Migration: Does my Mother Tongue Determine my Identity?

Emigración: ¿Determina la lengua materna la identidad?

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Resumen

La emigración produce un impacto en las vidas de los emigrantes que se ve reflejado de maneras muy diversas. En este artículo, se tomarán en cuenta dos elementos principales: la lengua materna y la identidad. Teniendo como base Madrid, capital de España, y la población rumana, como la nacionalidad con mayor porcentaje en dicha comunidad se intentará dilucidar si la lengua materna determina la identidad en dichos individuos. Para poder conseguir tal objetivo, se realizarán dos tareas recurrentes en el campo de la atrición: tarea de fluidez verbal y tarea de recontado o de volver a contar. Estas tareas, que se realizarán en rumano y español, determinarán la diferencia entre ambas lenguas. Los resultados obtenidos en estas tareas, junto a una entrevista sociolingüística, proporcionarán suficientes datos para extraer conclusiones sobre la importancia de la lengua materna en la identidad de los inmigrantes.
Palabras clave: emigración, lengua materna, identidad, rumanos.

Abstract

Migration produces an impact in the migrants' lives that is reflected in many different ways. In this article, two main elements will be taken into consideration: the mother tongue and identity. Focusing on the capital of Spain, Madrid, and examining the nationality with a higher percentage in this region, the Romanians; an attempt will be made to characterize whether or not the mother tongue determines the identity among these individuals. In order to achieve this outcome, two different tasks that are usually carried out in the attrition field will be conducted, that is, the Verbal Fluency Task and the

retelling task. These tasks carried out in Romanian people and in Spanish people will determine the difference between both languages and this, together with a sociolinguistic interview, will provide enough data to yield conclusions whether or not the mother tongue is a powerful aspect that defines the identity.

Keywords: migration, mother tongue, identity, Romanians.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Due to an increasing globalized world (Castells, 1996), a high percentage of individuals decide to migrate to other countries. The decision to migrate tends to have a great impact: migrants "uproot themselves, leave behind home and country, and face the painful process of incorporation into a different society and culture" (Glick Schiller et al., 1995: 48). Whilst this incorporation can affect many aspects, the present article will focus on two of them: language and identity, in particular, the possible relationship between both of them.

Studying language within a migrational context often links with the factor of the loss of the mother tongue as a frequent process, especially when residence in a new country spans a substantial period of time. It is, therefore, appropriate to study the possible loss of language and identity that individuals might present, since a correlation is always present and to ascertain the importance of the mother tongue in determining identity.

Before specifying the details of participants and methodology, information about migration in Spain will be provided as it owns a particular signal path. Unlike other countries, such as Canada or the United States, immigration in Spain represents a new emerging phenomenon.

Spain has recently moved from being a country of emigration to being a country of immigration, and its situation with reference to migration has drastically changed. Whereas around two million Spaniards left the country from 1960 to 1975, during the 1980s a strong economic growth made Spain attractive to many immigrants. In 2000 and without taking into account the undocumented population, around one million immigrants were registered among Spain's population (Kreienbrik, 2008).

The population referred to, in this article, is the city of Madrid. This city proved relevant not only for being the capital of Spain but also most importantly, for being among the cities with the largest rates of immigration in the country. The Region of Madrid's Immigration

Observatory[1] published a report in 2016, in which an appreciation of linguistic diversity as a result of immigration has been noted.

Faced with the impossibility of reaching all minorities reflected in the data from January 2016 of the previously mentioned report, this study zoomed in on one specific group: Romania, representing the country with a superior percentage of immigrants in Madrid. Immigrants from Romania reflect 23.78% of the total foreign population percentage, which includes 205,033 citizens.

This paper is organized as follows. This first section has introduced a brief review of the Spanish migratory situation as well as the objective and structure of this article. Section two will highlight a theoretical discussion regarding the main points of this research, that is, language loss or attrition, identity and loss of identity. In order to study the concept of identity, we will define the elements which play an essential role in the concept of identity and which will furthermore help us elucidate a possible loss. Section three highlights relevant features of the capital of Spain, Madrid, where the research is based. This section will dress an exhaustive image of the Romanian community in Madrid. The fourth part presents the participants of this research.

