The inclusion process of young Romanians in Catalonia (Spain): The relationship between participating in classes of L1, self-identification, and life-satisfaction

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We analyse the influence of attending or not attending classes of the language of origin in self-identification and in life-satisfaction. In addition, we analyse how these elements are related to the perception of integration of young immigrants of Romanian origin in a multilingual and multicultural context like that of Catalonia (Spain). We present a mixed method study. A total of 131 young people of Romanian origin (74 females and 57 males), aged between 12 and 18 years completed a questionnaire. We also carried out 34 in-depth semi-structured interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative results prove that attending or not RLCC courses does not have a significant influence on self-identifications. Results coincide in that young people self-identify more with their ethnical group of origin; however, a tendency towards hybridisation is revealed as the length of stay increases. Diversely, those who present more self-identification with Catalonia and less with their origin, felt more comfortable in the receiving country. Expectations perceived from these young people point mainly towards the need to assimilate and abandon who they are in order to feel more at ease, an element that may encompass stressful psychological factors, resulting in discomfort and conflict.

Keywords: Integration, Self-identification, life-satisfaction, heritage Language courses

Introduction

In the last 20 years, Spain has received great numbers of immigrant population; the equivalent of 22.8% of the total Spanish population, according to 2017 data (INE 2017). Our study has been carried out in Catalonia, one of the communities with the largest numbers of immigrants. IDESCAT (2018) data show that immigrant population amounts to 14.2% of the total population. The nationalities with the largest numbers are Moroccans in first place, followed by Romanians and then Chinese (IDESCAT 2017).
If we look into the group aged 15 to 19 years, the total immigrant population is 4.7% (IDESCAT 2017).

The reality of these young people of immigrant origin has changed in recent years, becoming more complex, as it includes people belonging to the second and 1.5 generations (Rumbaut 2004), unaccompanied immigrant minors, and refugees (Generalitat de Catalunya 2014, Secretaria d’Igualtat, Migracions i Ciutadania 2016). In the first two cases, the literature reveals that they experience stress caused by a change in migrating expectations contrasting with those of their parents, who abandoned their countries in search of better labour opportunities (Kennedy and Macneela 2014; Kunst and Sam 2013; Marcu 2012; Portes and Rivas 2011).

This diversity puts social cohesion in the spotlight as one of the leading challenges faced by European societies. Integration is a pressing need in increasingly multilingual and multicultural societies, as a means to construct spaces where the generations descending from immigrants can feel part of the society that has received them (IFRC 2011; Futurelab Europe 2015; Faas 2007; Plewa and Caroli 2013). In the pursuit of building cohesive societies it is relevant to consider that the construction of self-identifications, life-satisfaction in the host society and how this society welcomes and capitalizes the background of people of immigrant origin, like their language, are relevant dimensions in the process of integration. These are the elements we address in our study.

Our study offers new insights regarding the intricate relationships between self-identifications and life-satisfaction and the essential moderator role played by an educational program of heritage language maintenance in a context characterised by a considerable influx of migration in a short period of time, such as the Catalan society.

**Theoretical Framework**
The life-satisfaction feeling of young migrants in the host society

In order to have a better understanding of the adaptation of these young people into the host society, it is necessary to address the process of acculturation they follow. In this sense, the Theory of Acculturation (Berry 1997, 2005, 2009; Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault and Senécal 1997) is a reference framework. Berry (1997) establishes four forms in which the task of entering a new society is undertaken, depending on the adoption of the dominant culture and the maintenance of the heritage culture: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The strategy of acculturation is not a choice made by the individual, but rather a result of the interactions between beliefs, expectations, and cultural practices they participate in (Kennedy and Macneela 2014).

In this study we focus on the sociocultural adaptation involved in the acquisition of the necessary abilities and competences to face the cultural context of the host society (Kunst and Sam 2013). We understand that the process of adaptation involves cultural and psychological changes and a mutual accommodation between the individual and the group; this includes learning other languages, other patterns of behaviours related to eating, dressing, and the types of social relationships (Berry 2005). How this process of adaptation is developed will have an incidence on their life satisfaction. Moreover, some elements such as: attachment to the inherited culture, pressure from parents and peer groups, contradictions between the expectations of behaviour in the public and private domains (Ward Stuart and Kus 2015) and their life expectations and wishes (Chowdhury and Obaidul Hamid 2016) become stressful and make life satisfaction difficult.

