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## Referential and vehicular languages in the process of migrant integration

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### Abstract

*In this article I examined the strategies developed by Bulgarian immigrants living in Spain in order to promote the learning of Bulgarian language and culture among their children. Starting from the incorporated cultural capital brought by immigrants in the form of habitus (Bulgarian language and culture), I analyse how this devaluated cultural capital in the migratory context is effectively reconverted in other forms of cultural capital (objectified and institutionalized) through the development of non-formal and formal courses on Bulgarian language and culture. In this analysis I show the articulation between, on the one hand, the contexts where these informal, non-formal and formal courses take place and, on the other hand, the reconversion of different forms of social and cultural capital: the initial bonding social capital between family members and close group of compatriots is effectively reconverted into bridging and linking social capital as the organization of these courses requires and contributes to the diversification of social networks. The analysis has also a gender dimension given that in most cases, and certainly in the case of Burgos, women are the main social actors and makers of these strategies. The main objective of the article is to show the relevance of social interaction and social networks in the development of reconversion strategies of different forms of social and cultural capital. In addition, the article also expects to raise more awareness towards the relevance of mother-tongue learning in the migratory context.*

**Keywords:** *Integration; migration; Bulgarian migrants; language; networks; culture.*

### Learning Referential Language and Culture

The learning of the languages and cultures of origin of the immigrant population (what I denominate referential language and culture<sup>1</sup>), has a political dimension in relationship to the way in which linguistic and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> I use the concept of 'referential place' and, by extension, 'referential language and culture' to refer to a space of belonging in which certain cultural and symbolic codes are recognized and shared as a consequence of having experienced certain historical events (e.g. fall of communism) and/or certain fundamental moments in the life of the individual (e.g. adolescence). This referential place has diffuse boundaries and variable cartographies: my country, my region, my town, my house. In the migratory context, this referential place is redefined in relationship to the duration of the migration and in relationship to the residential or relational place where their everyday life take place. In this sense, Hristov's reflection on the perception of Bulgaria among the Bulgarian historical minority resident in Odessa, shows how this perception of the referential place was transformed in the 1990s when the image of a 'mythical homeland' became an image of 'historical place' (Hristov 2015: 152). Elsewhere (Ibáñez-Angulo, 2008) I have also shown some of the ways through which Bulgarian migrants reify Bulgarian identity and culture from abroad.



diversity are included in mainstream (supranational, national, regional, local) cultural policies and in the education system through bilateral agreements and/or specific provisions. The inclusion of migrants' referential languages in the education system has been the subject of political debate on several aspects: the right to education and cultural identity, the preservation of cultural heritage, the promotion of dialogue and linguistic diversity, and the political use that is being made of this issue. In addition, several pedagogical considerations have influenced the methodology and the way in which these languages are included in the school curriculum, either as bilingual programs or as programs outside the curriculum. In the case of bilingual programs, the debate focuses on defining which centres can effectively create these bilingual programs (e.g. depending on the concentration of students with a referential language other than that of the education system). On the contrary, in the case of extracurricular programs the debate focuses on the added difficulties that these programs can generate among students: extra hours that can lead to tiredness, or a negative attitude and rejection of these programs. As Heckmann suggests, an alternative to these two approaches is to integrate these referential languages and cultures transversally into the educational system with the aim of presenting an integrated image of the immigrant population, improving their self-concept and, indirectly, their school success (Heckmann 2008: 47).

The benefits of including referential languages and cultures in the education system in order to improve school success and social integration have been elaborated by the "Theory of Interdependence" (Heckmann 2008). According to this theory, the incorporation of these courses into the curriculum is not only a question of human rights, but it also constitutes a means to combat the stigma for being linguistically inferior while contributing to increase cultural capital (Little 2010; Eurydice 2008 and 2009). However, detractors of this theory suggest that the data available cannot confirm such interdependence between teaching and learning the referential languages and cultures and school success (Little 2010; Heckmann 2008; Navas et al 2007).

In the context of the European Union, linguistic and cultural diversity has focused on what we can call 'territorial diversity', that is, cultural diversity that can be circumscribed to a geographical place within each member state. For instance, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML; Council of Europe 1992a) expressly excludes the languages of the immigrant population (Article 1). As the ECRML explanatory document indicates, "the languages covered by the Charter are essentially languages with one territory, that is to say, languages



traditionally spoken in a particular geographical area" (Council of Europe 1992b, subtitle 33.9). On the other hand, the Council of Europe does not address the learning of so-called mother languages as an element of social integration and social inclusion in the migratory context, but rather as a preparation for return to the place of origin. As stated in the Report of the European Commission of January 2015, the promotion of the origin language of the immigrant population is based on the recognition of the importance for the sons and daughters of the immigrant workers to maintain the linguistic inheritance because it facilitates their reintegration in the case of return (Council of Europe 2015: 162)<sup>2</sup>. More recently, the Third Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals launched by the European Commission in June 2016 also excludes the learning of referential languages as an element of integration, focusing on learning the language and culture of the migratory destination (European Commission 2016).