From next section, the focus will be on the specific details of this research. Section five develops the methodology employed in order to achieve set goals together with the perception that participants have about their possible language loss and section six will present the findings suggested by the tasks accomplished by participants. The last section will conclude by trying to elucidate the question meant for this paper, that is, whether or not the mother tongue defines identity in Romanians living in Madrid. Conclusions and guidelines, for possible future research, will also be provided in this last section.

2.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As stated previously, this paper will attempt to provide whether or not the mother tongue is one of the most powerful aspects that determine the identity. Within the context of the current subject, immigration, this mother tongue could be undergoing some changes and/or losses.

Starting with language loss, findings concerning this theory have been well documented. Huffines (1980), for instance, reports on a relative isolation of Germans in Pennsylvania as a cause for their language loss; De Bot & Fase (1991) studied the position of the first-

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[1]
http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?c=CM_InfPractica_FA&cid=1354273641612&language=es&pagename=ComunidadMadrid%2FEstructura

generation migrant worker groups in Western Europe. In a similar vein, Guardado (2002) reflected on the loss and maintenance of first language in Hispanic families in Vancouver. Recently, this language loss has been deeply studied and attrition is the term used for this concept.

In order for attrition to occur, circumstances such as emigration to a country with a different linguistic environment, adaptation to this environment in, mainly, all the aspects of life and high reduction of mother tongue input and use must take place (Köpke et al., 2007). All these circumstances happening in a very long period of time along with attitudinal factors will also play an important role in attrition although, as stated by Schmid and Köpke (2009), none of them having place by its own will produce attrition.

Many definitions have been given about attrition through the years (Andersen, 1982; Olshtain, 1989; Kaufman, 1991; Pavlenko, 2000; de Bot and Hulsen, 2002; Köpke and Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2008; Schmid and Köpke, 2009; Schmid and Dusseldorp, 2010; Schmid, 2011, among others). Nevertheless, taking into account the approach of this paper, we would define attrition as a sociolinguistic phenomenon which consists of the loss of a portion of mother tongue or deterioration of mother tongue in migrants or just the perception of it.

On the one hand, we consider it sociolinguistic since the social features are extremely influential (e.g. use of language with other migrants). On the other, just a portion of language will be lost since several dimensions are more likely to suffer from attrition than others. Bearing in mind that lexical access and fluency are more vulnerable than syntax (Köpke, 2002; Montrul, 2002; Gürel, 2004), some of the specific tasks (Verbal Fluency Task and retelling task), usually carried out in attrition research, were accomplished in order to dispense some concrete data about the possible loss of language in immigrants.

Moving onto our next pivotal characteristic: identity; we agree with Blommaert's words (2005: 205) since we do not see identity as something stable. "People don't *have* an identity, but that identities are constructed in practices that *produce*, *enact*, or *perform* identity – identity is identification". Believing that the identity is not a homogeneous entity, we concur with the idea by Julien Bauer (1994) about the approaches conceived, depending on the definition accorded to the term.

Blommaert (2005) continued saying that identities are closely linked to space. This is a relevant element in our research as the new location in which migrants are living, together with the place where they were born, might influence their identities. In line with that, Bauer (1994) used the sociological aspect in the identity definition. Conforming him, every

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citizen of Spain, who feels Spanish, could say that his or her identity is Spanish.

In order to reflect on what we really are, our identity, many concepts could be brought to light although only origins, memory and the idea of going back will be arisen in this paper given the relevance that they have in the possible loss of identity.

Sibony (1991) provides a definition of identity, taking into account the migrant's origin. Origins are pivotal for this article because, as Awah (2012) affirmed, we argue that they represent the best antidote to the no-Identity. When origin becomes visible, there will always be an identity, even if this identity can be affected by the origin in a positive or a negative way. Sibony (1991) specifies that, whereas some individuals will try to inhibit their origins, others will show them off. Considering this premise, participants were asked about their origins and the possibility of losing them.

Our bottom line, following Sibony (1991), is that a pure and intact origin has never existed so origins will be mixed and they will influence identity. Moreover, we concur with the idea by Sibony (2016) that origin is not only something that is left behind but something that is also ahead of us (author's translation).

