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Negotiating belonging through language: immigration and integration in contexts of ethno-linguistic conflict

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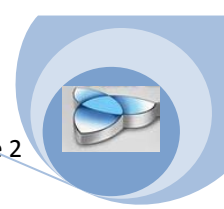
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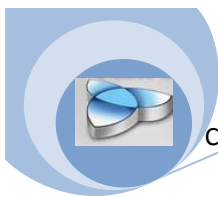
NEGOTIATING BELONGING THROUGH LANGUAGE: IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN CONTEXTS OF ETHNO-LINGUISTIC CONFLICT

Abstract

Contemporary international migration has created situations where migrants are confronted with tensions between on the one hand requirements of language usage and on the other hand pressures connected to symbolic values attributed to language in host societies. Those tensions are particularly complex and intense in contexts of ethno-linguistic conflict. This is because the pre-existing ethnic conflict creates particular obstacles and inconsistencies for linguistic integration. In this paper we focus on such areas where immigration and integration from an additional challenge to complex linguistic regimes. We will explore how migrants position themselves in different regional and local language regimes characterised by ethnic conflict. First we will present an overview of language usage of migrants in institutional and sociolinguistic environments for regions of ethnic conflict in Europe. Secondly, two case studies are presented on Latin American immigrants in Catalonia and the Basque Country. The Latin Americans can manage their daily life through Castilian, but not in the language that has a high symbolic value. Based on 71 semi-structured interviews with Latinos in Barcelona, Bilbao and San Sebastian we subsequently describe language usage, language as an obstacle to or vehicle of socioeconomic integration, their positioning in a binary conflict situation and the role of language in identity formation. Comparing the Basque and Catalan settings we conclude that the expectations of migrants about the conflict and about language requirements for integration differ. The regional and local language regimes and the cultural capital of migrants explain the different outcomes of the adjustment process.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary international migrants are confronted with tensions between on the one hand requirements of language usage and on the other hand pressures connected to symbolic values attributed to



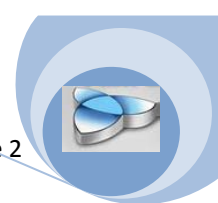
language in host societies. Those tensions are particularly complex and intense in contexts of ethno-linguistic conflict. This is because the pre-existing ethnic conflict creates specific challenges, obstacles and inconsistencies for linguistic integration.

In this paper we focus on such areas where immigration and integration form an additional challenge to complex language regimes. We will explore how migrants position themselves in different regional and local language regimes characterised by ethnic conflict based on 71 semi-structured interviews with Latin American immigrants in Barcelona, Bilbao and San Sebastian. We subsequently describe the language usage they reported, how they perceive language as an obstacle to or vehicle of socioeconomic integration, their positioning in a binary conflict situation and its role in identity formation. Comparing the Basque and Catalan settings we conclude that the expectations of migrants about the conflict and about language requirements for integration differ. The regional and local language regimes and the cultural capital of immigrants explain the different outcomes of the adjustment process.

MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND LINGUISTIC ISSUES

For the past decades international migration has been high on political and academic agendas in Europe. New political parties emerged and mobilised on anti-migrant platforms while others defended the rights of immigrants and promoted a multicultural society. There is an extensive and ever growing academic literature scrutinising integration processes and assessing problems linked to international migration, socio-economic and socio-cultural integration (Alba and Nee 2003; Berry 1997; Castles 1995; Faist 2009; Gordon 1964; Grillo 2007; Kymlicka 2000, 2001; Kivisto 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Ruiz Vieyetz 2006).

One of the key issues in these debates is that of linguistic competencies and their relations to cultural and economic integration (Chiswick et al. 1999; Dustmann 1994; Extra and Verhoeven 1997; Extra and Yagmur 2004; MacManus 1995). Language is an instrument of communication to function in the host society and especially to access the labour and housing markets. Therefore language is an important capability to improve one's socio-economic position in the host society. In addition, language is an identity marker (Valentine et al. 2008) and as a consequence linguistic choices have cultural and political connotations. The ability to understand and speak its language is generally seen as a primary and a fundamental precondition to belonging to any community.

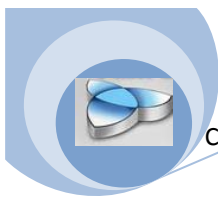


This situation is more complicated in cases of migration into bilingual communities, where language is at stake in identity politics of an ethnolinguistic conflict.

Formulating ethnolinguistic conflict as an 'additional challenge' to integration issues is somewhat problematic because it contributes to the framing of the coexistence of several languages in a city or a region as an anomaly. Without subscribing to the norm of monolingualism (neither at the territorial nor at the individual level), we acknowledge that the specificities of a host society with multiple languages. It makes the task of adapting to the host society more complicated for new immigrants. They might need to learn two or more new languages instead of one. In addition they need to understand the different positions of the languages present in the host society and to master the political background of language issues while they have to develop specific competencies to make language choices in social encounters. Such an adaptation might involve becoming bilingual and being able to switch between languages according to the situation (work, school, shops, football field etc.) and to the addressees. Moreover new immigration flows can be conceived as upsetting achieved institutional arrangements (Ros and Nicolau 2004). From the point of view of the parties involved in a language conflict, immigrants can be seen as possible recruits for the language group. Will they choose the dominant or the minority language? How and why? If their language skills are limited to one of the languages in the community their presence will affect the relative balance between the languages and the language groups.

In Europe, most of the traditionally multilingual contexts are situated in sub-regions of nation-states (Mamadouh 2002). Although Belgium and Finland have multilingual national regimes, in practice bilingualism is found in specific areas, respectively Brussels, Turku and the Western coast of Finland, and not in others (Flanders, Wallonia, Åland islands, most of Finland). In other countries, bilingualism is limited to certain administrative regions like Friesland, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Wales, South Tyrol, etc.

These cases point at issues often neglected in integration studies, e.g. that of the relevant geographical scales of reference for integration processes (Pascual 2004). When talking of integration one eludes the point of clarifying to what group in what place, one needs to integrate. Generally national and local integration are seen as reinforcing each other. However when the local linguistic situation differs from the national one, national and local linguistic requirements might clash. Immigrants (as well as migrants from other parts of the country) might

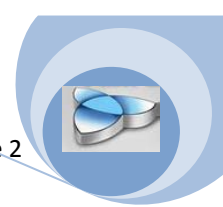


think in terms of nationwide integration and downplay the importance of a local language not used in other parts of the country and prefer investing in the state language or in a language of wider communication, such as English. Local inhabitants by contrast probably underline the necessity of getting acquainted to the local language to integrate locally and the importance of local language acquisition among newcomers for the maintenance of the local language. They may perceive the presence of foreign immigrants as a threat to their language because they contribute to the further marginalisation of the local language in public space and in daily social interactions at the work place if and when they use of the central state language. In doing so immigrants contribute to state-wide cultural homogenisation at the expense of the local language. Earlier flows of internal migrants from other parts of Spain to Catalonia and the Basque Country similarly contributed to the Castilianisation of these regions.