Furthermore, European policies on support for migrants' referential languages and cultures (such as Recommendation 1740 of the European Parliament on learning of the language of origin) present two main limitations because, firstly, these recommendations are not binding on individual member states and, secondly, because such support is limited to those cases "where appropriate and useful", so that support for the referential languages can be left to sui-generis interpretations and partisan politics (as the European Parliament itself acknowledges it happens) (European Parliament 2006).

In the context of the Spanish state, linguistic diversity policies have also favoured territorial languages, especially those languages which, in addition to Spanish, have been recognized in the Statutes of Autonomy as co-official languages (Basque, Catalan, and Galician). The supraterritorial cultural diversity brought by minority social groups is excluded from mainstream cultural policies and is relegated to ad hoc policies and programs (e.g. integration programs for immigrants) in which the local population rarely participates. Additionally, the emphasis of integration policies in the learning of the relational-vehicular language and culture, the Castilian and/or the co-official languages, has not taken into account the relevance of recognizing migrants' referential languages in any integration process.

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<sup>2</sup> As indicated in paragraph 12 of article 19 of the European Social Charter (revised version of 1996), the parties signing the Charter undertake: "to promote and facilitate, as far as practicable, the teaching of the migrant worker's mother tongue to the children of the migrant worker" (Council of Europe 1996).



The exclusion of migrants' referential languages in the educational system and, more broadly, the lack of support for them (Besalú 2002, Etxeberría 2005) finds its legitimacy on the national logic according to which not only there is an immanent national culture, but moreover social cohesion would depend on the maintenance and reproduction of such national culture and cultural identity, so that cultural diversity would pose a risk to such social cohesion (Ibáñez-Angulo 2016). However, social cohesion is not so much a cultural issue, as it is a social issue related to gain equal access to resources, respect and dignity, to engage in responsible participation and to the defence of social, political, and civic rights (Little 2010: 30).

It is precisely this exclusion of the linguistic and cultural diversity brought by the immigrant population from the mainstream cultural policies and from the educational system that has led to the development of different strategies to promote the learning of the language and culture of origin among the so-called 'second generation'. In the absence of a bilateral agreement between Bulgaria and Spain<sup>3</sup>, the learning of Bulgarian language and culture takes place in three differentiated learning contexts: (i) informal context of the family; (ii) non-formal context through courses organized by immigrants and immigrant associations without any official recognition; (iii) formal context when these courses are officially recognized as part of the Bulgarian school curriculum.

These learning contexts relate to different forms and patterns of social and cultural capital and to specific reconversion strategies through which the initial incorporated cultural capital in the form of habitus can be effectively reconverted in objectified and institutionalized cultural capital through the strengthening and diversification of social networks and social capital.

### **Informal Learning Context**

Knowledge of referential language and culture is one of the most characteristic forms of incorporated cultural capital, habitus (Bourdieu 2001: 140), that the migrant population brings to their migratory destinations. As a form of incorporated cultural capital, knowledge of the Bulgarian language in the migratory context of Spain is a devalued capital insofar as it does not constitute the vehicular language and, therefore, it is difficult to reconvert into other forms of cultural, social and economic

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<sup>3</sup> In Spain there are only two bilateral agreements: one with Morocco (Arabic Language and Moroccan Culture Program) which started in 1980; and another with Portugal (Portuguese Language and Culture Program) which started in 1970) (Ibáñez Angulo 2016: 78-79).



capital. This form of incorporated cultural capital or habitus is important, however, in order to generate horizontal links between family members and compatriots who have also emigrated and with whom migrants interact on a regular and continuous basis (e.g. every week). These horizontal links, this social capital established from the development of close ties among individuals with similar status, with very specific norms and customs, and with continuous social interactions and which is known as bonding social capital, constitutes the basis from which most immigrants begin to weave, to extend and consolidate their social networks (D'Angelo et al. 2015). Moreover, these relationships constitute the basis for the reconversion of such bonding social capital into other forms of social capital through the constitution of associations of Bulgarians in the migratory context (i.e. bridging social capital).