In conclusion, origin is never pure and it will always be present (above all, in a foreign country) and unachievable since, even if we try to get closer, it eludes us. Origin, which is behind and in front of us too, will be the best antidote to the no- identity (Sibony, 1991).

This concept of origin raises one of the most valuable matters for the first generation, which is memory. According to Awah (2012), our origins are in charge of feeding the memory of the present, that is, they transmit the heritage received by ancestors. Bearing in mind the importance of memory, the different perspectives provided by several authors will be displayed.

Firstly, for Sibony (1991), memory constitutes the power of remembering. Secondly, Clézio (2004) posited that he had to go back to his childhood memories since it was where his strongest feelings were developed. Finally, and the most valuable, is the description by Awah (2012: 222), who described memory as a puzzle made by history and tradition, it is identity and existence (author's translation). Taking the concept of memory as identity, it is easily understandable that migrants' identity will be composed of the memories that immigrants have.

When a migrant forces this memory to become active, the memories are brought up and circulated in the mind. This will make migrants think on the possibility of going back to their origin countries. It is strongly believed that, when the idea of going back to one's homeland is too obvious, this might affect the person in two distinct ways.

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On the one hand, this idea will lead to a non-loss of mother tongue, culture and identity since, in the case of going back, they will need their language and culture. In consonance with Svasek (2010), the homeland is conceived as an attachment between immigrants and the place where they used to live, which produces suffering. On the other hand, following Makomè (2006), we see this temporary condition as a problematic issue. As reported by Makomè (2006), this idea will block the integration of immigrants and it will be harmful as well as for the second generation.

As far as this approach is concerned, Memmi (2004) posited that, except for some occasional visits, the immigrant will not go back to their home country. It is, what he calls the end of a myth: the definitive return. Our initial stance, on this issue, led us not to agree with this view as it was supposed that immigrants had the willingness to go back to their countries of origin.

Origins, memory and the idea of going back are believed to modify what we are; our inner self and they will carry indirectly a possible loss in identity. Nevertheless, the collective identity is relevant given that human beings do not live alone but in relationship with others, and one of the reaffirmations of this collective identity is the language. The language, which should fulfill the people's needs, will lead migrants to be willing to maintain or not their mother tongue and, thereby, this choice might determine their identity. Furthermore, Köpke and Schmid (2004) stated the importance of language as group identity too. They hypothesized that attrition could be prevented thanks to this group identity.

Knowing, beforehand, the difficulty inherent in specifying not only the definition of identity but also the loss of identity, we conducted sociolinguistic interviews with the goal of providing results on their opinion about identity and a possible loss.

Findings from the linguistic tasks and from these sociolinguistic interviews will lead us to elucidate the importance accorded by immigrants to the mother tongue in their identity process.

## 3.   ROMANIAN COMMUNITY IN MADRID

Before diving into the issue of the Romanian community in Madrid, a brief note about the foreign population living in this city should be given. According to the report[2] published in January 2016, the foreign population (shown in figure 1) stood at 862,085, with 13.15% of

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[2] Report published by The Immigration Monitoring Centre (Spanish translation for 'Observatorio de Inmigración').

the total population in Madrid, whereas 86.85% (5,693,162) represents the Spanish population.

Figure 1. Foreign population in Madrid by continents (January 2016)
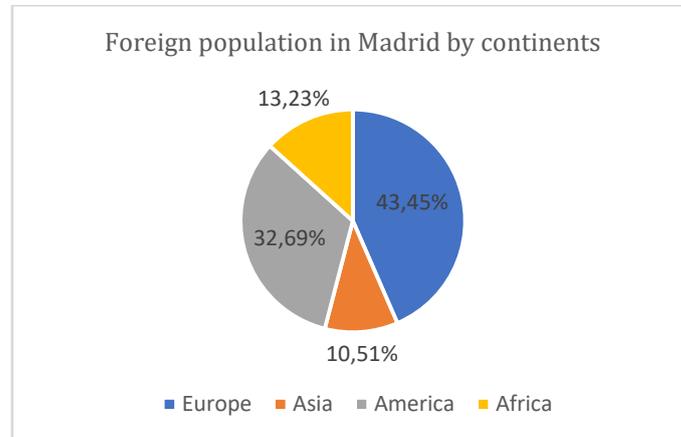
As shown, the highest rates concern intra-European migration. The same report also offers an overview of the nationalities with a higher percentage within the Community of Madrid (figure 2). The three nationalities with the highest percentage of migrants are Romanian (205,033 people), Moroccan (79,639) and Chinese (55,784). Considering the importance of Romanian immigrants, the present analysis will focus on the Romanian community. Assertions, explanatory findings and conclusions about the effect of the mother tongue in identity will be, then, applicable only to this nationality.