In this way, the process of adaptation and the acculturation strategies used have an impact on life-satisfaction. This was true in Neto’s study (1995) in which those who opted for integration strategies presented better mental health that those who resisted, separated or experienced marginalisation. However, more recent studies show that
adopter la culture majoritaire au détriment de la culture héritée génère une plus grande satisfaction de la vie dans la société hôte (Lefringhausen et Marshall 2016). Cela fait naître une réflexion nécessaire dans les sociétés contemporaines quant à la modélisation d'intégration qu'elles promeuvent.

Enfin, et en lien avec ce qui a été dit ci-dessus, le discrimination perçue est un autre élément à considérer. Les études indiquent que ceux qui conservent leur culture héritée au détriment de la culture de la société hôte tendent à percevoir un plus grand de discrimination. La discrimination a un impact, en particulier sur le bien-être psychologique des descendants d'immigrants (Perreira et Ornelas 2011), et elle est exercée parmi les groupes d'égaux, qui jouent un rôle significatif dans le processus d'acculturation des jeunes immigrants (Reitz, Asendorpf et Motti-Stefanidi 2015).

**Constructing multiple self-identifications in a multicultural society**

En ligne avec ce qui a été dit, l'identification est également un aspect fondamental dans le processus d'adaptation des jeunes immigrants, car elle est liée à la fois au psychologique et à la socioculturelle (Stoessel, Titzmann et Silbereisen 2014). Cela est essentiel dans le cours d'intégration dans la société hôte, dans laquelle se sentant valorisé et reconnu a un impact sur le bien-être et favorise une intégration plus positive (Portes, Vickstrom et Aparicio 2011).

Dans ce sens, il est important de savoir de quelle manière nous construisons notre identité sociale – comprise comme la connaissance, la valeur et la signification émotionnelle de l'individu en tant que membre d'un groupe social (Tajfel 1974a, 1974b, 1982).

Cela n'est cependant pas un processus complexe pour les jeunes d'origine immigrée en raison de la diversité des contextes dans lesquels ils participent, car ils se trouvent à un stade où ils transpercent au même temps différents cultures et langues. Les adolescents d'immigrants en particulier se trouvent, par exemple, à un stade
where they prefer the socially dominant group, reducing their identification with the group of origin (Geerlings, Verkuyten and Thijs 2015).

A hybrid cultural self-identification (Marcu 2012, 2014; Petreñas, Lapresta and Huguet, 2016) constructed as individuals participate in the different sociocultural contexts and in which the feeling of being someone is shown with more intensity (Portes and Rivas 2011; Phinney, Jacoby and Silva 2007; Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 2003). Yet, many still relate their self-identification at a symbolic level with their origin in order to keep belonging to their group of reference (Espinosa 2005; Lenard 2010; Seggie and Sanford 2010; Trumbull and Rothstein-Fisch 2011).

In spite of the process mentioned, studies show a gradual replacement of the inherited culture by the host society’s (Hochman and Davidov 2014) with a view to getting greater life satisfaction (Carpentier and de la Sablonnière 2013; de la Sablonnière, Saint-Pierre, Taylor and Annahatak 2011).

The value of the inherited language in the host society

Language is another key element for social integration, as learning the host society’s language often leads to changes in self-identification (Lapresta et al. 2009). Similar studies with second generations show that there is a progressive tendency to use the host society’s language in most life contexts, relegating the heritage language to the family context (Petreñas, Lapresta and Huguet 2016; Rasinger 2012).

Taking into account everything mentioned above, it is worth noting that valuing the culture of people of immigrant origin is especially relevant in their process of adaptation (Huguet and Madariaga 2005). Different studies show that offering an education to the young people of immigrant origin which takes into account their culture of origin and their history is associated with better beliefs and better predisposition to inter-group relationship (Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyên and Sellers...
2009) and helps enhance prestige of all languages, including those of origin (Alarcón and Parella 2013; Coelho, Oller and Serra 2013; Hornberger 2009). However, studies carried out in the Catalan context show that in spite of the high value that young people of immigrant origin give their inherited languages, they are aware that these are not valued by the host society (Alarcón 2010; Lapresta et al. 2010).