The learning of the language and culture of origin among the sons and daughters of the immigrant population constitutes a fundamental aspect in the daily life of migrant families. The so-called second generation acquires knowledge of the Bulgarian language and culture in the context of the family and in the circle of friendly relations of their parents with compatriots. In this informal setting there is not a specific methodology, often using pedagogical materials that families bring themselves from Bulgaria and, in some cases, utilizing the same textbooks with which their parents studied and which are most often obsolete (especially in the case of post-Communist societies such as Bulgaria).

However, despite the efforts of parents to teach and use the Bulgarian language, it is quite common that the second generation does not value and does not use the referential language of their fathers and mothers given that their daily life is carried out in the relational-vehicular language (Castilian and/or other co-official languages), and that the knowledge of Bulgarian language is devalued in the everyday life. Thus, a common situation is that the interaction between brothers and sisters is in the relational-vehicular language of the migratory context while the interaction with the parents is in Bulgarian; it is also not unusual that parents speak Bulgarian with their sons and daughters, but that they respond in the vehicular (e.g. Castilian).

### **Non-Formal Learning Context**

Non-formal learning contexts can be defined as those learning contexts that do not lead to the official recognition and certification of the subjects studied, regardless their more or less fixed schedule, contents, methodology or timing.



The development of horizontal social networks is fundamental for the organization of non-formal courses of Bulgarian language and culture in relationship to two aspects. Firstly, these social links allow parents to realize that not only *my* sons and daughters do not use the Bulgarian language, but that the same condition also affects other families. And secondly, these networks contribute to give the Bulgarian language a strong identity dimension, so that the loss of the Bulgarian language among the second generation transcends purely linguistic competence (e.g. the language used among family members and among the group of friends), settling in the symbolic field of identity and considering it as a cultural asset, as a common and referential place. In this sense, the knowledge and use of Bulgarian language and culture becomes a kind of moral obligation to cultural heritage, to the *origins*.

Fears that the second generation will lose their cultural referential are common among migrants. However, while some family groups will try to install such referential culture among their children, most Bulgarian families consider that it is *normal* and to certain extent *expected* that their children prefer to use the vehicular language and culture and their lack of interest, even rejection towards the referential culture of their progenitors. There are several aspects that could explain the rejection of so-called second generation towards their parents' referential language and culture: the instrumental value given to language and culture, the focus of integration policies in learning the vehicular language, and the Bulgarian social imaginary that identifies migratory experience with upward social mobility. Indeed, this social imaginary is manifested in the linguistic field with a rejection of the referential Bulgarian language, as in those cases in which Castilian becomes the preferred spoken language among Bulgarians in order to show that not only linguistic competence in Spanish language has been acquired, but also that one has acquired a higher status. As a result, most families show little or no interest in having their sons and daughters learn and use Bulgarian language and culture, privileging the study of other more *valuable* languages such as English and German. Indeed, as I will show, the number of these children who participate in these courses in Spain is very low, accounting to less than 20% of children of Bulgarian background.

The organization of non-formal courses arises from social networks (bonding and bridging social capital) developed by the Bulgarian population in the local context and, especially, from associations created by Bulgarians and by the social networks constituted by Bulgarian mothers, what Herman & Jakobs (2015) denominate "ethnic social capital", who want that their children "learn and love the language and history of Bulgaria". It is through



these networks that the demand for the courses is first established, that the teachers are found, and that the premises to hold the classes are located.

As non-formal learning, these courses are held outside of school hours, usually four hours on Saturday mornings. Although it is always intended that the teaching staff in charge of these courses have the specific degree (as suggested by one informant, “this staff was sought in remote places, in towns”), in those cases where no such teacher could be found, s/he is selected from already established social networks searching for those individuals who have a training and/or related experience in teaching. The remuneration (symbolic) of this teaching staff is borne by the families, while the local institutions and/or associations provide the physical space, classrooms, where the courses take place.

The first non-formal Bulgarian language and culture courses in Spain<sup>4</sup> were organized in 2002 in Getafe (Madrid). These courses were not organized as a school in the proper sense of the term, but rather as a gathering of boys and girls to learn and speak Bulgarian. Consequently, there was not a specific curricular project, neither there was a follow-up of the academic results nor a specific methodology. The classes were held at the premises facilitated by the City Council of Getafe thanks to an agreement with the Bulgarian association that organized the courses and they were free of charges.

