socioeconomic inequality, English remains an extremely classist topic in this country. Chileans from lower socioeconomic positions see how English profits wealthier Chileans, but they fail to connect how they could also reap those rewards. While I do see the vast socioeconomic disparities in Chilean society as problematic, I feel that the goal of English language programs in Chile should be to continue providing equal access to all Chileans because over time equal access will lessen the inequality of results that is prevalent today. One can never expect completely equal results because all people are different. If you take two students from similar backgrounds and offer them the same opportunities, they are generally not going to produce the same results. Humanity is naturally diverse and will always have various goals and passions that determine how hard they work and what their priorities will be. “Some inequality may be tolerated, like inequality caused by differences in effort and talent, particularly when attempts to reduce it could interfere with other ethical objectives such as privacy and individual freedom. Equality of opportunities is desirable, equality of outcomes (earnings, income, wealth) not necessarily” (Barros, 2008).

In order to reduce the connection between social class and English proficiency, those in charge of promoting English education in Chile must refocus their marketing strategy in order to create a more positive outlook among Chilean citizens as a whole. People need to see examples of how other Chileans who grew up in lower income households have benefited from learning English, not only how the rich have gotten richer because speaking English has provided them with more job opportunities in higher



paying positions. If the goal is to create a bilingual citizenry, then advertisements need to reveal how people from lower and middle classes have improved their standard of living; people need to relate to those who have benefited from learning English in order to truly find the motivation to work as hard as is necessary to become proficient in a foreign language. Right now wealthier Chileans are typically more motivated to study English because the advantages are unmistakably apparent to them, but poorer Chileans lack the necessary role models – they have not seen English benefit anyone close to them – and thus are less willing to dedicate the necessary time and energy to learn the language. In order to truly revolutionize English language abilities in Chile, Chileans need to witness people just like them finding better paying jobs and improving their standard of living because this will increase their eagerness and enthusiasm and with more motivation will come better results.

### **Universities Must Play their Part**

In addition to altering the message broadcasted throughout Chilean society, Chilean universities – both public and private – must place more emphasis on English proficiency during both the admissions process and during a student's career as well. It is not enough for the government to assert that English is necessary for Chileans' personal development; students must also have a more short-term, specific objective to work towards because only thinking that you might make more money one day is not sufficient. Right now because English is not required (and with most universities' admissions requirements English is not even encouraged) Chilean students do not prioritize English class in relation to the rest of their core courses. Students cannot be

expected to spend an equal amount of time studying English as they do in their math, Spanish language, science, and history classes when those other courses greatly impact their chances of attending university and English does not. If universities include English proficiency in the admissions process – either by making it a requirement or including an English section on the PSU (Chile’s standardized test, which is similar to the SAT reasoning test) - students in high school who plan on attending university will have greater incentive to devote more time to English and will thus improve their proficiency. Students must be motivated to learn English and the best way to motivate them is with incentives. For students who plan on attending university, making English mandatory to attend is the greatest incentive available.

### **Strengthen the Quality of English Lessons**

Thirdly, Chilean governmental authorities that are in charge of national English language programs must increase the quality of the lessons they provide in public schools. Students who attend these public schools must be able to adequately compete with other students when applying to university and for employment opportunities. In order to make these students competitive, they must have a solid foundation in their skills, which will only be possible if the Chilean government improves the quality of English education in public schools. The vast majority of those interviewed and surveyed in this study highlighted how the quality of their English classes in school was not up to par with other classes, thus changes must be made. Another option in increasing the quality of provision would be for the government to increase its allocation of scholarships and other resources so that students who wish to can take English classes at private

institutions. Since one of the common complaints from these interviews was that students from lower socioeconomic standings lacked the resources to attend private English language institutes, the government should use a percentage of its resources to make this option available to more citizens.