For all these reasons, the desirable scenario is that suggested by Portes and Rivas (2011), in which young people who learn the host society’s language and culture, but also preserve their own language, their values and customs, are more likely to overcome discrimination and the disadvantages suffered by their parents.

**The context of the Romanian community in Catalonia**

Keeping this in mind, in response to the increasing language and cultural diversity in the classroom, the Ministry of Education launched in 2004 the Plan for Language and Social Cohesion (Government of Catalonia 2007, 2009) with the aim of offering ways for young people of immigrant origin that joined the Catalan educational system, to develop a language competence in Catalan. The Plan also included specific programmes to work with all the languages present: Catalan, Spanish and the immigrant students’ L1, with a view to enhancing progress and social mobility (Government of Catalonia 2009, 2014). The complexity has been increasing and therefore the Government’s Plan for 2013-2016 commits to ensuring that all students, regardless of their families’ language of origin, reaches full command of the official languages (Catalan and Spanish) and at least of one foreign language. But it also commits to the promotion and maintenance of the immigrant students’ languages of origin (Departament d’Ensenyament 2017; Secretaria d’Igualtat, Migracions i Ciutadania 2017).
In view of the strong pressure that the Romanian group has in the Catalan and the Spanish school systems, a cooperation agreement was signed in 2007 between the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth and the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, to offer primary and secondary school students the possibility of attending a programme called ‘ Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation’ (RLCC). The aim of this programme is to preserve contact with the cultural and community Romanian reality. The programme seeks to facilitate the knowledge of the Romanian language and culture to young people and to preserve their identity and culture. This is an extracurricular activity, it is carried out during the academic year and is optional for young people and their families to attend. The course is organised by Romanian teachers and they follow the curriculum, textbooks and class materials provided by the Romanian Language Institute in Romania (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation 2015).

Taking into consideration this conceptual framework and the opportunity for young members of the Romanian collective to receive Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation courses, we have two objectives. The first one is to analyse what influence attending these courses on their own language and culture has in aspects as relevant as their self-identification and their life-satisfaction in the host society. The second objective is to look more deeply into the meanings young Romanians give to integration and how they relate this to their own life satisfaction in the host society.

**Methodology**

We present a mixed study, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data. We identified the effect of attending or not attending Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation classes in the development of self-identification through the application of a questionnaire. We also analysed the effect of self-identification in the variable life-
satisfaction when attending or not the RLCC course. In parallel, qualitative data give us access to the meanings that participants in this research have constructed around their self-identification and their life-satisfaction, and allow us to understand their perceptions of the process of integration in the host society (Ruiz Olabuénaga 2009; Sandín 2003).

**Participants**

The questionnaire was answered by 131 young Romanian immigrants (74 females and 57 males), with ages between 12 and 18 years, with a mean of 15.06 years (SD = 1.58). All of these students were born in Romania, and were enrolled at all levels in Catalan Compulsory Secondary Education at the time of our research. The sample included the entire population of Romanian students in secondary education who at the time were taking optional RLCC classes in Catalonia. Moreover, for the purpose of carrying out comparative analyses, classmates of these students who had not attended RLCC were also included in the sample. Overall, 43 of the participants attended these courses, while 88 did not.

The questionnaire captured socio-demographic data (e.g., gender, age, place of birth, etc.) and three variables of interest:

- Self-identification with three cultural groups: Catalan, Spanish, and Romanian. The three items consisted of a four-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent);

- Life-satisfaction was measured with an adapted version of the five-item scale developed initially by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) and frequently used since (e.g.: Berry et al., 2006). Participants responded on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). As the
scale had to be adapted to the Catalan context, its reliability was checked and proved to be satisfactory with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .85.

- Attendance at the RLCC program was measured with the help of a dichotomous item (Yes/No).