Figure 2. Nationalities by majority in the Community of Madrid[3]

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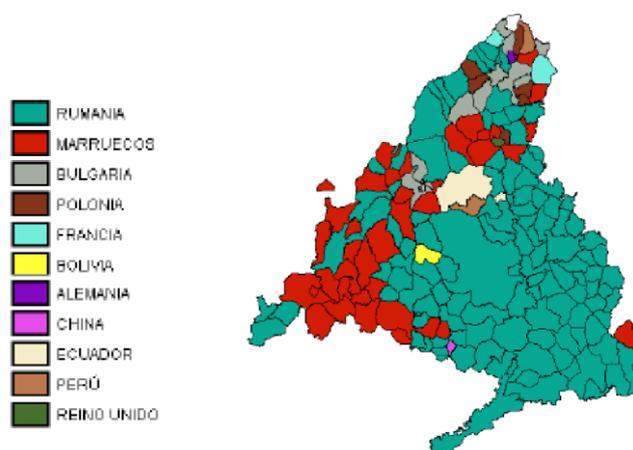
[3] Map in figure 2 has been left as in original source form, the immigration monitoring Centre Report. Original source in Spanish.

According to the World Bank 2015[4], the Romanian population stands at around 19.83 million and the immigrant share of the Romanian population in Spain has fluctuated over time. Figure 3 stresses the evolution of Romanian immigrants, living in the Community of Madrid. According to the INE[5], the number of Romanians was situated at 906 in 1998.

Conforming to data from Viruela Martínez (2006), Romania joined the Schengen area in 2002, which permitted immigrants easy access due to the lifting of Visa requirements. Before the Schengen agreement, Romania had to comply with certain conditions aimed at creating a better legislative framework for the control of Romanian migration. Once the Visa imposition was suppressed, immigrants began to migrate massively. This is reflected in the number of new arrivals in 2002. In 2001, figures disclosed 13,961 Romanians. After abolition of internal borders in 2002, Romanians were allowed to enter Spain as visitors. This explains a substantial increase of 11,602, bringing the overall total to 25,563 Romanians in Madrid in 2002.

2007 is the next relevant year to be considered: Romania joined the European Union which, again, entailed an intense migration movement (Marcu, 2011). In said year, 34,350 Romanians arrived in Madrid, making a total of 148,906 Romanians, and 2008 brought that figure up to 181,251. During this period, Romanians represented 31.6% of the European immigrants, making them the European nationality with the highest percentage in Spain. Romanians consisted of 14% of the total foreign population in Spain (Krenbrink, 2008). This is also reflected in our research population, some of them having resided in Spain for less than ten years.

In light of the data, the main peak time corresponds to the years 2002 and 2007. However, the economic crisis facing the country led to a sharp drop in new arrivals from 2013 and the number of immigrants, in general, began to drop. In 2015, the quantity of Romanians living in Madrid was situated at 187,914 (figure 3)[6].

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[4] Romania home. http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/romania
[5] Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Statistics Institute),
http://www.ine.es/dynt3/inebase/index.htm?type=pcaxis&file=pcaxis&path=/t20/e245/p04//a2015
[6] All the numbers regarding Romanian immigrants have been taken from the National Statistics Institute previously mentioned.

