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The Importance of Dual Delivery of Services in Inclusive Education at the Intersection of Multilingualism and Disability

La importancia de la prestación dual de servicios en la educación inclusiva en la intersección entre el multilingüismo y la discapacidad

Tü anasükalü ma'in süpüleerua piamainkuai ekirajawaa sulu'u waneesia pütchi, sa'akajee watta saalin wanüiki otta na wayuu kapülaasükana e'raajaa

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Abstract

Despite a majority of the global population being multilingual, research in education dominantly stems from contexts that treat monolingualism as the norm. In inclusive education, the intersection of disability and multilingualism remains scarcely investigated. Unsurprisingly then, special education services are primarily delivered in monolingual settings without consideration of multilingualism and often take precedence over linguistically and culturally responsive interventions. Worse, research indicates that some service providers in dominantly monolingual contexts still advise caregivers of multilingual children with a diagnosed disability to focus on one language, though evidence highlights potential detrimental consequences of this advice and no evidence supports its effectiveness. Despite an overall dearth of research in this area, existing research has been primarily conducted in countries from the Global North, leading to a disconnect between research contexts and the identities of students at the intersection of multilingualism and disability. In this paper, we argue that dual delivery of services for multilingual learners labelled as disabled is central to inclusive education and call for more research examining this intersection, specifically from cultural and linguistic contexts beyond the Global North. We discuss not only the dire need for more research in this field but for scholarship that is situated in local communities and conducted in partnership with communities.

Keywords: multilingualism, disability, intersectionality, inclusive education.

Resumen

A pesar de que la mayoría de la población mundial es multilingüe, la investigación educativa se origina predominantemente en contextos que consideran el monolingüismo como la norma. En la educación inclusiva, la intersección entre discapacidad y multilingüismo continúa siendo escasamente investigada. Por ello, no resulta sorprendente que los servicios de educación especial se presten principalmente en entornos monolingües, sin tener en cuenta el multilingüismo, y que con frecuencia prevalezcan sobre las intervenciones lingüística y culturalmente pertinentes. Más preocupante aún, las investigaciones indican que algunos prestadores de servicios en contextos predominantemente monolingües continúan recomendando a los cuidadores de niños multilingües con una discapacidad diagnosticada que se concentren en un solo idioma, aunque la evidencia señala las posibles consecuencias perjudiciales de esta recomendación y no existe evidencia que respalde su eficacia. A pesar de la escasez general de investigaciones en esta área, los estudios existentes se han realizado principalmente en países del Norte Global, lo que genera una desconexión entre los contextos de investigación y las identidades de los estudiantes que se encuentran en la intersección entre el multilingüismo y la discapacidad. En este artículo sostenemos que la prestación dual de servicios para los estudiantes multilingües identificados como personas con discapacidad es fundamental para la educación inclusiva. Asimismo, hacemos un llamado a desarrollar más investigaciones que examinen esta intersección, especialmente desde contextos culturales y lingüísticos situados fuera del Norte Global. No solo analizamos la necesidad urgente de ampliar la investigación en este campo, sino también de promover una producción académica situada en las comunidades locales y desarrollada en colaboración con ellas.

Palabras clave: multilingüismo, discapacidad, interseccionalidad, educación inclusiva.