Later on, 34 semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with 19 Romanian girls and 15 boys, aged 15 to 19. All participants had been born in Romania, experienced a migration process and at the time of the study were attending secondary school in Catalonia. Out of these, 14 attended the RLCC programme and 20 did not attend. Table 1 shows this information:

Table 1. Participants’ information

| Nickname | Gender | Age | Length of stay | Own Language |
|----------|--------|-----|----------------|--------------|
| Laura    | Female | 15  | 11             | Spanish      |
| Stefana  | Female | 16  | 10             | Spanish      |
| Simona   | Female | 17  | 9              | Romanian     |
| Vlad     | Male   | 16  | 9              | Romanian     |
| Anda     | Female | 16  | 12             | Romanian     |
| Claudiu  | Male   | 15  | 8              | Romanian     |
| Roxana   | Female | 14  | 11             | Romanian     |
| Codrina  | Female | 15  | 7              | Romanian     |
| Laurentiu| Male   | 15  | 8              | Romanian     |
| Ioana    | Female | 13  | 13             | Romanian     |
| Madalina | Female | 14  | 9              | Catalan      |
| Elena    | Female | 14  | 8              | Romanian     |
| Monica   | Female | 14  | 8              | Romanian     |
| Raluca   | Female | 16  | 13             | Romanian     |
| Name     | Gender | Age | Grade | Nationality |
|----------|--------|-----|-------|-------------|
| Ana      | Female | 17  | 8     | Romanian    |
| Maria    | Female | 17  | 8     | Romanian    |
| Ilinca   | Female | 15  | 10    | Catalan     |
| Bogdan   | Male   | 16  | 3     | Spanish     |
| Irina    | Female | 16  | 7     | Romanian    |
| Tudor    | Male   | 16  | 12    | Catalan     |
| Constantin| Male  | 16  | 3     | Romanian    |
| Nicolae  | Male   | 16  | 8     | Romanian    |
| Iulian   | Male   | 18  | 12    | Spanish     |
| Stefan   | Male   | 16  | 9     | Catalan     |
| Sebastian| Male   | 16  | 7     | Romanian    |
| Carmen   | Female | 15  | 9     | Romanian    |
| Cosmin   | Male   | 17  | 14    | Romanian-Spanish |
| Daniel   | Male   | 16  | 7     | Romanian    |
| Octavian | Male   | 17  | 12    | Romanian    |
| Olivia   | Female | 18  | 8     | Romanian    |
| Mihai    | Male   | 15  | 4     | Romanian    |
| Gabriela | Female | 15  | 8     | Roma        |
| Diana    | Female | 16  | 4     | Romanian    |
| Razvan   | Male   | 14  | 12    | Romanian    |

**Procedure**

The ethical aspects acknowledged by the European Commission (2010) that refer to the preservation of the participants’ anonymity and confidentiality were observed through the use of pseudonyms, and participant consent was also obtained.
In the first phase of the study, pupils were asked to fill in a questionnaire, which contained questions regarding the variables of interest as well as demographic aspects. The language used for the entire questionnaire was Catalan, the language of instruction in the Catalan education system. The questionnaire was administered collectively and was provided in paper format. The average time students needed to complete the task was 30 minutes.

Secondly, permission was sought to interview the Romanian young people, while ensuring that the profiles of those who had not attended RLCC matched those who had. Researchers belonging to the Romanian group participated in drawing up the interview and implementing it, as well as transcribing and analysing the answers; this guarantees an analysis constructed together with the group studied and is highlighted in the data interpretation.

Data analysis
The quantitative data was analysed with the software package SPSS v.24, which allowed us to calculate the descriptive statistics, Kendall tau-b correlations and mixed-design ANOVAs.

ATLAS-TI software (v.6.0) was used for qualitative data analysis, through content theme analysis based on categories (Bardin 1986). Two groups were created depending on the participants’ attendance to the RLCC program in order to compare those who participated and those who did not. Both groups were analysed through the categories: “self-identification”, “life-satisfaction in the host society”, and the categories “perception of what it means to be integrated”, “self-perception of integration” and “discrimination” were included.

Results
The results combine/integrate quantitative and qualitative data, being organized in three sections focused on: the self-identifications depending on the RLCC attendance, the relationships between self-identifications and life-satisfaction, and the relationships of these variables with their perception of integration.

**Defining who I am in the host society**

In order to understand how participants identify with the different cultural groups in which they participate we conducted a mixed design ANOVA to capture the general of the effect of attendance at RLCC on self-identification with the three groups. Furthermore, we also provide a more in-depth analysis based on the interpretations that the participants make regarding the identifications with the three groups: Romanian, Catalan, and Spanish.