THE VALUE OF COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

Comparing the opinions and strategies of migrants in different contexts enables us to approach this problem with enough attention to the many differences in such processes. Some of these differences are related to the individual immigrants, their cultural and social capital, their intellectual capacities and their personality; many others are related to the different contexts in which they live. For example these are differences in terms of conflict histories, sociolinguistic context and political mobilisation around language issues and national identities. In addition there are differences in terms of institutional arrangements regarding language use, such as formal compulsory education. Finally there are also differences regarding the composition and histories of migration flows and patterns.

Each larger city experiences multilingualism through the large diversity of origins of immigrants, but fewer cases come to mind when thinking of a double source of multilingualism: regional minority languages on the one hand and international immigration on the other. Of the many regions with multilingual arrangements, only few are recipients of significant numbers of immigrants: Luxemburg; Brussels; Barcelona and Catalonia; the large cities of the Basque Country; the larger cities of Wales; Corsica; South Tyrol, and Andorra. In Central and Eastern Europe it is less an issue as they are (so far) less international immigrants than in Western Europe.



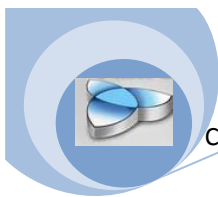
The empirical fieldwork for this paper was done in two Spanish regions because they present a number of interesting differences in terms of political mobilisation and institutional arrangements related to bilingualism, while keeping other aspects (the migrant groups, the role of the central state, and the relation to the EU) as similar as possible.

After a long period of repression under Franco's authoritarian regime, Spain has witnessed the institutionalisation of regional cultural diversity (Schrijver, 2005, 2006), which makes Spain a quasi federal state (Moreno, 2001). Some autonomous communities have statutes with a far reaching autonomy. This is especially the case of the historical nations of Catalonia and the Basque Country. These are the two institutional contexts we will explore in our empirical study.

Differences between the Basque Country and Catalonia are many. We will highlight the most important ones: The first is a linguistic one: it is the proximity in linguistic terms between Castilian and Catalan, compared to the distance between Castilian and Basque. While Catalan is a Romance language with similarities to Castilian and French, Basque is a pre-Indo-European language markedly distinct from Castilian. To provide an example: Aitak frantsesa ikasten du (Euskera). Padre está aprendiendo francés (Castilian). Pare està aprenent francès (Catalan). (Father is learning French.). Linguistic distance is particularly important for older language learners and proximity greatly eases access to a new language and the development of passive knowledge.

The second difference is sociolinguistic and concerns the stronger position and prevalence of Catalan compared to the Basque language. This is true of its position as a literally language (before the period of oppression) in terms of standardisation and harmonisation and this is true of the smaller percentages of Basque speakers, although they can vary greatly between the different regions, provinces and municipalities. The prevalence of the minority language in daily life and the status of the activities in which it is employed, will directly impact its attractiveness for immigrants. If an immigrant feels he or she does not need to learn a language to find his or her way in the host community, he or she would not be inclined to invest time, energy and money to learn it.

The third is political: in Catalonia the conflict about the status of the regional language and the autonomy of the nation within the Spanish state is non-violent, which is in sharp contrast with the ongoing political violence regarding the independence of the Basque Country. A high level of political mobilisation and polarisation around language issues heightened the significance of language choices and demand more investment from immigrants to grasp the issues at stake and the



connotation of language use. As a result they might be reluctant to use the local language either because they do not want to take a stand (but this is a vain hope as choosing Castilian is also taking a position in the eyes of the proponents of the local languages) or because they associate it with the more radical players of the political spectrum.

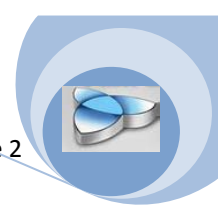
The fourth is institutional and pertains to the formal arrangements about bilingualism and language use in each Autonomous Community. While Catalonia made Catalan the compulsory language of instruction in formal education and carries a policy of increasing monolingualism (in Catalan) in public space, the Basque Country makes it possible for parents to choose between Basque language, bilingual or Castilian-language education. The immigrants in Catalonia have fewer linguistic choices in education than those in the Basque Country, and less opportunity to avoid the regional language altogether. Still they might develop strategies to avoid the compulsory languages.

The fifth and last aspect is demographic. Whether both regions as major industrial centres of the Iberian peninsula have a long history of immigration from the South of Spain, international migration is a more established phenomenon in Catalonia (especially Barcelona and on the coast) than in the Basque Country.

FIELDWORK IN SPAIN: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To maintain certain commonalities we focus on Latin American immigrants. Even though the label 'Latin American' hides an enormous social, cultural, and economic diversity, there are significant similarities, perhaps most relevantly their Spanish mother tongue (with some exceptions in migrants from Portuguese and French-speaking countries of Latin America, and those with an indigenous language as mother tongue). In addition, 'Latino' is a label of identification much used by migrants themselves and by others.

Other immigrants consist of much more diverse groups including Moroccans, Sub-Saharan Africans, Chinese, Romanians and European expats from Western and Northern Europe. These immigrants will have to learn Spanish as well as Basque or Catalan, but their difficulties with Spanish will vary greatly depending on their mother tongue (proximity for Romanians, distance for Arabic or Chinese speakers) and experience (Moroccans from certain regions might be familiar with Spanish prior to moving to Spain while this is unlikely for Chinese or Senegalese). In some ways learning Catalan or Basque for Spanish speaking immigrants can be compared to learning Dutch or German for Turkish immigrants to the



Netherlands and Germany. Nevertheless the context is very different. Moving to Spain, but arriving in Catalonia or the Basque Country, they are confronted with language issues they were probably not expecting in advance. They might not have been aware of the linguistic make-up of their region of adoption or have anticipated any linguistic problems and have therefore more difficulties to cope with them than immigrants expecting those. When aware of the conflict, they are also more likely to be acquainted with the framing of the conflict by the Spanish state than immigrants with no prior knowledge of Spanish. They might also want to move further within Spain and therefore not be prepared to invest in adapting to the local linguistic situation.