Figure 3. Line graph of composition by gender of Romanian immigrants in the Community of Madrid
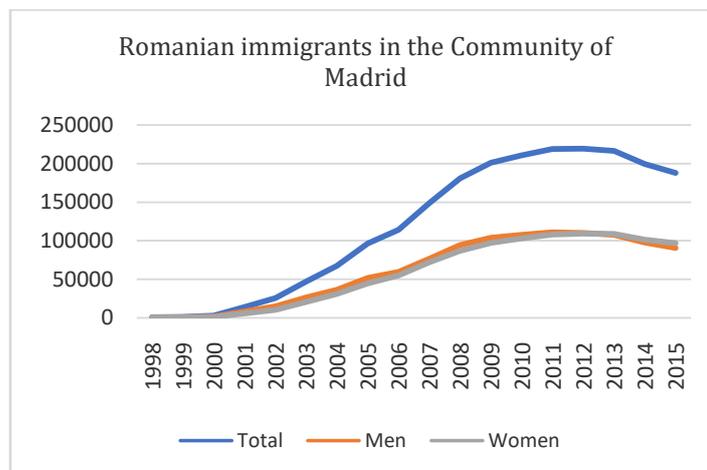
Having established the more general context of Romanians living in Madrid, the next section will provide more specific information regarding the Romanian participants of this research.

4. METHODOLOGY: PARTICIPANTS AND STUDY DESIGN

Having followed a qualitative methodology approach, twenty-four in depth personal interviews had been conducted between June 2015 and March 2016. The participants are middle class first generation migrants who were, at least, twelve years old when they left their country, meaning their mother tongue had already been fully acquired (Schmid, 2009, among others). They have spent from seven to twenty years in Spain, with an average of thirteen years.

Following the General Statistics Office, the quantity of men in Romanian migration in Madrid has always been higher to that of women until 2013, the year in which the presence of female Romanian migration starts to be higher than masculine. Regarding participants' gender, no specific analysis has been performed, the reason being that the rate for women is higher than for men, so no comparable data could be regarded. Despite this as being widely recognized, the group is composed of nine men (37.5%) and fifteen women (62.5%) between the ages of 27 to 45.

Initially, recruitment of participants was intended through networks, clubs, organizations, advertisements. Given that none of these recruitment attempts offered participants, a message was directed to the Embassy of Romania to present this study's aims and to get the name of associations, radios or newspapers to which information could be addressed.

E-mails were also sent to associations and cultural centers. The number of answers was inferior to 5%; out of more than thirty e-mails, only one answer was received. Further recruitment for this particularly difficult-to-access population occurred through snowball sampling (Tracy 2013, 137), that is, the few participants involved from the beginning were asked to suggest friends or family member who, then, recommended other participants from their own social network, creating the effect of a snowball rolling downhill.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish and their duration depended on the availability of the participant and the desire to share knowledge with the interviewer. Most of them lasted between an hour and a half and two hours. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission (19 participants, 80%), except those who refused (5 participants, 20%). Among those who gave permission, they preferred not to be recorded during the whole interview but only in the linguistic tasks. Regardless of the permission to record or not, the same guidelines were followed with all participants.

All locations for the interviews were suggested by the participants themselves. Therefore, the interviews were usually carried out in informal settings, such as the participants' homes, work spaces, parks, although some of them were also conducted at work places. The goal was to elicit speech as natural and spontaneous as possible within the confines of an interview. A warm-up period of a few minutes was used to 'break the ice' and to explain, in depth, the purpose of the interview. Some of them already knew something about the interview but, in this warm-up, the goal was to let them know our desire of learning more about their community in Madrid and about what was happening to their language. This warm-up was followed by the socio-biographical interview itself after which the previously mentioned tasks were performed (Verbal Fluency Task and the re-telling task).

Quantifying the amount of attrition is not the goal of this article and is, according to Köpke (2004), an impossible task. This difficulty was bridged over by replicating two procedures commonly used in the field of attrition (Waas, 1996); Roberts and Le Dorze, 1997; Yagmur, 1997; Schmid, 2007; Köpke et al. 2007, among others) and proved adequate for examining the possible loss of language. That is the reason why the Verbal Fluency Task and the re-telling task were the two tasks accomplished by the participants of this research.

Moving forward with the first task, The Verbal Fluency Task (VFT), known also as the Fluency in Controlled Association (FiCA) (Köpke et al., 2007), it was chosen in consonance with Schmid & Fägersten's motivations (2010: 765): "it allows the elicitation of relatively free spoken data with a controlled content, so that choice of vocabulary, style and so forth

can be assumed to be relatively homogenous across the sample".