The quantitative findings are presented in Table 2, which summarizes the means and standard deviations. The group of Romanian children and teenagers studied identify with all three cultures mainly present in their lives (i.e., Catalan, Spanish, and Romanian). The results of the mixed design ANOVA, which were adjusted using the Huynh-Feldt Epsilon factor, showed that self-identification patterns did not differ between participants who attended RLCC and those who did not ($F_{(1.91, 246.11)} = 0.48, p = .610$). However, there were overall differences between the self-identifications ($F_{(1.91, 246.11)} = 44.79, p < .001$). Specifically, regardless of their attendance at RLCC, the participants identified more with the Romanian culture than with Catalan ($t = 8.29, p < .001, r = .40$) and Spanish cultures ($t = 6.48, p < .001, r = .34$). Their Spanish self-identification was also stronger than their Catalan self-identification ($t = 3.30, p = .001, r = .18$).
Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of life-satisfaction and Catalan, Spanish and Romanian self-identifications by attendance at RLCC

| Attendance at RLCC | Variables | Mean  | Standard deviation | Correlation matrix |
|-------------------|-----------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                   | 1. Life-satisfaction | 3.71  | 0.74               |                    |
|                   | 2. Catalan self-identification | 2.49  | 0.88               | 0.35*              |
|                   | 3. Spanish self-identification | 2.86  | 0.80               | 0.31* 0.45*        |
|                   | 4. Romanian self-identification | 3.65  | 0.72               | -0.14 -0.12 -0.36* |
| Did not attend    | 1. Life-satisfaction | 3.69  | 0.77               |                    |
|                   | 2. Catalan self-identification | 2.55  | 0.96               | 0.39*              |
|                   | 3. Spanish self-identification | 2.84  | 0.77               | -0.03 0.05         |
|                   | 4. Romanian self-identification | 3.49  | 0.82               | -0.28* -0.24 -0.11 |

Note: *p < .05

At qualitative level, when asked about different scenarios where people might ask them where they are from, all participants in the study responded without hesitation that they were Romanians, because they had been born in Romania, that’s where their roots are, their place of birth. We observe through their statements that their self-identification with Romania responds to ethnical ties that show an important emotional component, linked to what they see as “their origin”. However, as the analysis progresses, other important nuances with regard to their self-identification are incorporated. In this sense, when asked how they feel (regarding their identification)
their replies mainly qualify the response given to the first question, they refer to a “mixture”. A mixture that implies in most cases a self-identification with Romania, but also with Spain and with Catalonia.

Interviewer: You feel Romanian. That would have been the next question. [laugh] And why do you feel Romanian?
Anda: [laugh] I don’t know. Because going to Romania makes me feel happy, seeing my grandparents, my family, my friends there. It makes me feel... More Romanian.
Interviewer: And when you are here you feel you are Romanian as well?
Anda: Sometimes I do, sometimes I don’t. Sometimes I feel more Spanish because I always speak Spanish and all that... I feel more Spanish. But when I am with my family I feel... Romanian.
(Anda, 16 years old, attendance)

Interviewer: All right, perfect. Now think a little bit about what I’m going to ask you, thinking about yourself, how do you feel? Catalan, Spanish, Romanian, some of these, none?
Iulian: Me, honestly...
Interviewer: yes, answer honestly.
Iulian: Some of these.
Interviewer: Some of these.
Iulian: I feel half Spanish from here and half Romanian.
Interviewer: All right. Why do you feel half and half?
Iulian: Because although I have Romanian blood, I have been living here for many years, I am used to living here, and I prefer life here; I don’t know, it makes me feel like I’m from here.
(Iulian, 18 years old, not attendance)

Their stories lead us to understand that the construction of their self-identification in a different society than their original includes complex processes that cannot possibly be simplified in a dichotomous way towards self-identification with the group of origin or the host society. In the case of Catalan language, the complexity is greater, as the host society poses two different self-identifications, with Catalonia and
with Spain. Moreover, we observe in their discourses that there is no difference between those attending the RLCC course and those not attending.

**Self-identification and life-satisfaction**

Furthermore, when looking at the possible effect of RLCC attendance on life-satisfaction, it was found that Romanian children who attended and those who did not attend RLCC had similar levels of life satisfaction ($F(1, 129) = 0.02, p = .885$).

