

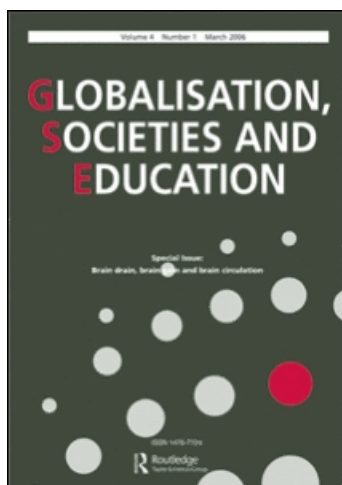
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Transmigrant families: intercultural and bilingual competences development

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This article presents the results of a research project concerned with analysing and identifying the discourses and related strategies used by Spanish–German transmigrant families to support and develop bilingual and intercultural competences stemming from their transmigratory experiences. Using the biographical-narrative approach, we reconstruct the families' migratory phases, emphasising shifting parental discourses on bilingual practices and intercultural competences in the home. After presenting the analysed empirical data, the results obtained are grouped into four broader interpretative frameworks: bilingual practice, life-world intercultural theories, social networks and 'cosmopolitanism'.

Keywords: intercultural communication; migration; family mobility; cultural background; diversity

Subject matter and theoretical background

This paper summarises the research findings of a study concerned with identifying and analysing the intercultural and multilingual strategies developed by trans-national/trans-migratory families. These strategies are based on both educational and formative experiences as well as past, present and future migratory projects.

Two universities participated in the research project: the University of Granada and the University of Hamburg. The team from Granada used an ethnographic research approach (Werner and Schoepfle 1987; Kvale 1996) focusing specifically on the use of biographical-narrative techniques (see Aguirre 1995; Pujadas 1992; De Miguel 1996; Canton 1996; Stake 1998; Connelly and Clandinin 2000; López and Pozo 2002; Bolívar, Domingo, and Fernandez 2001; Bertaux 2005). By contrast, the research team from Hamburg used bilingual sociolinguistic methods and techniques to analyse data gathered in the German context related to the use of standardised testing¹ (Reich and Roth 2004).

During group discussions related to the data the combined research approach described above emerged as a particularly useful research and analytical model to address bilingual and intercultural strategies and practices in trans-migrant contexts within social research. However it is important to bear in mind the exploratory character of the study given the limitations of the selected sample. As such, this study

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represents a preliminary inquiry into the analysis of intercultural and multilingual competences.

Much of the literature that supports this study is based on research relating to migration in a trans-migratory context. The literature focuses principally on countries within the European Union and suggests that the increased circulation of information, goods and people within and between countries of origin and places of destination, functions to generate new strategies and networks to support the transmigratory process. These strategies appear to straddle the national and cultural borders that previously enclosed intercultural and bilingual competences. As a result, the context of origin and the context of destination are no longer perceived as contradictory or mutually exclusive; rather they are understood as emerging and unfolding spaces. Due to this contemporary development, trans-migrant families begin to acquire, through their everyday lived experiences, a life-world that can no longer be identified with a specific country or language. In other words, they acquire a life-world that goes beyond the boundaries of the nation-state to establish 'transnational social fields or spaces' (Blash et al. 1994, 7).

The implications of these new life-worlds for the socialisation and educational development of young people involved in the trans-migrant process need to be considered. Recent studies on the future prospects of young people making the transition towards a more active and independent life frequently demonstrate that their future plans are closely related to professional desires and orientations. These results have generated a series of perspectives that differ markedly from traditional studies on this subject. A very important part of the reasoning used by young people is the notion that their linguistic competences and trans-cultural life experiences give them a competitive edge in the professional world.

These studies demonstrate that pendulum migration, that is, integration into the reception society with the possibility of returning to their place of origin or alternatively to another migratory context, reflects a new experience based in a reality which is increasingly considered 'normal' for a growing number of young people. For many children and adolescents with a trans-migrant family background, the possibility of developing their lives, in a different cultural and linguistic context, is implicit in their life projects.

Thus, an increasingly important demographic group is emerging which demonstrates a tendency towards mobility, not only in the spatial sense but also in an economic sense. Above all, the linguistic resources which characterise these children and young people constitute a valuable individual and collective capital in an increasingly globalised world. In spite of this, we argue that the educational and social systems in many of the European countries have failed to adequately promote and develop these skills in the official learning context. Our data suggests that to date, the promotion and development of bilingual and bicultural aptitudes are mainly due to private and informal investments made by individual trans-migrant families 'investing' in the 'cultural capital' of their children. In the Spanish case, some social institutions have started to get involved; however these institutional developments are largely related to non-migrant families with a high socio-economic status who view bilingualism as an important skill for the future of their own children.