This paper is based on fieldwork among Latino immigrants in three metropolitan areas: two in the Basque Country (Bilbao and San Sebastian) and one in Catalonia. Bilbao and San Sebastian differ in terms of the prevalence of the Basque language and political mobilisation around the language issues and the institutional arrangements

METHODS

In Barcelona and the metropolitan areas of Bilbao and San Sebastian semi-structured interviews among Latinos have been conducted. The interview topics concerned language usage, choice and attitudes and identity issues. We have opted for a qualitative approach for this explorative fieldwork because interviews are suitable when studying personal language practices and identities. Respondents have been selected by a snowball method. Contacts with the respondents have been initiated through migrant associations, visits to places where Latinos frequently meet, and visits to cultural and sport events. In some occasions focus group interviews have been realised when more immigrants were at the same location. Although the sample does not have external validity, respondents have deliberately been selected from the statistically most represented nationalities, including those who have double nationality. The interviews have been conducted in Castilian. In Bilbao and San Sebastian additional information about language usage, acquisition and attitudes of Latino children has been gathered from primary school teachers and directors. The Barcelona fieldwork has been carried out from 21 June to 18 July 2009 while the fieldwork in the Basque Country has been conducted from 1 November to 15 December 2009. In settings of ethno-linguistic conflict interviews about language issues may yield sensitive information that may harm the respondents.



Therefore their identities are protected and anonymity is assured by using fictitious names.

Expert information from specialists in the field and stakeholders, e.g. language activists and immigrants about the Catalan and Basque fieldwork settings and Brussels has been gathered during a workshop organised by the authors in Castelldefels (Barcelona) on 22 and 23 January 2009. The outcomes of the workshop and further information from experts collected during the fieldwork have been triangulated with available documents and the results from the immigrant interviews.

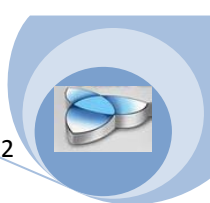
THE BASQUE COUNTRY

The Bilbao and San Sebastian metropolitan areas: two different settings

Both metropolitan areas have five percent of foreigners of the total registered population, which suggests the shares of the real proportion of immigrants (e.g. those having double nationality and the undocumented) are similar (Ikuspegi 2009). Greater Bilbao totals 867,777 inhabitants and the district of Donostia-San Sebastian 326,254 (Eustat 2009).

According to the same source Greater Bilbao is basically a Castilian-speaking setting with only seven percent of the population using Basque as a home language. In contrast San Sebastian is socio-linguistically more fragmented with Euskera more prominent (27% speak Basque at home). Fragmentation is reflected in basically Spanish-speaking municipalities like San Sebastian and Lasarte-Oria (22% speak Basque at home) on the one hand and Euskera-speaking municipalities like Oiartzun (66%) and Usurbil (61%) on the other. In some municipalities one can hear Euskera spoken at work, in the streets and in the bars. However, in contact with Spanish mother tongue speakers diglossia plays a dominant role to the detriment of Euskera. The socio-linguistic differences between the two settings are particularly relevant to language choice at school. While in the Bilbao agglomeration Spanish-medium education at elementary-school level is offered in most municipalities, in the San Sebastian municipalities with high shares of Basque speakers only Basque-medium schools are available in primary education.

In Greater Bilbao moderate nationalists of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco have strongholds in the Bilbao municipality and the wealthier municipalities on the right bank of the Ría, while the regional branches of the Spanish statewide left (Partido Socialista de Euskadi-Euskadido Ezkerra and Ezker Batua) dominate the workers districts on the left



bank. The political landscape of the San Sebastian metropolitan area is more fragmented with the statewide left governing the San Sebastian municipality and three other municipalities, radical nationalists (Acción Nacionalista Vasca) in five municipalities, one local nationalist party (Urnieta) and the moderate nationalists of Eusko Alkartasuna in one municipality (Astigarraga). The municipalities around Donostia belong to the most conflictive settings characterised by organised street violence and intimidation (De la Calle Robles 2007; Mansvelt Beck 2005).

BILBAO

Our respondents in Greater Bilbao do not speak the Basque language, nor know any Bilbao-based Latinos who have some command of it. Due to the overwhelming dominance of Castilian in local life command of Basque is hardly an issue. The few Basques who insist to publicly speak Euskera are often seen as radical nationalists, which may discourage newcomers to use that language. Nevertheless Latinos are perceived as the linguistical 'other' in two ways. First, locals can easily recognise Latin Americans because of their accent. The second way is more complex because it refers to the usage of politically correct idiom. Local people who identify themselves as Basque nationalists entertain a subtle usage of Castilian to distinguish themselves from other 'non-nationalist' locals. Such a symbolic language usage is reflected in terms like 'the Spanish state' instead of 'Spain' or 'Euskal Herria' instead of 'The Basque Country'. The symbolic language usage of Latinos is similar to locals whose political identification is more Spanish than Basque.

Interest in other languages and cultures is confined to the relatively small group of immigrants possessing cultural capital. The majority, however, are poorly qualified, mostly women working in domestic services, particularly nursing elderly at home. Among these women there are many single mothers, according to some local experts half of them. Their direct priorities are the fulfilment of basic needs and in case of children who are left in the country of origin, family reunification. Many women hold several jobs, for instance old-aged nursing and cleaning offices or flat buildings in order to pay the debts made to emigrate and transferring the children from their homeland.

Other languages and cultures are beyond the direct interest of these women. Cony Carranza, a Salvadorian community worker in the Getxo municipality organises groups of Latinas, the major part Bolivians, stated: Their main problem is how to survive, not how to define their political or cultural positions. [...] If they have any interest in a language,



it is Spanish because they all expect to return to their home country. [...] Euskera is not an issue; they attribute more value to English rather than Basque.

Among the first-generation Latino migrants there is practically no interest in learning Euskera. In Getxo and some other wealthy municipalities on the right bank of Bilbao's Ría, there is however some slight interest because language courses for immigrants are free of charge. According to the president of an association of Peruvians, the rejection of the association's request for free language training to the municipality of Erandio in October 2009 has aborted motivation and interest of the Peruvians for Euskera. The symbolic value of Euskera is reflected the unwillingness to pay for its acquisition whereas they do pay for English courses.

Many migrants' children have poor school records. Interviews with school directors, teachers and educational experts, as well as documents (Lantarón 2005, Etxeberria 2006) show that children of poor immigrant households with little cultural capital significantly lag behind their classmates. According to the director of a Spanish-medium school in Getxo, '... the mothers of the Bolivian children do not have time to educate their children because they are too busy...' (Interview 3 November 2009). Their children hardly do their homework because they are unattended. In a daily life full of concerns about basic needs formal education has no priority, let alone acquisition of such 'a difficult language' like Euskera.