Kendall tau-b correlations (see Table 2) provided some data regarding how these self-identifications relate to life-satisfaction. Catalan self-identification seems to be the most important one in determining life-satisfaction, regardless of their RLCC attendance ($r = .35$ for those who attended and $r = .39$ for those who did not attend the RLCC program).

The results also show a moderate negative correlation between the Romanian self-identification of those who did not attend RLCC and their life-satisfaction ($r = -.28$), while the same relationship is not statistically significant for the attending group.

Furthermore, the life-satisfaction of those students who attended RLCC was also positively correlated with their Spanish self-identification ($r = .31$). This finding is in line with the positive correlation between the Catalan and Spanish self-identifications of the attending group ($r = .45$). It is worth noting that in the same group of attending students the Romanian self-identification is negatively associated with the Spanish self-identification ($r = -.36$).

**The role of self-identification in the Integration Process and Life-Satisfaction in Catalonia**

The qualitative analysis points to the importance of delving into the meaning they give to integration and the relationship between this perception and life-satisfaction, where some situations of discrimination appear. Thus, further we analyse the relationship between perception of integration and their life-satisfaction.
The participants in the study coincided in three common axes that encompass the meaning of being integrated within the host society. One of these common axes is related to the language and its domain as a communication tool. Thus, participants underline that speaking Catalan makes them feel more integrated in Catalonia, as they share the language communication channel of a group, and this allows them to be part of it. In this sense, language is a channel for communicating with the other, for socialisation in a specific social context, but also a symbol of the mastering of social relations and belonging to a society.

The second of the common axes emerges from the meaning of the concept of integration, and is related to what has been called by some “being a normal person”, and mostly interpreted as sharing customs, traditions, and following behavioural patterns set by the host society. Iulian, one of the participants in the study, uses a metaphor related to football to refer to that,

Interviewer: Yes, yes, according to you. What does it mean to you to be integrated?
Iulian: Well, being... that’s, sharing the same customs, language, tastes. Well, I think everyone has a taste of their own, a personality of their own, you know? To generalise a little, I don’t know. I am just giving you an example, I don’t know... I support Real Madrid, speaking of football, all supporting the same team; I am more integrated with the people that support my team, it happens a lot nowadays, I don’t understand why, but well, even if they support Barça... do you know what I mean? (Iulian, 18 years old, not attendance)

The metaphor provides an important underlying interpretation, which has to do with sharing a feeling of belonging to a group, a community with which one shares certain symbolisms. Feeling that I am from here does not mean that the “other” accepts that I am part of “here”, of a space that we share: the feeling that you are at home. In this conceptualisation of integration, we wonder where is the self-identification with the inherited culture. In this sense, a hint of acculturation with assimilating connotations is
perceived; being integrated involves doing what the autochthonous do. Then, where does it fit in who am I and where do I come from.

As for the third axis of analysis, integration appears in the discourse of participants as tightly tied to satisfaction, to feeling content with what the host society offers them.

When asked about their satisfaction or lack thereof in the host society, a mainstream discourse appears in the sense that they are generally satisfied; although there are some nuances that need analysed. Part of these nuances emerge when they relate satisfaction to some of the components that have been defined as “what it means to be integrated”. Thus, we find Roxana’s discourse (14 years old, attendance), who relates being surprised and uncomfortable in the host country, “I was not born here”, this hints at a certain discomfort related to the process of integration. Like Roxana, other participants affirm not feeling totally satisfied with their lives in the host society; they attribute this feeling of not being integrated, to a “rejection” response by the autochthonous. They concur in the idea that in most cases, autochthonous label them as immigrants, and also label them with more negative connotations related to Romanians as a whole. This makes it difficult for Romanian people to feel integrated and satisfied with their lives here, according to their perceptions.

Interviewer: How do Romanians like you, see all this? Do you think they share your same views? They feel satisfied...
Stefan: No, I think some are not satisfied... maybe because... friends don’t talk to them, or maybe people leave them out or something like that... or maybe they feel undervalued and then they see it differently from me.
Interviewer: They see it a little differently. And do you think they believe that people here could do something to make them feel better, or is there something they could do to feel better? How do you see it?
Stefan: Something they can do better, well, respect people here. Then the people from here, can show the same respect towards them.
The idea that people who are more or better integrated in the host society are more satisfied here appears repeatedly. Feeling valued by the “other”, as Daniel (16 years old, non attendance) was telling us, is also related to the degree of satisfaction, which is really the degree of support received from the autochthonous population, who also acknowledge them as part of the main group, and not as foreigners. Well-being, understood as satisfaction in the host society, and something they would not have in Romania, as Maria (17 years old, non attendance) and Ana (17 years old, non attendance) explain. But also for the capacity of relating to the other, feeling free, having friends, sharing, what intrinsically translates into group integration, a group that welcomes you and considers you. This is how Cosmin explains it,