Palitpütchiru'u

Watta saalin na wayuu aashaje'erakana watta saalin wanüiki mmaipaa, shasa'a tü achajawaakat pütchi süpüla ekirajawaa, eitaasü sulu'u waneesia ne'e wanüiki joolu'u. Sulu'u tü ekirajawaa ewiichikana, tü asirúajirawaa sa'aka kapülaa e'raajaa otta watta saalin wanüiki nnojotsü achajawaain achiki ma'in joolu'u. Müshiijese'e nnojolin i'raajüin maa'ulu yaa, na ekirajawaa ma'in sulu'u naatawaa eitaasü sulu'u waneesia ne'e wanüiki, nnojoishi keraajüin na wayuu ashajakana sünain akuwa'ipaa otta wanüiki eekai anain süpüla joolu'u.Tü kapülaasükalü ma'in, eesü achajawaa pütchi eekai saashajain achiki maa'ulu sünain na laülaayuukana na jochonyuukana eekai kapülaan süi'ruku eekai aashaje'erain watta saalin wanüiki, eitaasü namüin sünain keraajaa waneesia ne'e wanüiki, ja'itairü eekai kashasüin pütchi Facebook süpüla na jochonyuukana otta nnojotsü eein achajawaa pütchi eekai laülaain saa'in süpüla pütchikat tia. Ja'itairü meetsalüin tü achajawaakat pütchi sulu'u mma joolu'u, na ashajashiikana chayaa mma “Norte Global” nnojotsü ewiichijirain sünain wakuwa'ipa yaa wamüin, na ekirajaanakana sa'aka watta saalin wanüiki otta kapülaa e'raajaa.Sulu'u tü ashajajkat pütchi yaa, waashajain sünain piamainkuai ekirajawaa namüin na ekirajaanakana eekai aashaje'erain watta saalin wanüiki otta eekai kapülaan sa'aka ekirajawaa ewiichikana. Aluwataasü pütchi süpüla achajawaa pütchi achiki joolu'u sa'aka wakuwa'ipa yaa yaaje'ewat saa'in "Norte Global". Ninjutsu waashajain ne'e sünainchoo süpüla eitaa pütchi süpüla achajawaa pütchi yaa, eesü süpüla keraajaa ekirajawaa achiki sa'aka mma pütchiru'u otta pa'anapajirawaa pütchi namaa na wayuu yaaje'ewaliikana ma'in.

Pütchi katsüinsükat: Pütchi katsüinsükat: watta saalin wanüiki, wayuu kapülaasükana e'raajaa, asirúajirawaa sulu'u naatawaa akuwa'ipaa, ekirajawaa ewiichikana.

Introduction

Inclusive education is widely understood as a commitment to ensuring equitable access, participation, and meaningful learning opportunities for all learners. However, this commitment remains unevenly realized for students positioned at the intersection of multilingualism and disability due to the historical and ongoing expectations for assimilation upheld in schools (Cioè-Peña, 2017). In this manuscript, we argue for the importance of dual delivery of services - integrated supports that address both language development and disability-related support needs - as a critical yet underexamined component of inclusive education. We begin by outlining our conceptualization of inclusion as a contextually situated and equity-oriented practice, before engaging with intersectionality as a framework for understanding how multiple identities and systems of marginalization shape educational experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016). We then focus specifically on the intersection of multilingualism and disability, where a limited body of scholarship has been largely shaped by perspectives from the Global North, which predominantly centers monolingual norms. In contrast, multilingualism is the lived reality across many regions in the Global South, yet research from these contexts remains limited. We contend that the infrequent centering of Global South perspectives restricts the development of culturally responsive and contextually relevant approaches for multilingual learners labelled as disabled. By highlighting existing research, including from the Global South, and identifying critical gaps in the literature, we argue that urgent investment in this area is needed to build a stronger evidence base for inclusive practices that are both culturally sustaining and responsive to the complex needs of multilingual learners labelled as disabled.

Inclusion

In recent decades, inclusion has been prioritized across the globe. Delegates from around the world gathered in Spain at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994 to produce the Salamanca Statement on inclusion: “All children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 11). Ninety-two nations made a commitment to inclusive education and adopted this statement, applied first by countries in the Global North, and later by countries in the Global South (Kozleski et al., 2011). This marked the start of a trend in the inclusive education movement in which policies and practices from the Global North would be taken up by countries of the Global South (Walton, 2018). However, this approach has been critiqued as scholars have noted the need to situate models for inclusive education within a socio-historical context, taking into account various socio-political contexts individuals have to navigate (Kozleski et al., 2011; Walton, 2018).

Intersectionality in Education

In addition to considering socio-political context, models for inclusion must also account for individuals' unique identities. Intersectionality serves as a vital framework for exploring how multiple, intersecting social identities - such as race, gender, language, and disability - work together to shape both individual experiences and broader structural outcomes (Crenshaw, 1989). Instead of viewing social categories in isolation or as merely additive, intersectionality argues the importance of considering how systems of power, both oppressive and privileged, overlap to affect student's access to educational opportunities and their achievement in complex and sometimes contradictory ways (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Traditionally, research and policy have often considered language diversity and disability as separate, discrete categories. Inclusive education has frequently been taken up as a means to create access to the general education curriculum specifically for students labelled as disabled (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). This lack of an intersectional perspective when analyzing the experiences of multilingual students labelled as disabled, perpetuates siloed approaches in both support systems and diagnostic practices (Artiles et al., 2011).