Participants were asked to name as many items as they could remember in sixty seconds within a certain category (animals, fruit, food, items in a supermarket, and so on). The aim of this part was to measure the rate of lexical retrieval as lexical access and fluency are considered to be more vulnerable than syntax (Köpke, 2002; Montrul, 2002; Gürel, 2004). Following the guidelines of Waas (1996) and Schmid (2007), we chose one type of VFT, that is, the semantic verbal fluency, where the items to be cited belong to two different stimuli, in this case, 'animals' and 'fruit and vegetables'.

Following Schmid (2009), the higher the score on this task, the higher the proficiency reflected by participant. Therefore, it was decided to include this task, but adding a new element. We incorporated a new language so participants were asked to accomplish this task in both languages (first, they carried out the task in Spanish and, later on, in their mother tongue) in order to know the language, in which they needed less time to retrieve words. All repetitions were eliminated from the overall count.

The second technique applied, the re-telling task, was initially designed by Perdue (1993). Many other authors, such as Pavlenko (2004) or Schmid (2007), continued using it not without signaling several of its limitations, in particular, the fact that it does not require specific concepts (Schmid 2010). This technique involves the participant watching a sequence from Modern Times, a Charlie Chaplin silent movie from 1936, after which he is asked to retell what was observed.

In consonance with Weltens (1988), self-evaluation would not be a valid measure in order to establish if a participant is suffering attrition or not. He hastens to add that attriters[7] tend to enlarge their linguistic loss since results, in research, do not usually show the same as expressed. Participants in his research reported high attrition, whereas the results in the accomplished tasks (reading-comprehension tests, listening-comprehension tests, multiple-choice cloze tests, among others) showed a slight attrition.

Bearing these limitations in mind, the participants' perception about the possibility of completely losing the mother tongue, or the percentage of language, that they thought to have lost, seemed significant to this research. This is why, language loss was measured through participant's self-report, rather than linguistic analyses of the mother tongue receptive and productive language competences.

In the same line, results about their identity, or possible *loss* of identity, will be suggested

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[7] Seliger and Vago (1991) defined attriters as those individuals who had a very good second language and did not use their first language for a long period of time. For Schmid (2010, 2011), attriters are those who are surrounded by a language which differs from the one of their childhood.

through the interviews conducted with immigrants. Participants would reflect on their origins, the fact of going back, their memories or the role of their mother tongues in their lives. Al these elements will yield explanatory findings in order to confirm their opinion about identities.

5. RESULTS

In relation to the linguistic tasks that participants accomplished, the first one was the Verbal Fluency Task and the second one was the retelling task.

In relation to the first task, the average of lexical items included in the category 'fruits and vegetables' enumerated by Romanians in Spanish is 10,3 whereas, in their mother tongue, this corresponds to 12,4. Regarding the category of 'animals', the average in Spanish is 9,2 whereas the average in Romanian is 10,8. These findings illustrate that participants are still better in vocabulary in their mother tongue than in Spanish.

Regarding the second task, participants in the present study seemed to feel more comfortable retelling the scene in Spanish than in Romanian. When asked for the reasons, they mentioned to have a higher use of Spanish than the use of their mother tongue so it was easier to retell a story in Spanish.

It is hard for me... I could say word by word but I can hardly say the expression. (Female - participant 11[8], age 34)[9].

When retelling in Romanian, I knew all the words that I should use but sometimes, the construction that I was using was Spanish and not Romanian. (Female, p. 13, age 31).

Another relevant aspect in this research was the perception that each participant has about their possible attrition or loss of language. 70% did not conceive the idea of completely losing the mother tongue, that is, not being able to remember even a word. Participants were invited to reflect on the percentage of mother tongue (from 0% to 100%) that they considered to have lost. 22% asserted to have lost nothing and about 40% considered to have lost among 1% and 20%. Finally, 4,1%, i.e. only one participant, believed to have lost more than 50%.