Moreover immigrants who have no more worries about how to survive in Bilbao showed a negative attitude towards the acquisition of Basque. During a group encounter with Ecuadorians we asked whether it was important to learn Euskera. They all agreed with one of the spokesmen:

For us it is useless; one has much more opportunities in the rest of Spain with Castilian. For our children we prefer them to learn some English instead of Euskera. We as parents are not interested at all to learn Euskera (focus group interview, 7 November 2009).

Although it is obvious that for the Latino immigrants themselves command of Euskera is not perceived as an asset, they may hold a different view concerning their children's education. In this respect there may be different motivations. During our fieldwork we detected four types of motivation. The first one is an instrumental one which is hypothetical in the Bilbao case and real in the San Sebastian setting. Children are sent to bilingual and occasionally to Basque-medium schools because the parents expect proficiency in Euskera to be an asset



for the labour market in the Basque Country. Indeed, many jobs in the public sector are only open to applicants who have sufficient command of Basque. The second type of motivation assumes that the child's psychosocial integration would benefit from enrolment in bilingual or Basque-medium education. The third type concerns language choice as symbolic affection for basqueness. Finally, the fourth type of motivation is not based on linguistic considerations but on minimising cost.

Language choice, though legally free, is in practice determined by the local context and the age of the pupils at arrival in the Basque Country. At preschool age the great majority of immigrant children are in Basque-medium education. From primary schools onward the proximity of cheap schools is crucial to many marginalised households. At preschool level local-born immigrant children enrol mostly in Basque-medium education. Those who immigrated at elementary or secondary school age are mainly in bi-lingual and Spanish-medium education. However, in the course of their school career most immigrant pupils end up in Spanish-medium education, and to a lesser degree in bilingual education (Aierdi Urraza 2008, 145-148; Etxeberria and Elozegi 2008). Generally they are enrolled in the relatively cheap public-sector schools, which is in contrast with native children who study relatively more in private schools. However in some districts parents may choose for private education, in particular schools of Catholic congregations traditionally dedicated to the poor, like in Erandio. For most Latinos the lack of proficiency in Euskera in combination with a weak school performance '...intensifies the process of social and cultural marginalisation...' (Etxeberria and Elozegi 2008).

For most immigrant households language choice in education is not based on instrumental, cultural or ideological considerations, but on the expected short-term effects on the household economy. A Bolivian single mother in Erandio on the wealthy right bank of the Ría confirmed the financial pressure behind school choice:

I have to look for the cheapest possibility to enrol my children [...] I know many Bolivian mothers who do the same thing (Gloria, Bolivia).

If the availability of different language-medium schools and the household economy allow for a comparatively free choice at the local level, Latino migrants usually choose bilingual or Spanish-medium education.

In the Bilbao agglomeration we have not spoken to migrants of the third type of motivation based on a Basque sense of belonging. However, occasionally, we have met a cosmetic adaptation to school-class culture in order to make the child appear like native children. An Ecuadorian

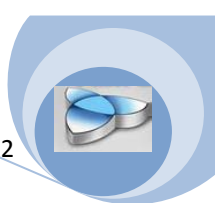


couple in Santutxu, a working-class district of Bilbao, with an eight-year old daughter at a bilingual elementary school wish her to be similar to their native classmates. They even gave her a Basque name, like many local girls. However, such cosmetic adjustment to local culture, if perceived as a constraint, may also work against Basquisition. In the Spanish-medium school of Getxo there is a strong aversion to Euskera, not only by migrants, but also by the local Castilian-speaking people because the school has attracted native children whose parents are not motivated and often opposed to Basquisise their children. Consequently the profesorado de refuerzo lingüístico (teachers specialised in Basque language acquisition) has huge problems to motivate the children to learn Euskera as a subject.

During our interviews with Latinos we have never heard that Euskera would be important as an asset on the job market, not even for the second generation. Both the sociolinguistic context of a predominantly Castilian-speaking urban area and the scarce job opportunities on the job market of the public sector may explain the absence of the instrumental type of motivation observed.

The obvious lack of involvement in a nationalist-inspired language project does not automatically mean the absence of friendships with locals. Through the children at school parents may develop intense relations with native fellow-parents, irrespective of their nationalist orientations. The same applies to relations at work. However, for more experienced migrants, among them many Colombians and Ecuadorians the attitudes towards Euskera vary from indifference (focus group interview Ecuadorians) to hostility, as expresses a spokesman of a Colombian association, who emphasises that language policies increase the feeling of not being integrated at all.

Many Latinos have obtained double nationality. However, this does not imply that their identity has become Spanish, let alone Basque. In the Bilbao and San Sebastian metropolitan areas all Ecuadorians and Colombians holding double nationality present themselves as Ecuadorians or Colombians and not as Spaniards in the making. They entertain contacts with fellow-countrymen all over Spain. Their labour market orientation is not confined to the Basque Country, but covers the whole of Spain. Ecuadorians have started to explore labour markets beyond Spain. In Switzerland a small migrant community of Ecuador-born Spanish citizens is growing and providing information on job opportunities to their friends and relatives in Bilbao (interview spokesman association of Ecuadorian immigrants).

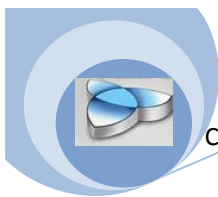


The type of orientation toward their original homelands varies with nationality and area of origin. Most Latinos entertain economic links with their home areas through remittances, debts, etc., and try to preserve cultural attributes in the host area through mutual contacts. Specific groups like Peruvians and sometimes Colombians are politically involved with their home country. Before emigration they were often politically organised and possessed the necessary cultural capital to continue their activities abroad.

Practically all Spanish citizens of Latino background are active voters in Spanish, regional and local elections, though political activism seems limited compared to the native population of this highly politicised society. When asked for their party choice they often shy away and do not answer. However, the few indications we obtained, suggest a preference for leftist state-wide parties (the socialist PSOE and Izquierda Unida) and their regional branches (Partido Socialista de Euskadi-Euskadido Ezkerra and Ezker Batua).

Many immigrant associations are active in the Bilbao metropolitan area. They considerably vary in size, ranging from a small Chilean folk dance group of a dozen people to a huge organisation of Colombians with almost 500 members and providing activities in the sphere of education (English and computer courses), legal advice, culture, sports and lobbying at local, regional and state levels. In Bilbao all Latino associations are organised according to the national backgrounds of their affiliates. The bigger ones claim to represent fellow-nationals the province of Bizkaia or the entire Basque Country and are collaborating with their sister organisations in state-wide federations. In contrast to the individual migrants, associations often show symbolic ties of connection and affection with the Basque Country and Basqueness.