A different case is the Bulgarian language and culture courses organized by associations of Bulgarians abroad and funded by the Bulgarian Language and Culture Program sponsored by the Bulgarian government. Even though it is the Bulgarian government who finances these courses, there is not any kind of official recognition or certification. Indeed, the Program is also often used to finance other cultural activities such as dance or music folk groups, as well as to organize activities on the mayor national Bulgarian holidays (e.g. March 3 Independence Day and May 24, day of Cyrillic Alphabet and Bulgarian language). The only requirement to access this type of funding is that the applicant is a registered association within the official SABA (State Agency of Bulgarians Abroad). As regards to criteria of eligibility, besides the availability of funding (especially in a time of crisis), the project has to meet the general objective of the annual call: “Supporting the study of Bulgarian language and literature, history of Bulgaria and geography of Bulgaria from the preparatory group up to the 12th grade, among children

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<sup>4</sup> See Ibáñez-Angulo (2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012); Markova (2006, 2010); Slavkova (2010) for detailed accounts on other aspects of the lives of Bulgarian migrants in Spain.



of Bulgarians living abroad” (Program on Bulgarian Language and Culture 2016).

Through this annual program, the Bulgarian government supports projects aimed at promoting the Bulgarian language and culture through the provision of school material and economic resources which, in the opinion of all those interviewed, are not enough to meet the needs of the courses and, consequently, families have to collaborate with a symbolic tuition (about € 20 / year). Projects are only valid for one year which means that associations in the diaspora interested in carrying out cultural activities financed by this Program have to apply every year, always fearing, as one interviewee pointed out, “that there is not enough funding and that the project cannot continue”. According to the vice-president of the Association of Bulgarian Schools outside Bulgaria, ABUCH<sup>5</sup>, the main limitations of the Program arise from the fact that Bulgarian courses and schools financed through the program do not issue official certifications and from the lack of a follow-up that evaluates the results obtained by the students and the school. In practice, this means that each school follows its own curriculum and that there have been some cases of corruption (e.g. registering students who never took part in these courses).

The first Bulgarian school in Spain to be financed through the Program was created in Madrid in 2003 under the auspices of association Aibe Balkan. In the city of Burgos, the first non-formal Bulgarian language courses financed by this Program began in 2010 under the auspices of Bulgarian association Khan Kubrat located in Burgos, an association activated by a group of around 10-14 Bulgarian women who, in a sense, became the guardians of Bulgarian traditions in this migratory context. These courses were held on Saturday mornings in the premises facilitated by the City Council. As suggested by the teacher who was in charge of these courses, a standard curriculum was not followed “there was no specific educational project and children learnt by playing [...] they enjoyed the classes very much”. Due to different issues the association Khan Kubrat ended up dissolving in 2011, and it was not until year 2013 that these courses restarted again. From 2013 to 2015, the absence of a Bulgarian association in Burgos that could sponsor the project, courses were taught under the auspices of association Stara Planina in the nearby town of Valladolid that also organized courses in Valladolid and Palencia. However, being dependent from another association was not satisfying for this group

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<sup>5</sup> The Association of Bulgarian Schools outside Bulgaria, ABUCH, was constituted in 2007. Its main objectives are (i) the fulfilment of the Bulgarian constitutional mandate to study the Bulgarian language; (ii) the preservation of the Bulgarian language and identity outside Bulgaria; and (iii) the development of a common approach for the teaching of Bulgarian language and culture in the diaspora (ABUCH 2017).



of women who wanted to create their own school in Burgos; to this end in 2015 they created the association Rila and the Bulgarian school Rayna Knyaginya which currently enrolls 42 students and has been financed by the Bulgarian Program on Language and Culture for the last two school years (2015-2016).

One of the main difficulties faced by these families who want their children to know Bulgarian language and culture is the lack of available classrooms that meet the required teaching and learning needs. For instance, in the case of Burgos, during the first two years in 2010 and 2011, courses were initially held at the premises offered by the City Council. Yet, due to new urban ordinances that prohibit the transfer of public spaces for more than three continuous months, they were forced to find new ones. Moreover, given that in Burgos there was not an association that supported the courses from 2013 to 2015 (as it happened in other towns, where courses took place in the premises of the Bulgarian cultural association that organizes them), they had to ask private and public institutions that could grant them the needed classrooms. During the school years 2013-2015, when the Bulgarian school in Burgos was sponsored by the association in Valladolid, the courses took place in the premises provided by local organizations, mainly the Catholic Church, thanks to personal contacts and networks developed by this group of women (bridging social capital). In these two years, courses changed their location twice: in academic year 2013-2014 courses were held at the dining room of the Church of St. Paul (a space that did not meet the requirements of a classroom “it did not have a blackboard”), and in academic year 2014-2015 they met at the Catechesis Classrooms of the Church of St. Julian. In both cases, a symbolic donation of € 30/€ 40 per month was given to the Church “as a way of thanking and participating with expenses, such as heating”. During academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, after the official constitution of the association Rila, these courses took place on Saturday mornings from 10.00 to 14.00 in two classrooms offered by the Catholic school Maristas thanks to personal relationships of the director of the Bulgarian school with one of the school’s teachers.