In conclusion, we could say that Romanians maintain the knowledge of their mother tongue, although it could have been slightly damaged due to migration and the contact with the new language. Their vocabulary seems to be easily accessible whereas Spanish is the language, in which they feel more comfortable when retelling a story.

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[8] From now on, only the letter p. followed by the number of participant will be displayed.
[9] All the interviews were done in Spanish although for the purpose of this paper, the notes have been translated into English by the author of this research.

Once the results about language have been examined, findings about identity through their opinion about origins or the fact of going back to their first countries must be illustrated.

In our research, 33% of participants conceive the idea of origin as being possibly lost, whereas 66% suppose that it is unlikely to lose or forget them. In this regard, participants' answers are in line with the assertions of Sibony (1991), who explains that, when living in a foreign country, even if we believe that we have forgotten our origins, the ties with origins become relentless.

It is important not to forget origin. (Female, p. 2, age 34).

We have to be proactive if we do not want to lose them. (Female, p. 13, age 31).

Findings show that participants conform what is assessed by Memmi (2004) as they asseverate that they have already settled in Spain, and it would be very hard to return. Only 23% of the participants assert having the desire of going back.

I don't like the idea of starting all over again in my own country because I will feel like a foreigner in my own country (Female, p. 11, age 34).

They affirm that it would be better to stay in Spain due to the probabilities of a better life for their children. This is in line with the study by Brabete & Gruia (2013), in which participants do not envision going back to their countries of origin. In the study carried out by Yilmaz and Schmid (2012), Turks had the same opinion as Romanians did in our research, in that they show a preference of staying in the new country since they estimated it as their home. Another comparison could be done between Romanians in our study and Portuguese in Memmi's book (2004). Memmi laid out those Portuguese villages, in which nobody lives, exist and were built by Portuguese immigrants who contemplated the idea of going back one day. In our research, Romanians claimed that they would not go back even if they built a house.

Contrary to what is believed, a high percentage of participants stated not having the desire of going back given that, during their stay in Spain, their countries of origin have changed and they were no longer informed about issues there. Memmi (2004), furthermore, justifies this by exposing that, when he was in the new country, their mother tongue developed, making him unable to interpret precise meaning of new vocabulary that had formed, thus, the idea of going back to his country of origin was no longer a priority. Some of the participants in our research also stated not feeling comfortable enough in their countries of origin as language was a part of their identity, and they could no longer control that part of identity. The importance of language in the individual's life is highlighted as being extremely relevant and linked to their identity.

Participants in our research were specifically asked about the identity they believe to present even though, following Memmi (1966), this issue was raised in a not so direct manner. In his book *La statue du sel*, he explained that the protagonist started to suffer when people forced him to wonder about who he was.

Results revealed that half of the Romanians interviewed declare presenting a more Spanish identity, whereas only 30% of the participants asseverated to have a stronger Romanian identity.

I don't feel Spanish but I do not consider myself as a foreigner. Spain is my home. However, I will never apply for Spanish nationality. I know that being in Spain, having Spanish nationality will bring benefits but I do not want to lose my roots. (Female, p. 7, age 27).

I feel more Romanian even if my identity has changed throughout the years spent in Spain. (Female, p. 12, age 30).

I feel more Spanish. If war was declared, I would fight on the Spanish side. (Male, p. 17, age 35).

I will always be Romanian even if I obtain Spanish nationality. Despite the fact that I live in Spain, I was born in Romania. However, there are moments in which I feel more Spanish than Romanian. (Female, p. 8, age 36).

The outcomes, that have not yet been clarified, are those which derive from individuals who declare presenting a mix between both identities. 80% corroborate the possibility of being a mix between both identities, feeling as though they were hybrid individuals. Nevertheless, we believe that identity is, in fact, a mixture of elements so everybody should feel as hybrid regarding identity. Despite that, the concept of hybrids needs to be focused.

In the past, hybrids were only those individuals who were born from parents with different nationalities as the book *Nini* shows. In this book, the protagonist is said to be a hybrid human being, who tries to be above humanity as she is assumed as having a lower status (Sadji, 1965). Nevertheless, this hybrid concept arises in immigration since they are between two languages and two cultures. Sibony (1991) uses the concept 'l'entre-deux' (betweenness, my translation). He asseverates that this 'betweenness' makes the two parts tied, with no side inherently good or bad, merely a dynamic space. It involves the origin cited above on the grounds that the origin trip consists of joining the pieces.