If they have websites, like the Colombian ASOCOLVAS and Ecuador Etxea, they show regional and local institutions (Basque Autonomous Community, municipality or province) and NGO's with whom they collaborate (ASOCOLVAS 2010; Ecuador Etxea 2010). Language usage of the associations shows far more political correctness in a Basque nationalist sense than their members show in informal conversations. However, the correctness is less dogmatic than the one usually displayed by local nationalists. For example, Ecuador Etxea (Etxea is house in Basque) displays a Basque flag along with a Spanish flag, the display of the latter considered taboo by most Basque nationalists. In addition ASOCOLVAS, the Colombian association shows labels of the Basque government (now led by non-nationalist parties), the province of Bizkaia and the municipality of Bilbao (both governed by Basque nationalists),



an unacceptable combination for many nationalists. We do not know whether this incorrectness is a deliberate message of non-involvement in the political dispute in the Basque Country, an effort to mention or attract subsidising public institutions or just the result of an unconscious action. However, given the high intellectual level of the leadership, we suspect that non-involvement is aim of the Ecuador Etxea, while economic motives may play a role in the Colombian association.

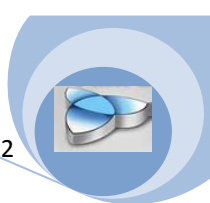
Since February 2009 migrants from a number of Latin American countries with at least five years of residency of Spain, have voting rights in municipal elections. Ecuador Etxea is now encouraging their members to vote for the 2011 municipal elections in the Basque Country. Since their establishment it is the first time they stimulate their members to become active voters, though they do not campaign for a specific political party.

DONOSTIA-SAN SEBASTIAN

For many marginalised immigrants, like in Bilbao, particularly for women with little cultural capital nursing the elderly, learning or speaking Euskera is no priority because they are fully absorbed by work. However those Latinos for whom survival is no urgent problem or those possessing much cultural capital, there is more interest in learning Euskera. In San Sebastian the first three motivations listed above as the justification of language choice for children in Bilbao also apply to the first generation of Latino migrants. Firstly, there are instrumental reasons. An Ecuadorian lady, age 38 years living for 11 years in San Sebastian observes:

Here many people are interested to learn Euskera. Yet we know all that the language only has local importance. We are interested because it gives us more job opportunities here. We don't like the language but in daily life some command of Euskera is more and more required (Susana, Ecuador).

Susana's observation fits reality because for lowly qualified work in the San Sebastian agglomeration, like old-aged nursing, cleaning, etc., some knowledge of the Basque language is often demanded. A similar category of immigrants learning Euskera for instrumental reasons concerns highly-qualified persons, including highly educated males who lost their job as a consequence of the economic crisis. They hope to increase their employability and find a job through language training. For example, two middle-aged Ecuadorian academics who lost their jobs now take language classes paid by the provincial administration. They try to



improve the attractiveness of their CV for the local labour market by learning Basque.

In San Sebastian it is not uncommon to learn some Euskera because migrants feel the need to be socially accepted. Most Latinos know some words and short phrases while several respondents really have been involved in language training. A Colombian woman, aged, 34 years, 12 years in San Sebastian:

I work in a supermarket with Basque-speaking colleagues. I have been eager to learn some Basque because now I feel happier (Carolina, Colombia).

In addition, several women with children at Basque-medium preschool have learnt some Euskera in order to better understand them. In this respect, one of the Ecuadorian academics is rather exceptional, as he states to study Euskera because he wants to help his son with his homework. The latter obviously requires far more command of the language than a chat with colleagues.

Concerning language acquisition for ideological reasons the San Sebastian-based Argentines are the exception to the rule. Usually they are of Basque descent, highly educated and have no doubt about their Basqueness, though they hardly speak Basque at arrival. They often mix up, marry or live together with local Basques and socialise according to the political preferences of their partners. According to two Argentine informants, Argentines learn quite frequently Euskera for both technical and ideological reasons.

Like in Bilbao, preschool education in San Sebastian is usually through Basque. Nevertheless at primary school level, parents have less choice than in Bilbao to elect Spanish-medium or bilingual schools, particularly in the municipalities with a sizable Basque-speaking population at the periphery of the agglomeration of San Sebastian. In Hernani for example, all elementary schools are Basque-medium ones. Most Latinos go to the private Basque school of Immacaluda, run by nuns. The Latino parents, mainly Ecuadorians, have elected this school, not only because they are familiar to this type of Church-linked education in the homeland, but in particular because the nuns are more flexible in using Spanish alongside Euskera (interview Ecuadorian mother, 3 December 2009).

As may be expected from the motives for adults to learn Euskera, all four types of motivation (see first section) to send children to Basque-medium education are present in the district of San Sebastian. In comparison to Bilbao, Latino migrants value comparatively more its usefulness for integration into the labour market as well as psychosocial



integration. The San Sebastian Argentines show a unique motivation to learn Basque because acquisition of Euskera is a symbolic choice reinforcing Basque identity. They are the only Latinos active in local associations and local branches of political organisations. In comparison with their fellow-Latinos who may speak some poor Euskera for convenience, their Basquisition is connected with a genuine sense of Basqueness.

The scene of immigrant associations looks similar to the Bilbao one. However, the biggest one, Esperanza Latina (Latin Hope), has a multinational character because of the membership of several Latin American nationality groups (Ecuadorians, Colombians, Nicaraguans, Bolivians, etc.). The association is the result of earlier initiatives taken by the local Church (misiones diocesanas) in 2000. But since its establishment, the association is run by the Latinos themselves and not anymore by the priests as its predecessors. Apart from courses directly preparing for the labour market (e.g. computer training, courses for bartender and sewing) Esperanza Latina is very active in providing courses in Euskera. Each Sunday over 30 Latinos attend the lessons provided by teachers of the Urrats adult training centre for Euskera, a public institution aimed at improving literacy in Basque. The latter demonstrates that the interest in Basque language and culture is not only symbolic performance like in Bilbao, but consists in concrete activities. However, the numbers of migrants learning Euskera show that it is still a modest phenomenon. According to the municipality, about 100 adult migrants, most of them Latinos are now enrolled in Basque language training (Municipality of San Sebastian 2009). The Latino associations are not involved in regional or local politics. In this respect language activism against Basquisition is conspicuously absent, 'though we don't like the language policies' as a spokesperson of one of the associations told us. Until recently local political involvement of the respective associations has been conspicuously absent in the San Sebastian metropolitan area. However, as we have seen in Bilbao, for the first time since the establishment Ecuador Etxea is now campaigning to vote for the 2011 municipal elections in the Basque Country.