Categorical distinctions, for example between multilingualism and disability, obscure the nuanced and often compounded challenges students face navigating the intersection of linguistic and ableist barriers. Cioè-Peña (2017) pointed out that the common focus on disability has resulted in a perception that only children labelled as disabled have been excluded, leading multilingual learners labelled as disabled in particular to continue to experience exclusion in terms of placement and access to curriculum. For example, multilingual learners are at risk of being misidentified or under-identified for special education services due to the inherent biases in assessment tools, which may not account for linguistic diversity, or because educators may lack the cultural and linguistic competence necessary to recognize the unique needs of these students (Kangas, 2017). Moreover, interventions that are designed to address the needs of monolingual students labelled as disabled are likely unsuitable to meet the specific linguistic needs of multilingual learners, which can perpetuate their marginalization within educational settings. An intersectional approach, by contrast, allows educators and policymakers to recognize the complex ways in which multiple forms of inequality interact. Additionally, it provides a pathway to develop more inclusive, equitable, and responsive educational strategies.

Given that multilingualism is the global norm rather than the exception, it can be assumed that a significant number of children worldwide grow up at the intersection of multilingualism and disability. Yet, despite the prevalence of this population, their experiences and educational needs remain insufficiently addressed in both research and practice (Cuba et al., 2026). At a time when inclusion has become one of the most prominent priorities in education systems globally, it is essential that the development of inclusive policies and practices explicitly considers multilingual learners labelled as disabled. Failure to do so risks reinforcing exclusion for students whose identities do not fit within traditionally separate educational frameworks

(Cioè-Peña, 2017). Furthermore, existing scholarship on multilingual learners labelled as disabled is largely dominated by perspectives from the Global North, often reflecting educational contexts where monolingualism is framed as the norm. Expanding research to include more diverse perspectives, particularly from the Global South, where multilingualism is often a lived reality, can generate more nuanced understandings and contribute to the development of culturally responsive and contextually relevant inclusive practices.

Positionality

Both authors identify as nondisabled white cisgender women. Melissa speaks English as her native language and considers herself an emerging bilingual. Christina identifies as bilingual, after gaining proficiency in English as a second language as an adult. We have both been trained in Global North contexts. Melissa's training as a teacher and teacher educator has been completed exclusively in the US, while Christina completed her training as a teacher and teacher educator in Germany, Sweden, and the US. We therefore discuss and research the intersection of multilingualism and disability from an outsider's perspective. We would like to acknowledge that we may have excluded some relevant articles from this paper due to our limited proficiency in languages used in the Global South.

Literature Review

Research at the intersection of multilingualism and disability has grown in recent years; however, it remains limited in scope and uneven in its development. Much of the existing scholarship is concentrated within the Global North, particularly in the United States and parts of Europe, where educational policies, frameworks for assessments, and overall conceptualizations of both multilingualism and disability are shaped by specific sociopolitical contexts (Gulyani & Mehrotra, 2023; Villalba, 2026). As a result, dominant frameworks in bilingual, special, and inclusive education often reflect Global North epistemologies (Walton, 2018; Villalba, 2026). Even when frameworks for inclusive education are developed in the Global South, they may privilege dominant perspectives and continue to marginalize some communities.

One example of this comes from Villalba (2026), who described how inclusive education policy in Colombia neglected Indigenous and Afro-Colombian perspectives, noting the history of colonization as a contributing factor. Although not specifically discussing inclusion, Gulyani and Mehrotra (2023) similarly cautioned against importing conceptions of disability from the Global North, emphasizing the need to understand disability and its intersections within a culturally situated context. They suggest a need to examine intersectionality to better understand disability as perceived in India, and in the Global South generally.

As these examples show, scholars have increasingly raised concerns that the concentration of knowledge production in the Global North risks marginalizing alternative perspectives and obscuring the experiences of learners in and from the

Global South (Gulyani & Mehrotra, 2023; Villalba, 2026). Importantly, Herrera-Seda and Walton (2025) note that scholarship on inclusive education from the Global North is privileged within research databases, while scholarship from the Global South is marginalized due to the privileging of publications in English and other database limitations. The geographical imbalance in research and resulting epistemological imbalance contributes to a disconnect between research contexts and the lived experiences of multilingual learners labeled as disabled.