I don't know what to answer but I have lived more years in Spain than in Romania so, even if I will never forget my origin, Spain is my home. (Male, p. 14, age 43).

The Romanian participants in this research, believing to exhibit more features from the Spanish identity, are more frequent than those who conceive to be keeping their previous Romanian identity.

My mother who lives in Romania always tells me that not having been born in Spain is the only thing that I do not have compared to Spanish people. According to her, I am Spanish because I feel like that. (Male, p. 17, age 35).

I forge my identity depending on the place where I am living (Female, p. 2, age 34).

The image that others forge about someone could affect the individual in many ways and, in this case, the negative perception that Spaniards seem to have about Romanians cause them to not be proud of their origins. In the same thought, Beiruti (2008) asserted that identity is forged with various aspects, that is, mental representations (what the migrant thinks about others, what others think about him or her, such as in previous experiences); internal and external factors (socio-economic), and rejection to the precedent identity. Similar findings are provided by the research done by Marcu (2011), in which Romanians felt discrimination and marginalization.

For Memmi, the more an identity is affirmed, the more it is threatened (2004:133, my translation), which means that identity is already in danger. The high level of Romanians, believing to present an identity more filled with Spanish parameters, would depend on stereotypes. Many of them brought up this topic because, as reported by them, Romanians are not well seen in Spain.

People are mean and we are judged by the things that other individuals from my country do. Therefore, I sometimes feel ashamed of being Romanian (Female, p. 2, age 34).

Language has been conceived as an outstanding element in their identity, considering the fact of not going back to their origin countries because they were not comfortable enough with this part of their identities. With this complexity in mind, and after having exposed the results regarding language and identity, participants were asked to address a hypothetical situation, in which they were to choose only one language for the rest of their lives.

Our results reveal that 66% of participants would choose Romanian as their only language. This shows that, even if they feel the stereotypes and even if they conceive that their identity is composed of more Spanish elements, the grand majority showed their desire to maintain their mother tongue in relation to other languages.

6. CONCLUSION

Identity, which would be hard to define as it is not composed of only one feature, embraces all the belongings that a migrant owns (Maalouf (2014). Furthermore, it would not only be the result of several circumstances that occur at the same time, but also the perception of them. As can be expected, the circumstances that we have defined such as

globalization, the concept of origin and memory, the idea of going back and the language itself produce an impact and influence over participants, although it will depend on the way in which they are perceived and internalized.

Identity is deemed to change throughout time. Le Clézio (2004) posited that a person can become a completely different person due to destiny, and we agree with this idea as identity would not be the same being that personalities also change and they will make identity alter. In this line, Memmi (2004) stated that migrants' personalities always change when living in another country, and this was substantiated by our participants as they claim that their identity has improved. The fact of recognizing that they have changed for the better, aspect corroborated by participants in the study carried out by Marcu (2011), makes them see their identity as positive.

Based on this reason, it is unlikely to solidly affirm a specific identity based on nationality since any individual will present a mix of identities that is ceaselessly ongoing. Sibony (1991) also stated that, the identity concept is composed of different identities plus all the changes which occurred from origin. This will lead us to the concept of 'betweenness' that has always been seen as a setback that migrants are forced to face. Unlike what could be expected, participants of our research see this feature as a very positive element that allows them to take the good characteristics of different cultures in order to forge a more mature and complete identity.

According to the participants of this research, language is significant since it is a part of culture; and identity is created by culture as well. They believe to have lost a high percentage of their mother tongue, and reiterate the desire of not losing it completely. Nonetheless, they do not see language as the most crucial aspect in the process of identity since, as laid out above, identity is a package of discrete elements that gain strength when happening together.

In conclusion, as Brabete & Gruia (2013) posited, we think that individuals forge their identities with a mix of countries, languages, cultures, worlds, etc. This is why identity is within the innermost feelings of the person. That being said, it is inevitable not to corroborate the relationship between language, culture and identities despite the fact that the mother tongue will not be per se strong enough to determine the identity.

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