The Ministry of Education must ensure that they are offering the best quality of education they can with the resources they are allotted. In addition to this, the Ministry of Education – in connection with public educational institutions - must reinforce the advantages of learning English. They need to find a way to ensure that teachers in English class are emphasizing the importance of learning English, encouraging their students to take advantage of the opportunities they have been offered, and supporting them along the difficult path. Learning a foreign language is never easy and if students are not continuously reminded that learning English will change their lives, they may give up. The Chilean government and those associated with the provision of English language learning in the country must do everything in their power to provide students with the resources they need to learn English so that they can raise their standard of living and play a role in the national economic development of Chile. Nonetheless, the reality is that the burden should not fall solely on those in leadership; Chilean citizens must take control of their own destinies and do what is necessary to truly learn English.

### **Chileans Cannot Only Depend on the Government**

The Chilean students who participated in this research project consistently spoke of their discontent with the provision of English language learning programs in their country and how currently English only benefits wealthier Chileans, calling on the

government to make substantial amendments to the programs and the education system on the whole. Without a doubt, adjustments must be made – especially in enriching the quality of what they provide - but it is also necessary for the Chilean people to recognize that the government cannot be the only institution in charge of improving the system. Civil society, specifically Chilean students, must be willing to actively participate in the development of their country and if they agree with the government that English will help them accomplish this then they need to take advantage of the opportunities that have already been offered to them. Chilean students should, first and foremost, attend their English classes in order to make the most of what the government has already provided them; too often they let their discontentment with the imperfection of the system translate into complete rejection, but this hurts them the most. Chilean society will profit when they work with the government and make the most of the English language programs that already exist while at the same time continuing to call for reform and progress. By thinking that it is too late for them and giving up they actually make the situation worse because their complacency does not keep the government accountable and does not create change and better opportunities for generations to come.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research on the effectiveness of English language learning programs in Chile and the citizens' feelings about them is necessary in order to continue to measure the need for English as a means of increasing economic development and raising standards of living. These research projects can assist both the national government and development agencies, while also providing an example for other developing countries

that are considering implementing national English language programs to make their citizens bilingual. Future projects should attempt to include university students in their research in order to provide a more accurate understanding of whether or not those students believe English opens doors for them personally and for the country. Finally, I recommend that future projects compare and contrast the perspectives of Chileans who work in multinational companies with those who work in national companies so as to measure whether or not priorities change when career goals change. As our world becomes more and more connected and English becomes more widespread, it will be increasingly important to assess the benefits of promoting national English language learning programs to make that certain that English still serves its original purpose and to measure the need to continue creating bilingual citizens.

**Appendices**

**Appendix 1**

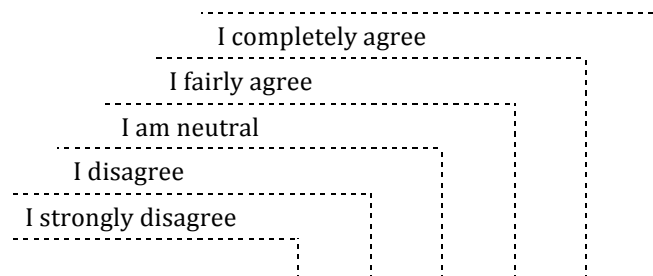
**Survey Questions – English Version**

**English Language Program – Student Survey**

**Basic Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course of Study: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Year at DuocUC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of English Classes at DuocUC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Years of English Classes before entering DuocUC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**English Level**



- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am comfortable reading English      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I am comfortable writing in English   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I am comfortable speaking English     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I am comfortable listening to English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**English Opens Doors Program/English Classes in Elementary and High School**

5. Are you aware of the language policy (English Opens Doors Program) established by the Ministry of Education in 2003?      \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

6. In which grade did you begin taking English classes?

7. How many hours per week did you have English classes?

8. Did you have Chilean English teachers?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No
9. Did you have native English teaching assistants?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No
10. Did you primarily speak English in your English classes?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No

### **Your Opinion of English Learning**

11. Do you think it is important to learn English?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No
12. If you answered yes to the previous question, why do you think English is important?
13. Would you have preferred to study a different foreign language?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No
14. If you answered yes to the previous question, what language would you have preferred to study?
15. Do you think English will benefit you in your future career goals?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No
16. If you answered yes to the previous question, how do you think it will be beneficial?
17. Has it been easy for you to learn English?      \_\_\_Yes      \_\_\_No
18. Do you see English as a threat to Spanish-speaking in your country?