The Intersection of Multilingualism and Disability

Historically, disability and multilingualism have often been treated as distinct areas of inquiry, resulting in fragmented approaches across both research and practice (Cioè-Peña, 2017; Phuong, 2017). However, a recent systematic review by Mendoza et al. (2026) suggested a shift in a more positive direction, including the development of programs that intentionally integrate special education and bilingual education. Despite this process, significant challenges remain. Much of the existing research continues to originate from Global North contexts, where monolingualism is often positioned as the norm and multilingualism has frequently been framed through a deficit lens - viewed as a barrier to be addressed rather than as an asset and an important component of individual identity. For example, within the US context, research has spotlighted the voices of parents of multilingual learners labeled as disabled, who have been been advised by practitioners to reduce the language input for their child, preferably toward the dominant societal language (i.e., English) to support the development of their child (Martínez-Álvarez, 2019). This advice opposes research showing benefits to multilingualism among children labelled as disabled (Lim et al., 2019) with no negative impact of multilingualism on their language development (Reetzke et al., 2015).

Persistent stereotypes surrounding multilingualism are perpetuated through policies shaped by monolingual norms and assumptions. Such policies pressure multilingual learners, including those labelled as disabled, to assimilate to use the dominant language at the expense of maintaining their other languages (Wong Fillmore, 1991; Cioè-Peña, 2020). It has been extensively documented how detrimental a lack of support for home languages can be for multilingual children, potentially leading to exclusion from cultural and familial activities (Kremer-Sadlik, 2005; Jegatheesan, 2011).

Despite growing evidence that multilingualism does not negatively affect the language development of children labelled as disabled (Cleave et al., 2014; Lim et al, 2019; Martínez-Álvarez, 2019), these findings have not been consistently translated into educational practice and many practitioners remain uncertain about how best to support multilingual learners with disabilities (Jozwik et al., 2020). This represents another area in which perspectives from educators working in contexts where multilingualism is the norm would be particularly valuable, as their experiences may offer alternative pedagogical approaches that move beyond monolingual assumptions and deficit-oriented frameworks. Such perspectives remain underrepresented in the

existing literature and are urgently needed to broaden the understandings of effective support for multilingual learners labelled as disabled. Boveda and Aronson (2019) found that even pre-service special educators who themselves navigated complex intersectional identities and expressed strong commitments to diversity often prioritized disability over other intersecting identities, revealing how disability continues to be treated as the primary lens through which students are understood.

Promoting Inclusion With Intersectional Frameworks

Emerging work grounded in intersectionality highlights that multilingual learners with disabilities navigate complex, overlapping identities shaped by language, race, culture, and ability (Martínez-Álvarez, 2019). When these intersections are overlooked, there is a heightened risk of misidentification and inequitable access to educational opportunities (Cuba et al., 2026). In response to these challenges, scholars in bilingual special education have increasingly advocated for more integrated approaches to service delivery, arguing that dual or coordinated service delivery models are essential for addressing the full range of students' needs (Cioè-Peña, 2017).

An example framework that employs an intersectional perspective to supporting multilingual learners labelled as disabled, is TrUDL, which is a fusion of translanguaging practices with Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Cioè-Peña, 2022; CAST, 2024). UDL provides a framework which increases access to instruction and learning environments for all learners. UDL has roots in architecture where design choices have been made to increase access to physical spaces. This has been applied to education to allow educators to minimize barriers to learning by increasing access in line with three overarching principles: multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression (CAST, 2024). Multiple means of engagement refers to the use of a variety of strategies that encourage learners to become engaged with material in meaningful ways, while multiple means of representation provides information to students in multiple modalities to support meaning making. Finally, multiple means of action and expression involves offering a variety of options by which learners are able to demonstrate their learning, creating opportunities for learners to leverage their strengths.

TrUDL extends UDL by acknowledging the interconnected nature of linguistic diversity and disability, providing a more holistic approach to supporting students who navigate both dimensions of identity. In this way, translanguaging is integrated into each principle in the UDL framework. By integrating strategies that accommodate both multilingualism and disability, TrUDL offers a more inclusive and equitable model for addressing the diverse needs of these students, thereby fostering better educational outcomes (Cioè-Peña, 2022; Padía et al., 2024).

A Need for Perspectives from the Global South

Despite these developments, the field remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries, including special education, bilingual education, and inclusive education. This fragmentation has limited the development of more cohesive theoretical frameworks and has contributed to gaps in empirical research, particularly studies that examine student experiences in diverse sociocultural contexts (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). Scholars have called for greater inclusion and visibility of perspectives from the Global South, where linguistic diversity is often the norm and where conceptions of disability and inclusion may differ significantly from those embedded in Global North frameworks (Walton, 2018; Herrera-Seda & Walton, 2025). Incorporating these perspectives is not only a matter of representation but essential for developing contextually relevant and culturally sustaining approaches to inclusive education (Kalyanpur, 2011; Villalba, 2026).