Besides its obvious didactic and cultural dimension, the organization of these non-formal courses also facilitates the development of new forms of socialization, new social ties (e.g. friendship) and social activities (e.g. celebrations) that transcend the objectives of the program. Taking the sons and daughters to school and having a coffee with other fathers and mothers, having a group of whatsapp, contribute to diversify social networks facilitating the reconversion of different forms of social capital. In this sense, these non-formal courses constitute effective strategies for the



strengthening and reconversion of social capital, both in vertical and horizontal movements. Vertical reconversion strategies of social capital (from bonding social capital to bridging and linking social capital), include links with civil society associations and local institutions for the transfer of spaces as well as links with Bulgarian institutions (the Bulgarian Embassy in Madrid, the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad -ABA- intermediary between the diaspora and the Bulgarian state) necessary to apply to the Program on Bulgarian Language and Culture. Horizontal reconversion strategies of social capital include links to other associations and fellow citizens living in other Spanish cities to see how they have resolved same or similar issues and, in some cases, to organize joint activities (e.g. celebration of the Bulgarian Day of Cyrillic Alphabet).

Moreover, the organization of these non-formal courses in Bulgarian language and culture outside the family context involves the effective reconversion of different forms of cultural capital. The reconversion of incorporated cultural capital into objectified cultural capital takes place when Bulgarian culture and language become a kind of a cultural asset that must be safeguarded among the following generations and against the enculturation strategies that migrants' children face in the migratory context. At the same time, the organization of these courses also requires to acquire new form of cultural capital, a know-how in the form of submission of applications, deadlines, and requirements.

### **Formal Learning Context**

The institutionalization of non-formal Bulgarian language and culture courses and schools in official schools of Bulgarian language and culture (institutionalized cultural capital) has been a medium- and long-term goal among those who organize and participate in them. This institutionalization is perceived as positive fact in so far as it gives the second generation the possibility of obtaining two diplomas (one from the state where they live plus the Bulgarian) at the end of primary and secondary education. In practical terms the Bulgarian "training certificate" means that they could be integrated in the Bulgarian education system without any further examination and that they can validate it in the labour market. Also, this institutionalization could be very relevant among Bulgarian historical minorities living in nearby states and who are not Bulgarian citizens (e.g. in Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova) in the case that the Bulgarian government decides to implement a "citizenship test" (a kind of integration contract as it exists in other European states) through which individuals aspiring to obtaining Bulgarian citizenship must demonstrate a knowledge



of the history, culture and political structure of Bulgaria and show its commitment to Bulgaria (SABA, 2014).

The creation of official schools in the diaspora is supported by several normative and legislative dispositions; however, it was not until 2011 that specific legislation in this issue has been implemented. Indeed, even though both the Constitution of Bulgaria (1991) and the Law of Bulgarians living outside Bulgaria (2000)<sup>6</sup> contemplate the right of Bulgarians living abroad to study Bulgarian language and culture as well as the role of Bulgarian government in supporting these courses, there was not a specific legal provision for the official certification of these courses besides de Program already mentioned.

The Decree 334 (2011) that regulates Bulgarian official schools abroad is the result of the reform of the Education Act in 2010 which generated an stimulating debate among the Bulgarian diaspora regarding the ways in which these official schools of Bulgarian language and culture outside Bulgaria should be implemented. Even though, as I will show, Bulgarian schools abroad were not included within the final draft of the Education Act, the debate meant the visibility of the Bulgarian diaspora, especially ABUCH (Association of Bulgarian Schools outside Bulgaria), and its commitment to Bulgarian language and culture. The main points to be discussed were the naming of schools outside Bulgaria, the need for an adapted curriculum, the qualification of teachers and the non-compulsory schooling of Bulgarian children in the diaspora.