In this study of intercultural life-worlds we defend the thesis that recognising and understanding this *life-world* is an essential requisite for maintaining the vitality of the cultural traditions and, above all, the languages of migrant and trans-migrant populations. To this end, we use this paper to summarise some of the bilingual and

intercultural strategies used by the focus families to promote and/or maintain multiple relations between experiences and contexts.

Transmigration, intercultural and bilingual strategies

Our specific aim is to analyse the complex relationship we perceive and/or suspect exists between emerging migration trajectories, increasingly transnational, circular- or pendulum-like, and the corresponding strategies used by trans-migrant families to educate and train their children within these trajectories in order to establish appropriate linguistic and intercultural competences. Mindful of the exploratory character of our research, the data obtained to date describe the intercultural strategies used by the families in transmigratory contexts, allowing for possible definitions of the resulting competences.

Our decision to focus on Spanish–German trans-migrant families is intentional. The multilingual and multicultural strategies used by these families mirror those used by large numbers of other families. The importance of migration from Spain to Germany is based on two fundamental sets of criteria. The first is related to the quantitative nature of this migratory flow which, from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, was characterised by large numbers of people. Statistics demonstrate that between 1960 and 1973 alone almost 600,000 Spanish citizens migrated from Spain to Germany. In fact in 1960 the Spaniards were categorised as the largest immigrant group in the country. The second set of criteria relates to the social and cultural strategies used by these families, both in their place of origin as well as in the receiving country. These include social assistance networks developed in this country and the association for returned immigrants organised in Spain, the formation of the confederation of parents of families seeking a better education for their children in the RFA, etc. These instruments demonstrate the transnational character of the cultural and social strategies used in both contexts (Muñoz nd).

On the basis of this group selection we focused on families from Granada who have made use of the following competences:

- (a) Bilingual competences inclusive of both children and parents; in this case we selected families with different backgrounds, life experiences and migratory projects.
- (b) Intercultural competences of children, focusing on ‘performance’ (understood as use and practice) of these competences in and outside of the family context.

Transmigration, in the context of this study, refers to a set of migratory processes which might not necessarily be included in the classical binary and linear framework defining emigration \Rightarrow immigration (\Rightarrow ‘return’). Drawing on the work of various authors, we understand transmigration as a migratory process that involves the development and maintenance of social and economic relations, in more than one place of residence (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Pries 1999; Guarnizo and Smith 1999; Portes, Guarnido, and Landolt 1999; Hannerz 1996). During the research process we apply this conceptual framework to families who have experienced, are experiencing or are planning to experience transnational migratory trajectories.

For the purposes of this research we understand bilingual competences as follows: the ability to use linguistic codes, which come from more than one standardised language, in daily school and/or professional life; and the ability to express oneself in

a satisfactory way (not always ‘correctly’) in more than one language and to switch linguistic codes according to the situation, the target of the communicative act and/or their own discursive needs and strategies (e.g., *code-switching*) (Lambert 1982; Cummins 1983; Siguán and Mackey 1986; Arnau et al. 1992; Baker 1997; Vila and Mendiburu 1998).

Finally, we define intercultural *competences* as the ability to communicate, perform and interact in diverse and heterogeneous situations with people from different cultural, social, ethnic and national contexts, from different age groups and/or different gender roles as well as with different abilities and disabilities (cf. Aarup 1995; Soenen, Verlot, and Suijs 1999; Auernheimer 2002; Mecheril 2002; Dietz 2007; Gogolin 2003). These competences can be identified by an individual’s personal ability to overcome an ethnocentric position specific to their social/peer group. They can also be identified in an individual’s ability to accomplish a change of perspective, as well as performing ‘translations’ among different normative and cultural systems.

Other definitions of the term ‘intercultural competences’ emphasise a body of knowledge, skills and attitudes ‘culturally appropriate’ to the development of cultural interaction (Byram, Nichols, and Stevens 2001). It is important to point out, in the context of this research, that this is not the definition that we adhere to. Rather than a body of skills, knowledge and/or attitudes we understand intercultural competence as:

... a potential generic capability to use social or cognitive skills (and their subsequent attitudes) in relation to a diversity that exists here and now. It relates more to skills that enable the management of a heterogeneous society in diverse ways, depending on the context in question, but always with the objective of achieving a creative and enriching form of management. It is impossible to define in advance what will be considered a favorable form of intercultural management given that intercultural competences are always relative in as much as they must always relate to the context in which a person finds him/herself and to the person or group of people defining that context. (Soenen, Verlot, and Suijs 1999, 66–7)