The move toward inclusion being a prominent undertaking in many countries around the globe brings not only the necessity but the opportunity to create new, localized policies. We argue that policies impacting multilingual learners, whether labelled as disabled or not, must move beyond siloed approaches and be rooted in intersectional, culturally responsive, and inclusive frameworks. Research that engages local epistemologies, community practices, and multilingual realities can offer critical insights into how inclusive education can be reimagined in ways that are responsive to diverse learner populations.

Literature Base from the Global South

In the following paragraphs, we draw on current systematic reviews that examine the intersection of disability labels and multilingualism, with a particular focus on highlighting research from the Global South included in these reviews. Given the limited number of available systematic reviews, we also conducted a hand search of existing literature.

Autism

In a review by Gilhuber et al. (2023), out of the 22 included articles, one study was conducted in China (Reetzke et al., 2015), one in India (Sen & Geetha, 2011), and two in Singapore (Sendhilnathan and Chengappa, 2020a; 2020b). All other research reviewed in the article by Gilhuber et al. (2023) stemmed from Canada, the US, Japan, Greece, Israel, and Australia. None of the included studies originated from South America or Africa. The review did not include single-case studies or studies of qualitative design (Gilhuber et al., 2023). All studies were group comparison studies, with different foci on the language development of multilingual children on the autism spectrum in comparison with their monolingual peers. It is important to highlight that research has found no indication that multilingualism negatively affects the language development of children on the autism spectrum and some studies discussed potential positive effects (Gilhuber et al., 2023).

We hand-searched additional articles and located only two studies from Africa (Shaw-Ridley et al., 2000; Vorster et al., 2024) and one from the UAE (Bakhsh, 2020). Table 1 outlines the key characteristics of these peer-reviewed studies situated in contexts beyond the Global North. In the case-study from Shaw-Ridley et al. (2000), the participant showed echoed language in and across both languages (Sotho and English). Vorster et al. (2024) evaluated the reliability and validity of a culturally and linguistically adapted version of the M-CHAT for use in the South African context. Bakhsh (2020) interviewed four mothers who raised their children bilingually about their perceptions on language and language practices. Additionally, we found an article that featured the lived experiences of three families of multilingual children on the autism spectrum: the families lived in Jordan, Nigeria, and New York, respectively (Fahim & Nedwick, 2014). Out of the limited literature available in the field, Fahim and Nedwick (2014) provided one of the few peer-reviewed publications offering practical guidance on culturally responsive strategies to support the language development of dual-language learners on the autism spectrum.

Table 1. Study Characteristics

Publication	Method	Number of Participants	Participants (Age years)	Country
Bakhsh, 2020	Qualitative	4	Mothers	UAE
Fahim & Nedwick, 2014	Conceptual	3	Families	Jordan, Nigeria, US
Reetzke et al., 2015	Quantitative	54	Children (3;9-8;2)	China
Sen & Geetha, 2011	Quantitative	15	Children (4;0-10;0)	India
Sendhilnathan & Chengappa, 2020a	Quantitative	40	Children (4;0-6;11)	Singapore
Sendhilnathan & Chengappa, 2020b	Quantitative	40	Children (4;0-6;11)	Singapore
Shaw-Ridley et al., 2000	"Single subject research design of a qualitative" nature (p. 127)	1	One child (7;11-8;2)	South Africa
Vorster et al., 2024	Quantitative	158	Mothers	South Africa

Fuente: Authors.

Other Disability Labels

We have not been able to locate a systematic review on the intersection of multilingualism and any other disability label other than autism. Therefore, we hand-searched articles situated at the intersection of multilingualism and other disability

labels. We acknowledge the importance of research addressing multilingualism and disability among Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) individuals; however, this literature was not included, as it was beyond the scope of the present paper.

While expanding, there is limited research on multilingualism and Down Syndrome. As is the case with autism, current studies in this field (e.g., Cleave et al., 2014; Ward & Sanoudaki, 2024) are predominantly from Global North contexts. For multilingual children with Down Syndrome, we were unable to find peer-reviewed research that was conducted in a country from the Global South.