### **English and Chile's Development**

19. What is your understanding of the Chilean government's goals behind the implementation of the English Opens Doors Program?

20. What does President Piñera's goal "to defeat underdevelopment by 2018" mean to you?

21. Do you personally see "defeating underdevelopment" as a necessary step in Chile?

22. Do you believe that English provides citizens with personal (education or career related) benefits?

23. Explain to me your understanding of inequality in Chile?

24. Do you believe speaking English reduces inequality because it offers more people the opportunity to work in more diverse fields?

25. Do you think the English Opens Doors Program should continue?

**Additional Information**

26. Is there any other information you feel is necessary for this study?



## Appendix 2

### Survey Questions – Spanish Version

#### Información Personal.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Carrera: \_\_\_\_\_

Años en DuocUC: \_\_\_\_\_

Numero de semestres de inglés en DuocUC: \_\_\_\_\_

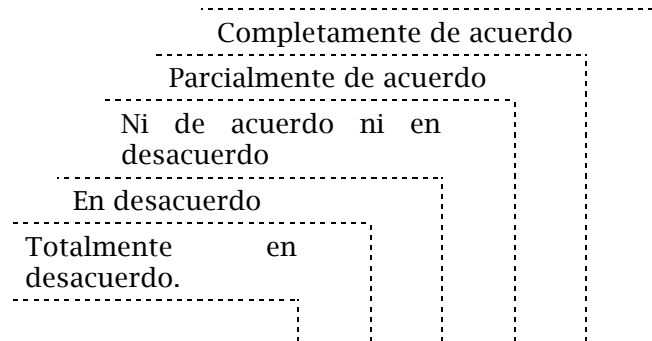
Años de clases de inglés antes de DuocUC: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# de mobil: \_\_\_\_\_

Estás interesado(a) en participar en una entrevista?      Sí\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_\_

#### Nivel de Inglés.



- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Me siento cómodo leyendo en inglés.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Me siento cómodo escribiendo en inglés. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Me siento cómodo hablando en inglés.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Me siento cómodo escuchando inglés.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Programa Inglés Abre Puertas/Clases de Inglés en Enseñanza Básica y Media.**

5. ¿Estás al tanto de las políticas del idioma Inglés (Programa Inglés Abre Puertas) establecido por el Ministerio de Educación en 2003?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

6. ¿En qué curso comenzaste a tomar clases de inglés? \_\_\_\_\_

7. ¿Cuántas horas a la semana tenías de inglés? \_\_\_\_\_

8. ¿Tenías profesores de Inglés chilenos?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

9. ¿Tuviste Asistentes de Inglés (Profesores Nativos)?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

10. ¿Hablabas principalmente inglés durante la clase?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

**Tu opinión acerca de aprender inglés.**

11. ¿Tú crees que es importante aprender inglés?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

12. Si contestaste SI a la pregunta anterior, ¿por qué crees que es importante?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. ¿Preferirías haber estudiado otro idioma extranjero?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

14. Si contestaste SI a la pregunta anterior, ¿Qué otro idioma habrías preferido estudiar?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. ¿Crees que el idioma inglés te beneficiará en tus futuras metas profesionales?

\_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

16. Si contestaste SI a la pregunta anterior, ¿Cómo crees que te beneficiará?

-----  
-----

17. ¿Ha sido fácil para ti aprender inglés? \_\_\_Si \_\_\_No

18. ¿Ves al idioma inglés como una amenaza para el idioma español en tu país?