So far there has occasionally been some political mobilisation organised by migrant associations addressed to the Madrid government. In San Sebastian and Bilbao Ecuadorian associations organised bus trips for their members to participate in the demonstrations against the new Aliens Act on 17 October 2009.



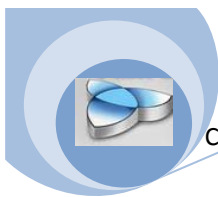
BARCELONA, CATALONIA

Barcelona, as the second largest city of Spain, and as the capital of the economically powerful region of Catalonia, has a long history of immigration. Until the 1990s most immigrants came from surrounding areas and relatively impoverished parts of Spain like Andalusia. Since then there has been a very rapid increase of international immigration into Barcelona. The foreign-born population of the city grew from just 3.9% in 1996 to 21.8% in 2009 (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2009). That increase of immigration has not only been confined to Barcelona and smaller cities like Girona, but also to Catalonia's coastal areas. This has made immigration, and the integration of new residents of Catalonia into society, an important topic on the political agenda.

Both Barcelona and Catalonia are often, by local authorities for instance, presented as 'European' rather than 'Spanish', as centre of economic dynamism, and the city of Barcelona as a 'global city' centre of creativity, tolerance, and diversity. A multi-cultural approach, welcoming immigrants and different cultures, fits in with those ideas of Barcelona. In addition, the memories of oppression of Catalan under Franco still give discursive fuel to those defending the rights of minority cultures. Nevertheless, there also is increasingly resentment towards immigration, a political backlash against some elements of multiculturalism.

Although in metropolitan Barcelona one hears less Catalan spoken than in more rural parts of the region, like around Vic, the difference is nowhere near as significant as in the Basque Country. In the whole of Catalonia the majority of the population speaks and understands Catalan, and Catalanismo, the belief in Catalan singularity, has support throughout the region. According to the most recent language census in 2001, 96.4 % of the inhabitants of Barcelona could understand Catalan, whereas 74.6% could speak it (Idescat, 2010). For Catalonia as a whole those percentages were 94.5% and 74.5%.

For most Latin American immigrants arriving in Barcelona the confrontation with another language than Spanish comes as a surprise. Although some are aware of the existence of Catalan before settling in Barcelona – particularly those with family already in Catalonia, or those that lived in other parts of Spain first – most recall complete surprise at finding out that Catalonia is a bilingual society. For many the prospect to live in a Spanish-speaking country was a reason to choose to migrate to Spain in the first place, rather than to another European country. This linguistic motivation to move to Spain seems somewhat more prevalent



among higher educated Latin Americans in Barcelona, but is mentioned by migrants of all backgrounds.

Well, I could have gone to China! But it was here in Spain that we would have the help of the language. Which is an advantage. Only, we did not know that in Barcelona [laughs] there was Catalan too (Gabriela, Chile).

However, given the widespread unawareness of the existence of Catalan prior to migration, most Latin Americans do acquire some Catalan linguistic ability once settled in Barcelona. The linguistic similarities between Spanish and Catalan ease the development of a passive knowledge of Catalan. Most interviewees, with exception of some very recently arrived in Barcelona, claim they understand Catalan, and are able to read it. Even though this ability to understand and read Catalan is often limited, most Latin Americans pick up some Catalan through the increasingly monolingual prevalence of Catalan in public spaces. However, for about half of all interviewees this claim to understand Catalan is combined with expressing an inability to speak Catalan. Almost all interviewees say they aim to learn Catalan at some point, although for some this is no immediate priority.

There is a wide variety of motivations for learning Catalan, or a more general wish to do so in the future. In the first place the omnipresence of Catalan, and the need to know some words to function in daily life.

I do a Catalan course, learning Catalan, because there are things you need to know. Because if you go to a market, everything in the market is in Catalan. So you have to learn it. It's a necessity in a way (Ines, Peru).

However, for many Latin Americans a daily life almost fully in Spanish, with very limited knowledge of and exposure to Catalan, remains possible. This is particularly the case in some neighbourhoods with high concentrations of Latin American immigrants where Spanish prevails, or with immigrants from other parts of Spain or a variety of international origins.

To be honest, Catalan is hardly ever used around here. Practically never. Not here. Because it's immigrants here. The majority. From Ecuador, Peru, from Colombia, Cubans. Spanish too, but the Spanish that come here speak Spanish. Castilian. Anyway, there are Africans, Ecuadorians, people from everywhere. In Catalonia it's an official language, but only between the Catalans. Yes. Within the immigrant community, all those that come here, people speak English, or Spanish (Wilson, Dominican Republic).

The main reasons to improve language skills in Catalan, including the ability to speak the language, are language requirements for work. On



the one hand a command of Catalan is needed for some low-skilled jobs, such as care for the elderly or shop assistant, mentioned especially by Latin American women. Nevertheless, more popular jobs among Latin Americans in Barcelona such as cleaning and construction do not normally require Catalan language skills. On the other hand, one of the main motivations mentioned by interviewees to learn Catalan is that it is regarded as key for opportunities to better employment. This is especially mentioned by highly skilled migrants who often have been professionals in their country of origin now unskilled jobs. Migrants perceive knowledge of Catalan as a necessity to find 'better' work, and to be 'successful' rather than simply survive.

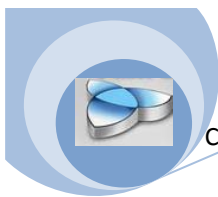
[Q: Is it possible to live a life only in Castilian here?] It's possible, but not if you want a good job. A good job, a professional job, no. You need to know some [Catalan] (Mercedes, Peru).

This perceived need to learn Catalan to improve socio-economic reflects both formal demands for command of Catalan in job advertisements, especially in the public sector, and informal pressure experienced in the work place.

A reason to learn Catalan related to the improvement of socio-economic opportunities lies in education, where most courses offered, ranging from integration courses, adult Information Technology literacy courses and technical skills diplomas to university courses, are offered in Catalan only. In that way many of the highly educated, but also the lower skilled, are confronted with the need to acquire some knowledge of Catalan to develop their skills. In that respect the experience of most interviewees who have been adult learners in higher education in Barcelona has been that teachers and lecturers tend to be more flexible in switching to Spanish to improve understanding among their students than Catalan fellow students.

Because all primary and secondary education in Catalonia is in Catalan, Latin American children and their parents have no choice but to learn Catalan. As such most immigrant children do indeed learn Catalan, although this is not without its consequences (see further below). But in itself, the fact that children learn and speak Catalan is mentioned as a motivation for their parents to learn the language too, either to help them with their homework, or to simply be able to understand them.