As regards the designation and status of official Bulgarian schools outside Bulgaria, there was a kind of 'terminological discrepancy' about the name and character of these schools. Different options were proposed: "diplomatic schools" (yet, most of these schools are not directly linked to the embassy or consulate), "state schools" (but it was an inconsistency given that schools are physically located in other states), and "public schools" which was the term favoured by ABUCH: "Bulgarian Public School outside Bulgaria". However, the final wording opted for "Bulgarian Sunday Schools Abroad", a denomination that did not satisfy almost anyone.

Regarding teacher qualifications, ABUCH demanded that the teaching staff of Bulgarian schools abroad (regardless of their official or unofficial status) had the same qualification as the teaching staff in Bulgaria, a

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<sup>6</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (1991) in its article 36 states that the study and use of the Bulgarian language is a right and an obligation of Bulgarian citizens. Also, Article 11 of the Bulgarian Law on Bulgarians Living Outside the Republic of Bulgaria (2000), states that the Bulgarian institutions should support the study of Bulgarian language and literature, history and geography among the Bulgarian population residing outside Bulgaria through the provision of teaching staff, teacher training programs and material resources.



demand that was finally accepted. As regards to the school curriculum, ABUCH proposed a curricular adaptation for Bulgarian schools abroad in order to facilitate the process for students who already follow the school curriculum of the state where they live and for whom Bulgarian language and culture courses constitute a kind of extracurricular activity. In addition, this proposal also included a flexible synchronization through online courses for those cases in which there was no registered association that could raise the necessity of a school and/or in those cases in which the minimum number of ten students required could not be reached. Even though the curricular adaptation was recognized, there is not yet a specific adaptation for online courses.

With respect to the mandatory character of these courses, ABUCH also opposed the initial compulsory nature of these courses for all Bulgarian citizens under the age of 16 (as it is the case of compulsory education in Bulgaria) in two respects: first, the extra work for students who had to follow both the Bulgarian curriculum and the curriculum of the state where they live; and second, the fact that this compulsory nature could interfere with the legislation of the state where they live and where children under 16 are already integrated in the school system. It was precisely the impossibility of creating two different legal frameworks for Bulgarian students in Bulgaria and outside Bulgaria that constituted the main argument used by the Bulgarian government not to include schools outside Bulgaria under the Education Act.

Thus, even though Bulgarian schools outside Bulgaria were not included in the final version of the Education Act, the final section on "Supplementary Provisions 1.b.2" (Public Education Act 2010), included the possibility of opening Bulgarian schools abroad that should be organized by the Ministry of Education, but without specifying how these schools will be constituted. One year after the promulgation of the Educational Act, the Decree 334 on "Bulgarian Sunday Schools Abroad" (Bulgarskite Nedelni Uchilishta v. Chuzhbina) adopted by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers on December 8, 2011, gave the necessary guidelines to the constitution of such Sunday schools guaranteeing their funding, defining the results that should be obtained and certifying the curriculum that the students should follow. As mentioned above, the Decree includes some of the proposals made by ABUCH, such as the required qualifications for teachers and the curricular adaptation of these courses.

Bulgarian courses on language and culture wishing to be integrated within this Decree and, henceforth ensure their funding without having to apply to annual funding (as it is the case with the Program of Language and Culture), have to compile with certain regulations given that it is no longer



just about organizing courses, and/or opening a school, but about managing an official school with legal and institutional support. In order to be included in Decree 334, Bulgarian schools abroad must meet a number of requirements (some of which are very similar to those established by the Program on Language and Culture): schools must be under the auspices of a Bulgarian Association officially registered with the Bulgarian Abroad Agency (SABA), the school must be functioning for a period of at least three years before applying for funding under this decree, there has to be a minimum of 10 students enrolled, teachers must have the same qualifications as those required in Bulgaria, classrooms have to be well equipped with blackboard, desks and ventilation, and the school shall be able to show the results obtained in previous years (students enrolled, activities developed, examinations and grades obtained by the pupils). Even though the resources obtained through the Decree 334 are higher than those obtained through the Program (teachers' salaries, textbooks and other materials such as maps and music), the funding is still not enough to face the expenses and families still have to collaborate with a symbolic fee (as they do when the courses are not official).

The first official school financed through Decree 334 was created in Madrid in 2013 by the association Balkan with the name Ivan Rilski. In Burgos, the school Rayna Knyaginya obtained official certification in June 2017. According to the director of the school, through this institutionalization "we have reached the maximum level of schools in Bulgaria".