Interviewer: And in which aspects do you think they are less satisfied, and in which ones more satisfied?
Cosmin: They are satisfied because they have, I mean they have enough freedom, right? And if they know the language they feel pretty much part of the family, they make new friends. Mmmm... I mean they add to their friends from Romania. It’s a good thing for them.
(Cosmin, 17 years old, non attendance)

When asked whether they feel unhappy and what the reasons are, a substantial number of participants refer to situations of discrimination they have experienced. In this sense, they explain that some people make them feel different for being foreigners; this influences their levels of satisfaction.

Interviewer: are there things you feel less happy about here?
Laura: I don’t know… the people who try to withdraw from a social group when they see that you are an immigrant, and… they don’t accept you totally.
Interviewer: Does this happen when they find out that you are an immigrant in general or when they find out that you are Romanian?
Laura: when they see that you are an immigrant in general, Romanian also … more or less.
Interviewer: has this happened to you?
Laura: yes, it has.
(Laura, 15 years old, attendance)

Many refer to the existence of racism in the host society; this is materialised in expressions such as “go back to your country” as Carmen (15 years old, non attendance) explains. Some of the situations of discrimination have to do with being rejected by the group. They also refer to experiences of school harassment as Sebastian (17 years old, non attendance) explains. These experiences happen especially during the first months after arriving in the host society; their peers harass them for being immigrants, in a period when they are most vulnerable because they haven’t mastered the language yet or are not fluent, and they haven’t yet consolidated relationships that could support them.

On the other hand, these situations of discrimination may involve the need to go unnoticed. During the interviews, participants explain situations where people they know, when they are in social situations, pretend not to be Romanian and say they are Catalan or Spanish, with the aim of avoiding situations of discrimination.

Interviewer: Do you think there are people who could say, well, I am Romanian, but I am also Catalan or I am also Spanish. Or not.
Claudiu: The majority say they are Romanian, but some even change their nationality and say they are Catalan.
Interviewer: And why do you think...
Claudiu: Why they do it?
Interviewer: They do it or...
Claudiu: For the reason I said before, because of racism, they have a bad name.
(Claudiu, 15 years old, attendance)
Hence, we see how discrimination is also a factor to be considered in the complex process of construction of self-identifications in the host society.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

One of the first observations that emerges is that in spite of the importance given by previous research to the learning of the inherited language in the host society for the process of integration (Alarcón and Parella 2013; Coelho, Oller and Serra 2013; Cummins 2002; Huguet and Madariaga 2005; Portes and Rivas 2011); quantitative results do not show differences between participants who attended the RLCC course and those who did not, regarding the construction of their self-identifications, although there is some variation regarding the interrelation patterns between self-identifications, as we will see further on. This first result leads us to wonder what the real function of this course is, and under what terms is it approached, as the answer to this could help us understand the results obtained.

If we analyse more in more depth both, quantitative and qualitative data, we can see that they identify with Romania, Spain and Catalonia. They all define themselves as Romanian, having been born in that country, but their self-identification becomes hybrid the longer they stay in the host society, in line with the research showing this key factor in the process described (Geerlings, Verkuyten and Thijs 2015). The mixture of multiple identifications they feel is an individual construction, yet also a collective construction, inserted within a definite context and dependant on interactions and who the others are (Petreñas, Lapresta and Huguet 2018). It is however important to highlight that, quantitatively, those attending the RLCC course identify more with Romania and not so much with Spain, but in general, if we compare identification with Catalonia versus with Spain, the latter is stronger. This tendency is also observed at the
qualitative level; in spite of being identified with all three, most of them grade identification prioritising Romania, then Spain and finally Catalonia.