My children start to talk in Catalan now at home. And clearly, I don't understand them. I tell them 'I don't understand you, explain it to me'. And let me tell you something, there are words that they know in Catalan, and do not know how to say in Spanish (Raquel, Ecuador).



Apart from the instrumental motivations for learning Catalan described above, a variety of motivations connected to the role of Catalan as instrument of membership of a local or national community is mentioned. In the first place it can be a reaction to an external pressure where migrants are stimulated to learn Catalan in order to assimilate culturally in Catalan society. This can be either a pressure located in public and political debates, or one experienced by migrants in everyday life.

Well, it's that Catalans have their ideas, they're a bit radical. They tell me 'look, you have now lived here for thirteen years, you've got to learn Catalan' (Ines, Peru).

There are many people who say 'oh, but you're Brazilian, you speak Castilian very well'. And from then on they start to ask you about Catalan. Many people tell me 'oh, but you speak Castilian very well. And how are you getting on with Catalan?' And they keep asking (Adriano, Brazil).

This social pressure to learn Catalan, or at least an appreciation for doing so, felt through encounters in everyday life as well as through job opportunities, is present in the accounts of a significant number of Latin American interviewees. But whereas it makes some depict 'Catalans' as a single force of linguistic enforcement, some stress that it makes a difference with which Catalan you mingle, and that migrant background make a difference too.

The idea most Catalans have of immigrants is of Arabs, or Indians, or blacks. Me, white and with European physique, nobody would call me immigrant. [...] Think about it, an Arab, or Indian, or black immigrant that doesn't speak Catalan doesn't have many opportunities. I'm not sure whether language is more important, but one of those speaking Catalan is received much more positively than me, an Argentine, not speaking Catalan. It also depends on the Catalan you meet. Clearly, if you speak to the separatist sector, they'll prefer an Indian that speaks Catalan. But always, an immigrant speaking Catalan is looked upon better than an immigrant not speaking Catalan (Veronica, Argentina).

But a motivation to learn Catalan as instrument and symbol of community membership is not always a reaction to outside pressure. For a small minority it reflects a political sympathy with the cause of Catalan nationalism, even though that is relatively rare among Latin Americans in Barcelona, and has more bearing on actual Catalan language usage than on learning Catalan in the first place – learning Catalan often precedes taking up a 'Catalanista' position. A much larger proportion of interviewees has become to regard Catalan as 'the language of Catalonia', where residency in Catalonia requires a command of Catalan. Rather than questioning this logic and claiming a right to be able to speak and



function in Spanish, many draw parallels with their own country, with Spanish as official language, thus discursively emphasising the status of Catalan as 'national language' in Catalonia.

I would like to learn Catalan. Clearly, if you live in a country, which has its language, its origins, you must learn it (Raquel, Ecuador).

If I go to a place that is not my own country, I have to adapt. That's what I think, right? Clearly, if it is their language here, I have to adapt to their language, right? I wouldn't want it any other way. If a Catalan would come to my country, and would ask me to speak Catalan, I would say that I'm in my own country (Martín, Ecuador).

As said above, the variety of motivations to learn Catalan, and value attached to the language, does not mean that learning Catalan is a priority for all immigrants. Apart from a lack of time and resources, a reason mentioned for putting learning Catalan down the list of priorities is the relatively limited international significance of the language. Several interviewees mention giving priority to learning English, although this is not as prevalent as could be thought; the opinion that learning Catalan is part of living in Catalonia is more widely held among the Latin Americans interviewed than the idea that learning Catalan would be a waste of time because it has little use outside Catalonia.

There is more resistance against the increasingly monolingual presence of Catalan in public space, in official information from the Catalan and Barcelona authorities and other public bodies and in education. Several interviewees know other Latino families who have left Barcelona for Madrid, Valencia or elsewhere in Spain because of the options to school children in Spanish. Most interviewees know families with children who have had difficulties at school because of the need to learn Catalan and be educated through Catalan at the same time. Especially families arriving with teenage children mention initial language problems, sometimes with a continued lower educational performance as a result.

However, most Latin American immigrants interviewed take this situation of monolingual Catalan education or official communication as a discomfort that comes with living in Catalonia. Very few consider themselves in a position to protest against that situation and claim equal status for Catalan and Spanish, like earlier immigrants in Barcelona from Andalucía, Extremadura and other parts of Spain did. This seems related to the outsider status in the Spanish-Catalan nationalist conflict in which most immigrants position themselves.

I believe we immigrants are a bit separated from that conflict. The Catalans, when you're no Spanish, do accept you. But in the conflict our



opinion doesn't count. They simply explain it to us, let's say keep us informed (Julio, Venezuela).

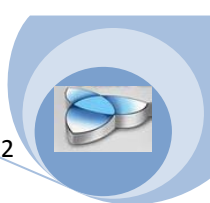
They say that Catalonia has to be a State, an independent country. That is their theme, I'm used to it (Lucía, Colombia). Some do draw parallels with earlier migrants, like those from Andalusia and other parts of Spain.

We come for the same reasons as the Andalusians earlier. The only difference is that for them, well, it was harder, because it is their country. I come from another country (Gabriela, Chile).

While most Latin Americans see, to different degrees and with different levels of priority, value in learning Catalan, actually using it in daily life is for almost all restricted to specific situations and specific places. Only one of the interviewees in Barcelona uses Catalan as everyday language at home and in most situations. All others, including those completely fluent in Catalan, use Spanish at home and with most friends. Some did make distinctions between being among 'Catalan friends', and among 'other' or 'Latino' friends, switching between using Catalan and Spanish respectively. In this way even those immigrants that are well integrated, with a Catalan social network, are stimulated to draw distinctions between being amongst 'locals' and amongst 'immigrants', highlighting the distance between them through the switching between languages.

For the majority of Latinos interviewed, however, having conversations completely in Catalan is rare. One of the most frequently named forms of usage of Catalan is in communication with official authorities, either through information received, or during bureaucratic procedures. For those immigrants Catalan is a language for 'formal' situations, contrasted with the predominance of Spanish in everyday life and in immigrant neighbourhoods. A similar distinction exists in workplaces and places of education. Those needing to use Catalan at work tend to reserve Catalan for formal communication and paperwork, switching to Spanish for all more casual conversation. At school children make a similar switch between the language for learning and communication with teachers (Catalan), and the one for conversation with friends (Castilian).