According to the latest data published for 2016 and 2017, most of the Bulgarian schools in Spain are funded by Decree 334 (forty-three schools for the 2016-2017 school year and 48 for 2017-2018), while only seven schools have been funded by the Language and Culture Program for the 2016-2017 school year. It is significant that a large part of the schools financed by Decree 334 are located in new migratory destinations of the Bulgarian population (Germany, United Kingdom and especially in Spain where schools financed by this Decree constitute a quarter of all Bulgarian schools financed in this way in the world) and in the United States (which is a migratory destination since the beginning of the 20th century). By contrast, a large proportion of the schools financed by the Program are located in territories where the Bulgarian historical minorities reside, especially Ukraine (Odessa region), Moldavia and Serbia. Historical minorities apply for funding for the Program and not for the Decree because they are not so much interested in opening schools for their children but in developing other kinds of cultural activities, such as folk and dance groups.



According to an interview with the vicepresident of ABUCH, the total number of Bulgarian students who benefit from these Bulgarian schools in Spain amounts to more than 3000, which is a very small number given that the potential demand for these courses is much larger: “almost 22,000 Bulgarian children living in Spain are not learning Bulgarian, which can be a problem when they return to Bulgaria”<sup>7</sup>. The same can be said for the case of Burgos, which would have a potential demand of about 100 students but only half of them participate in Bulgarian courses. Moreover, in a recent interview held in August 2017 with the director of the school in Burgos, she pointed out that even though the school is now able to issue official training certifications, students registration has diminished and the minimum number of students required has not yet been reached and that, therefore, the success of this school is at risk<sup>8</sup>.

### **Reconversion Strategies of Social and Cultural Capital**

As I have mentioned, Bulgarian associations are responsible for organizing the courses, assessing the demand for teachers and other material resources, seeking the classrooms, and ensuring coordination between Bulgarian institutions and the Bulgarian population that demands this education. In other words, the learning of Bulgarian language and culture is closely linked to the development of social networks formed in the migratory context that are capable of mobilizing bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital, diversifying social relationships that include a good number of social agents who belong to different (social, economic, cultural, political) status and with whom daily interaction is not required.

In the last instance, this reliance on associations of the civil society means that, as in the case of Burgos, the origin of these schools is located in a small group of people, usually women (between seven and ten) who interact regularly (bonding social capital), who have developed broader social networks (often personal) with individuals of different status with

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<sup>7</sup> Although the Bulgarian population living in Spain has experienced a steady decline since 2012 (consequence of the economic crisis and the rise of unemployment), this decline should not be interpreted as a definitive return to Bulgaria (Ivanova 2012; 2015). In fact, in many cases the horizon of a permanent return to Bulgaria has not been considered as a plausible option and a new migration project has been initiated in other states such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada or the United States. According to the information gathered in the interviews “many Bulgarians have left; but they have not returned to Bulgaria”. This decline of Bulgarian population in Spain has affected the remittance flows from Spain (Roig & Recaño-Valverde 2012) as it has happened in other contexts (Sirkeci 2012).

<sup>8</sup> In the global context, students’ participation in these courses is also low. As Kamelia Konakchieva pointed out in the context of the Annual Conference of Bulgarian Schools Abroad (July 2016), “90% of Bulgarian children living abroad do not study their mother language” (Bulgarian National Radio, BNR 2016).



whom they interact in specific spaces (bridging social capital) and who have at the same time developed even broader social networks that include social agents with whom they interact only in bureaucratic contexts (linking social capital). In terms of cultural capital, it means that this group of women has made it possible to effectively reconvert incorporated cultural capital into objectified and institutionalized forms of cultural capital and, ultimately, in economic capital (e.g. optimization of human resources that enables the Bulgarian population in the diaspora obtain the diploma that accredits them to teaching these courses and thus be able to develop their professional career). The following table shows the interrelationships among the three learning contexts of the referential language and the reconversion and diversification of the different types of social and cultural capital.

Learning context	Informal	Non-Formal	Formal
Social capital	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Cultural capital	Incorporated	Objectified	Institutionalized

This dependence on civil society organizations, although remarkable, can nonetheless be an impediment in those contexts in which a minimum number of students cannot be recruited and/or in contexts in which there are no social networks capable of activating and diversifying different forms of social capital and where there are not entrepreneurial individuals who want to lead the process. As indicated by the women who have contributed to the school project in Burgos, “we are proud to have participated in this initiative but its success is due to the hard work of the current director”.