### **El idioma inglés y el desarrollo de Chile**

19. ¿Qué entiendes de las metas que tiene el gobierno para implementar el Programa Inglés Abre Puertas?

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20. ¿Qué significa para ti la meta del Presidente Piñera de “derrotar el subdesarrollo para el año 2018”?

-----  
-----

21. Personalmente, ¿Crees que es un paso necesario para Chile “derrotar el subdesarrollo”? ¿Por qué?

-----  
-----

22. ¿Crees que el idioma inglés trae beneficios a nivel personal (en la educación o carrera profesional)? ¿Por qué?

-----  
-----

23. Explica lo que entiendes por desigualdad en Chile.

-----  
-----

24. ¿Crees que hablar inglés reduce la desigualdad, dado que ofrece a más personas la oportunidad de trabajar en diversas áreas? ¿Por qué?

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-----

25. ¿Crees que el Programa Inglés Abre Puertas debería continuar? ¿Por qué?

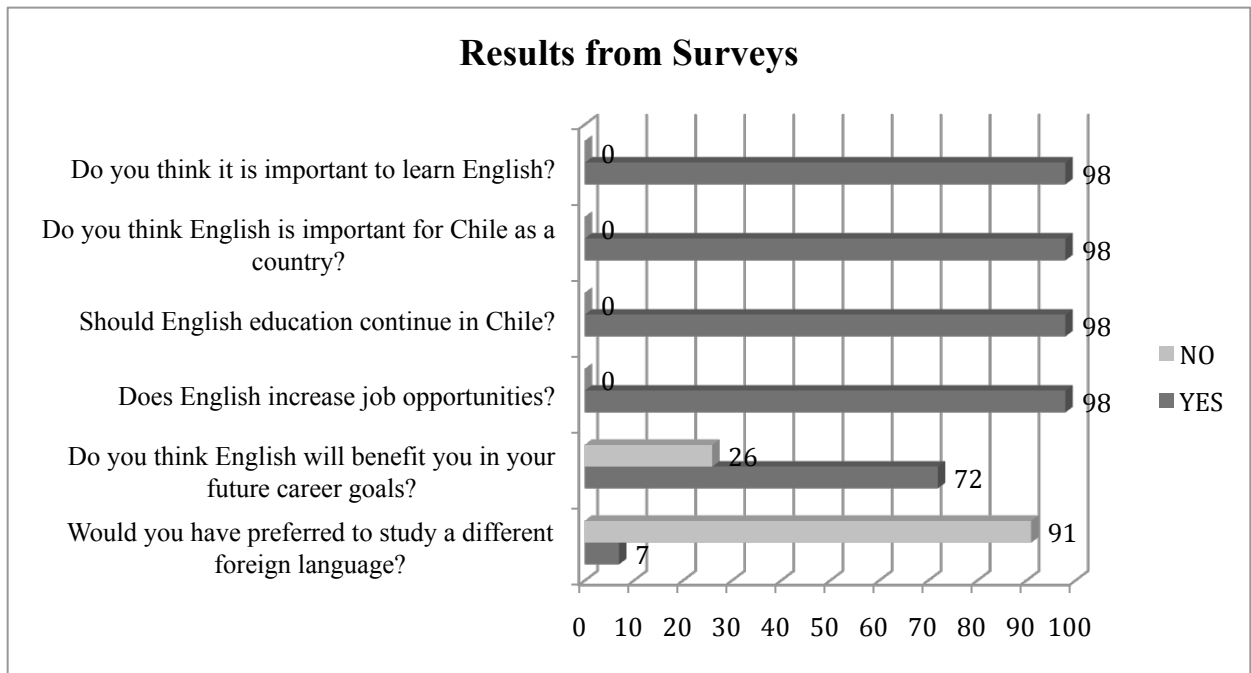
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**Información Adicional**

26. ¿Hay alguna otra información que creas necesaria para este estudio?

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## Appendix 3



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