Research on multilingual children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in Global South contexts also remains limited. A current scoping review from Africa (Salako, 2025) only found 20 studies across the region - primarily from Nigeria and South Africa - and highlighted major challenges such as limited culturally valid diagnostic tools and ongoing challenges to accurately identify language disorders among multilingual children, leading to potential misdiagnoses. We were unable to locate scholarship exploring the intersection between DLD and multilingualism situated in South America. However, scholarship conducted in the Global North from Gross and Kaushanskaya (2022) found that Spanish/English bilingual children with DLD responded to conversation partners in both of their languages. Similar to other disability categories, there remains a major geographic imbalance in DLD research that underscores the need for more work with multilingual learners labelled as disabled in Global South contexts.

Additional research has examined the communication practices of multilingual learners labeled as disabled who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). AAC creates access to communication among individuals with complex communication needs through the use of various means and technologies (Beukelman & Light, 2020). Unaided AAC includes the use of vocalizations, gestures, and other nonverbal communication to convey meaning, while aided AAC involves the use of an external tool to promote expressive language use. Aided AAC tools range from low- to high-tech options including picture-exchange systems to software applications. Research conducted in South Africa has explored approaches to fostering multilingualism among individuals who communicate via AAC (Tönsing et al. 2018), as these individuals often have access to the dominant language only (Dukhovny & Kelly, 2015; Tönsing et al., 2019). In their study, Tönsing et al. (2018) found that service providers sometimes provided access to multilingual AAC devices when working with multilingual learners and discussed factors such as limitations within existing AAC technology, the complexity of navigating multiple languages in the South African context, the preferences of children and families, and service providers' own knowledge base pertaining to AAC systems. While the research in South Africa is promising, this reflects the overall paucity of research examining AAC use among multilingual learners in the Global South.

In summary, there remains a significant paucity of research examining the intersection of multilingualism and disability. Beyond the limited body of literature overall, there is also a concerning lack of scholarship addressing inclusive practices

for this population. This gap presents an important opportunity to advocate not only for increased research in this area, but more specifically for studies that center the perspectives and experiences of families and practitioners from countries in the Global South. We argue that the development of culturally responsive and inclusive educational environments in any context requires the inclusion of diverse perspectives and voices.

Grounding Inclusion in Intersectional Perspectives from the Global South

Greater efforts are needed to increase the visibility of inclusive education scholarship from Global South contexts within major academic search databases (Herrera-Seda & Walton, 2025). At the same time, there is a pressing need for research grounded in Global South epistemologies that examines instructional practices supporting multilingual learners labeled as disabled. Such scholarship should be conducted by researchers who have meaningful partnerships with local communities in order to draw on insider knowledge and a nuanced understanding of local socio-political realities.

More broadly, future research should be grounded in and responsive to the communities it seeks to serve, attending to marginalized communities within such settings (Villalba, 2026). It is also important to recognize that scholarship is inherently situated within distinct socio-political contexts and, therefore, findings and practices cannot be assumed to be directly transferable or replicable across settings (Kalyanpur, 2011). At the same time, scholars and policy makers in the Global North should engage with this body of work, as it offers important insights that can inform policy and practice while challenging dominant assumptions embedded in Global North-centric frameworks. Attending to research from the Global South can foster more equitable, contextually responsive approaches to inclusive education across settings.

Conclusion

Existing research at the intersection of disability and multilingualism remains limited and fragmented, with much of it produced within Global North contexts that shape dominant frameworks (Kozleski et al., 2011). This imbalance contributes to a disconnect between research and the lived, intersectional experiences of multilingual learners labeled as disabled, as research and policies often fail to account for the interaction of language, disability, and other marginalized identity markers (Phuong, 2017; Villalba, 2026). Moreover, scholarship in bilingual special education consistently argues for integrated or dual service delivery models that address both linguistic and disability-related needs, rather than treating them separately (Mendoza et al., 2026). Together, these gaps highlight the need for more research grounded in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, particularly beyond the Global North.

Future research should therefore prioritize studies in underrepresented regions, examine the implementation of integrated service delivery models, and explore how inclusive education can be enacted in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing more equitable and inclusive educational systems that meet the needs of all learners.

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Declarations

Author contributions

Christina Gilhuber: Concept. – An. formal – Red. borr. orig. – Rev. y ed. – Adm. proyecto – Approval of the final manuscript submitted to the journal.

Melissa McGraw: Concept. – An. formal – Red. borr. orig. – Rev. y ed. – Approval of the final manuscript submitted to the journal.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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All data supporting the results of this study are published in the article itself.

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The authors declare that this article has no ethical implications regarding its development, writing, or publication.

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