The interest of the Bulgarian government in funding these schools should be seen in relationship to the Bulgarian government's policies (e.g. Bulgarian Citizenship Act), seeking to attract the young and educated Bulgarian population living outside Bulgaria<sup>9</sup> and to inculcate Bulgarian national consciousness among them (Ilareva 2015; Ivanova 2012, 2015; Smilov & Jileva 2009; 2013). As suggested by Georgi Pirinski (President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria from 2005-2009) in an interview with ABUCH “Bulgarian families living outside Bulgaria should educate their

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<sup>9</sup> The decline in population in Bulgaria since the 1990s is one of the most significant challenges facing the Bulgarian state. The causes of such negative growth are high emigration, high mortality and a low birth rate. The emigration of young people between 20-39 years of age is of key importance because it is generating the lack of a qualified and unqualified working people, which the Bulgarian government tries to remedy through policies of attraction to the so-called 'historical minorities' (Krasteva et al., 2011).



children in such a way as to prepare them for easy reintegration when they return to Bulgaria [reintegration which is] of vital importance for the near future of Bulgaria and for the cohesion and integration of Bulgarian society” (ABUCH).

A fundamental question that would require further research relates to the way in which these schools contribute to the reproduction of a specific version of Bulgarian identity in the migratory context in relationship to the denomination of the schools, and to the form in which certain historical episodes (especially the centuries under Ottoman rule) and certain Bulgarian minorities (especially Roma and Turkish) are represented in the curriculum (e.g. textbooks). In the fieldwork that I have carried out in Burgos I have been able to observe a certain contradiction between, on the one hand, the opinions of the interviewed women who point out that in the migratory context, ethnic identity not only is irrelevant but that “the school does more to eliminate the inequalities between different ethnic groups than all social integration programs”, and, on the other hand, the fact that all schools and associations have a denomination that enhances the achievements of the Slavic-Orthodox population to the detriment of the Roma and Turkish population, and the fact that school celebrations are also exclusively linked to the majority (Slav) ethnic group.

### **Final Remarks**

Whereas linguistic diversity is considered as a positive fact, and often an endangered one, the linguistic diversity provided by migrants is seldom, if ever, taken into account when approaching issues of social integration, school success, or human resources brought by migrants. Support for linguistic diversity and for referential languages is usually excluded from programs on social integration in relationship to several aspects, such as, first, the emphasis of integration policies on adaptation and assimilation although using the politically correct term of ‘integration’; second, emphasis of linguistic policies on territorial languages and disregard for supra-territorial linguistic diversity (e.g. Roma language); third, legislation at different levels (European, state, local governments) that privilege the vehicular language vis-à-vis referential languages; and fourth, the pervasiveness of national logic that reproduces a sociocultural imaginary which understands cultural diversity as opposed to social cohesion. As regards to school success among migrants’ children, most research and efforts on this topic have focused on the relevance of knowing the school’s vehicular language (e.g. organization of support courses); comparatively, however, very little research has been conducted in order to ascertain the



positive effects of including migrants' referential languages in the school curriculum. Regarding the workforce, with the exception of high-skilled migrants, the jobs that most migrants perform in the migratory context can be included within so-called low-skilled jobs that do not take into account the language skills of the immigrant population in non-hegemonic languages and which too often leads to a significant loss of human resources.

However, the linguistic diversity provided by migrants constitutes a source of social and cultural capital. As I have shown in the previous pages, the implementation of referential language courses and culture has a relevant social dimension given that these schools are constituted thanks to the social networks developed by migrants in the migratory context. Through the organization of these language and culture courses, migrants address several issues: first, they respond to the cultural assimilation among migrants' children and to their fears of losing one's referential language and culture; second, they combat the stigma associated with the referential languages of the immigrant population; third, they contest the absence of a cultural policy in Spain that takes into account cultural and linguistic diversity (the languages of origin are excluded from mainstream cultural policies and the educational system); fourth, they anticipate a return to Bulgaria (permanent return or in the form of short but continuous trips over time); and fifth, they improve the position of their children in the labour market (double Spanish and Bulgarian diplomas).

The teaching and learning of languages and cultures of origin can be analyzed in terms of the (horizontal and vertical) reconversion of different forms of social and cultural capital. As I have shown in the previous sections, while there is a reconversion of incorporated cultural capital (*habitus*) into objectified (cultural) and institutionalized capital (accreditation), different forms of social capital are also activated: from an original network composed almost exclusively by compatriots (bonding social capital), towards more diversified social networks that include people with different status and origins (bridging social capital) as well as relationships with people with whom migrants interact in quite specific (often institutional) contexts (linking social capital).

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