[Q: What language did you speak at school?] Well, it depends. With friends Castilian, with teachers Catalan. [FS: And with Spanish or Catalan kids at school?] Well, we don't really get along. Where I went to school there were mostly Latinos. So. [Q: And what happens when you ask something in Castilian in class?] They say 'try to ask me in Catalan'. If you



can't, they accept that, but, well, they send you to extra classes. It's very compulsory, Catalan (Maritza, Peru).

While children are immersed in Catalan at school, their parents might not speak much Catalan, but school can still be a main place of contact with Catalan. A large number of Latinos interviewed mentioned parents' evenings at school as a situation where they were confronted with their inability to communicate in Catalan.

Meetings at the school of the children are all in Catalan. I understand it reasonably well, but there are words, which, no. No. And because everything is in Catalan, and you don't know how you would ask something, because it has to be in Catalan, it's better not to ask questions (Raquel, Ecuador).

But the confrontation with Catalan does not only pose obstacles. There are also ways in which strategic use of Catalan can be an instrument to gain acceptance as member of a local community, or to achieve certain goals. Even a very limited knowledge of Catalan can be put to use in that way.

At university there are many Catalans, and they do speak Catalan. Already in the first few days I picked up a couple of Catalan words, and I could understand them a little bit. And if you talk to them in Catalan, for them that's the maximum [laughs]! (Julio, Venezuela).

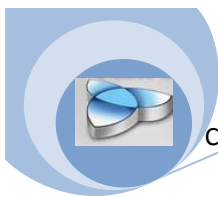
Catalans, when they hear you speaking Catalan, an immigrant speaking Catalan, they feel better. More content, they're more, eh, because, there's this black guy, or coloured person, or foreigner, speaking Catalan. They feel good because of that, not because they want that person to feel Catalan, but because they want people take notice of Catalan (Wilson, Dominican Republic).

I hardly ever use Catalan. Well, sometimes to be nice to clients, in the shop, I say 'bon dia' (Gabriela, Chile).

A similar tactic of using Catalan strategically is used by immigrants in formal situations, or by those involved in migrant organisations, for instance in communication with government authorities. The perception exists that using Catalan 'get's things done'.

Because, if you go to a public organisation, they can speak to you in Castilian. But if you arrive speaking Catalan, they treat you differently, the context is different, you are much more. It has to do with the priorities that the government has, and if you play along with that, doors open much more easily for you (Adriano, Brazil).

For the student organisation, having a president that speaks Catalan is very important. Because you get noticed more. If your president doesn't speak Catalan, no (Sofia, Colombia).



Apart from the instrumental and symbolic usage of Catalan, immigrants also regard the language as an element of Catalan identity. Barcelona's Latinos are confronted with a double pressure to integrate into 'society', with parallel definitions of Spain and Catalonia existing as 'national society'. Both definitions of 'nation' put their own cultural, social, and political demands forward to immigrants, often contradicting, and sometimes asking them to take sides in a Spanish-Catalan ethno-political conflict. Given the lack of knowledge of the Catalan language, and of the Spanish language as link between Latin America and Spain as the historical colonial 'motherland', it is surprising how most Latin Americans interviewed mention 'speaking Catalan' as a sign of 'being integrated'. Learning Catalan is clearly seen as a step in the process of negotiating a sense of belonging in Catalonia, but also referring to Barcelona, Spain, or a more undefined 'here'.

I would like to learn Catalan. Because, clearly, I'm here, I would like to integrate (Raquel, Ecuador).

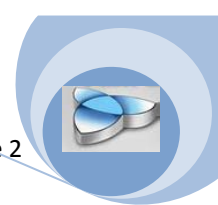
This strong connection made between 'integration' and 'speaking Catalan' appears to some degree a reaction to the way 'integration' is defined by government authorities (e.g. Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009) and in public debate.

Integration? Let's see. As far as I can see, it's mostly, let's say, the language. At first it was my idea to learn Catalan, when I still didn't have my papers. There are many places where they help you integrate, help you with the language (Paula, Bolivia).

First, you choose to learn Catalan, integrate into society. But to integrate doesn't mean to get to know your neighbours, it's something very strictly defined. The only way in which integration is seen is through the language (Veronica, Argentina).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION: COMPARING THE THREE CITIES

Our interviews show much similarity between the perceptions of Latin American immigrants in all three agglomerations. They confirm that multilingualism is seen as an additional, often unexpected, challenge. The perceived need to learn Euskera or Catalan is however limited. In the Basque Country only a few immigrants with higher education and higher ambitions learn Euskera to improve their position on the labour market. In Catalonia, by contrast the use of Catalan was seen as more useful at work, often not as a matter of necessity but as a matter of courtoisie to communicate with clients. In San Sebastian and in Catalonia speaking with colleagues is an incentive; as expected it is not the case in Bilbao.



Immigrants in Catalonia also reported more social pressure to learn and speak Catalan, which is directly linked to the feeling of being integrated or being seen as integrated by Catalans. This was not reported in the Basque Country, not even in San Sebastian. In addition, the differential institutional pressure between Basque Country and Catalonia is observed in the fact that parents in Catalonia often become more interested in Catalan when their children have to study it at school while immigrant associations perceive the use of Catalan as a necessary to have good connections with the regional authorities. A specific group to be mentioned is that of Argentines of Basque descent who tend to learn Euskera for cultural reasons. In conclusion, immigrants in Catalonia seem to have a clearer idea of a Catalan nation and identity than the respondents in the Basque Country have of a Basque nation and identity. They perceive integration as integration in Catalonia, while immigrants in the Basque Country refer to Spain. It remains unclear whether this is mainly an issue of prevalence and institutionalisation (as the interviews suggest), a consequence of the larger linguistic distance between Castilian and Euskera, the political situation of polarisation in the Basque Country, or the more recent establishment of the immigrants in the Basque Country.

Finally it should be noted that immigrants have a broader frame of reference, considering job opportunities outside Spain and valuing English lessons for their children or for themselves more highly than lessons in the regional language.

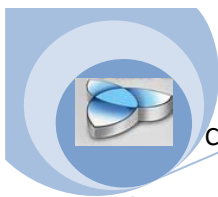
Evidently it would be useful to expand the research to non-Spanish speaking immigrants to see if they have similar feelings and attitude towards Catalan and Euskera or if the competition between Castilian and Catalan or Euskera became qualitatively different if they are originally both a foreign language to the immigrants.

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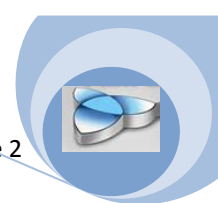
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Tetovo, 8-9 octomber 2010

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PH D. Mustafa Ibrahim
PH D. Andrew Goodspeed
PH D. Laslo Marash
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