Moreover, as we can see in the quantitative data, identification with Catalonia is related with a higher life-satisfaction among those attending the RLCC course. That is, the greater the identification with Catalonia, the greater the life-satisfaction. The same tendency takes place in the identification with Spain. Those who do not attend the course feel more Romanian the smaller their life-satisfaction is in the host society, and conversely, the greater the identification with Catalonia, the greater their life-satisfaction; this relationship, however, does not take place with their identification with Spain.

In spite of these results, the revalorisation and capitalisation of the heritage language in the host country is a substantial element to take into account when we look into how young immigrant people redefine their self-identification in the process of acculturation; it is important to guarantee strategies for integrating over assimilating (Berry 2005; Kunst and Sam 2013). In this sense, the results obtained alert us to the assimilationist model prevailing. Young Romanians perceive that being integrated involves opting for the majority language in the context, a tendency revealed by similar studies at European level (Johansson and Olofsson 2011; Rasinger 2012). Moreover, this also implies sharing a way of acting and a way of being, in which the feeling of belonging to a group leads them to assimilating with the majority group, where the heritage culture and language are blurred and they steadily lose their space (Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry and Smith, 2007). In the end, this is related to the satisfaction of feeling that the host society meets certain personal educational and professional expectations, contributing to a better quality of life.
In this sense, life-satisfaction appears linked to feeling appreciated by the other. Taking this into consideration, the participants in the study link their unrest with ethnical discrimination. Being given the label of immigrants by the autochthonous people, in spite of all their efforts to comply to what the host society expects from them, causes them unease. Processes of discrimination appear mainly in contexts with peers; this highlights the importance of peer groups among young people in Reitz, Asendorpf and Motti-stefanidi’s line of research (2015). Others, faced with discrimination, increase their rejection of who they are, abandoning their heritage language and culture and rejecting their origin (Neto 1995; Perreira and Ornelas 2011).

Moreover, perceiving integration as a non-conflictive process, where you don’t need to stop being who you are, and at the same time you feel part of a new community, generates a well-being in sociocultural aspects that in turn feeds the process of integration and the quality of life, along the lines of the evidence from previous research (Schwartz et al. 2013; Schwartz, Vignoles, Brown and Zagefka 2014; Utsey, Chae, Brown and Kelly 2002).

Finally, the study demonstrates that attending or not attending the Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation course does not have a significant influence on self-identifications with the country of origin or the cultures of the host society (feeling Spanish or feeling Catalan) as might be expected. Some precautions should be taken when generalizing these findings, considering the small quantitative sample. However, the sample included the whole population of secondary education students of Romanian origin attending the RLCC program. Future studies might benefit from higher enrolment rates. Moreover, at the qualitative level no significant differences are appreciated in the discourses of participants when defining their self-identifications. This leads us to
consider other variables that could be directly and more strongly influencing the means of self-identification.

Although the results could have been more positive, the acknowledgement of the linguistic and cultural background of these youngsters is crucial for their process of integration. Therefore, we have to consider that the RLCC course is an extracurricular activity which competes with other activities that are more appealing to teenagers and foment their social integration (e.g., sports, learning the languages of the host society, academic activities, etc.). This, as well as the relatively limited value received from the society could influence its effect. In this regard, there are new initiatives in the Catalan context to incorporate the learning of heritage languages, such as creating optional curricular subjects of Chinese and Arabic (cita). On the one hand, the new initiatives confer value and acknowledgement to the heritage cultures in the educational context, and, on the other hand, facilitate the analysis of the methodologies and contents of these programs.

Ensuring processes of integration is essential in the European multicultural and multilingual context with a view to achieving an egalitarian and cohesive society. However, a plural context at the cultural and linguistic levels such as Catalonia, with strong immigration flows over the last two decades faces several challenges, mainly in ensuring not only the integration of everyone, but also their psychological and sociocultural well-being. In this sense, rather than the inefficacy of these types of initiatives, the study highlights the evidence that the model being used at the social level leads immigrants to set aside their ethnical heritage. Furthermore, the link between identification and life satisfaction challenges the society to generate dynamics in which people of immigrant origin can develop a feeling of belonging to the host community. This would increase both life satisfaction and identification with host society. However,
we cannot disregard that they will always have a strong identification with their origin group and, thus, this background has to be acknowledged and valued at social level.

This should lead us to consider the different factors that have an influence on the promotion of the models of acculturation and promote better social integration, the psychological and social benefits of which have already largely been researched.

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