These theoretical understandings provide the starting point for the analytical process we applied to the data collected during the empirical phase of this study. The results that have emerged from the analytical process have significantly broadened our knowledge of the bicultural and intercultural strategies used by the focus families during their transmigratory process. Working from parental everyday theories our analysis describes bilingual practices developed during the migratory process as well as motivations, explanations and justifications related to bilingualism and cultural diversity. Equally, our analysis identifies the degree of family participation in social networks supporting these issues. Finally our data analysis located frequent references to these issues embedded in what we have referred to as a *cosmopolitan discourse*.

Research methodology

We have used ethnographic methodology focusing specifically on biographical-narrative techniques for this research project. Biographical narrative methodology focuses in detail on the subject’s personal narratives in order to gain insight into their personal understandings and meanings. This approach is based on the idea that we, as human beings, are ‘storytelling organisms that live individually and socially told lives’ (Connelly and Clandinin 1995, 11). The epistemological basis of this methodology aims to understand and interpret phenomena while maintaining an awareness

of the complex relations and emotions embedded in each individual action (Beltaux 2005; Canton 1996; Connelly and Clandinin 2000; De Miguel 1996; Pujadas 1992). In other words, it facilitates a position between the subjective testimony of the subjects, according to their life trajectories and experiences, and the conditions framing the social, cultural, political, environmental and economic context from which the subject's narrative emerges (Aguirre 1995; Goodson 2004; Lopez and Pozo 2002; Cook and Reichardt 1995).

The biographical narrative approach offers a variety of techniques for data collection; however within the context of this study we have chosen to focus specifically on *life stories*, in which significant events are related and evaluated by subjects who are interviewed about their lives (Del Rincón et al. 1995). In our study we have reconstructed the *life story* of five trans-migrant families, based on both parental and individual biographical narratives. In total there were seven informants (four mothers and three fathers) who are part of five families (four Spanish–German and one Spanish–Italian). All the families have children with trans-migratory experience, future plans related to migration and in some cases, bilingual practices embedded in family life.

The guidelines used to structure the biographical interviews are based on three principal chronological periods: childhood and first youth; second youth; and adult age – and four transversal dimensions: family context, academic trajectory, social life and professional life. The interview guidelines were not intended to be used as a set of rigid questions but rather to provide an informal outline for a ‘conversation’ taking place between two people, where one of the participants tells their *life story*. Informants were encouraged to recall and talk about events in their lives, relevant or otherwise, related to cultural diversity and bilingualism. This required, in most cases, two or three interview sessions of between three and four hours.

The essentially qualitative character of the study has generated a large quantity of information. While this has presented significant challenges for the analytical process it has also been extremely rewarding and enriching. After collecting and transcribing the interview data we organised them by using comparison, transformation and verification processes. This was implemented using an interactive and cyclic approach based on three procedural phases:

- (1) Reduction of information.
- (2) Presentation and disposition of the information.
- (3) Extrapolation of conclusions and verification.

The four analytical categories identified above, *bilingual practices*, *life-world theories on interculturalism*, *social networks* and *cosmopolitanism*, structured this process. The following section presents some of the results that emerged from the analytical process.

Main findings of the research

Bilingual practices in trans-migrant families

Our interest in bilingualism focuses on two key issues:

- (1) The competences required to achieve bilingualism (written and oral) in both languages (German and Spanish).

- (2) The actors involved in providing and enhancing bilingualism. Here we differentiate between institutional actors and the family/social context.

Our analysis demonstrates that bilingualism and bilingual competences are an ongoing practice in the family context. Bilingual competences and practice vary, however, depending on the specific conditions supporting them in the family context. In certain cases this practice responds to a migratory process that required the acquisition of a second language. Subsequently when these subjects have children of their own they implement a bilingual practice in the family context. The case of Maria del Mar is a good example of this practice. She was born in Germany after her parents migrated there from Spain. She learned German as her first language while accessing Spanish in the family context. She later maintained a daily bilingual practice with her children who were born in Germany but have since migrated to Spain. Thus, in the words of the interviewee, they *do not forget German once they go back to Spain*; a change of residence to the country of origin increases parental concern in relation to the possible loss of the host language. Hence, on returning to Spain, Maria del Mar reinforced bilingual practice in the home.

In other cases daily bilingual practice in the family is a consequence of a ‘bi-national’ reality; that is, a family made up of members from different countries with different mother tongues. In some bi-national family contexts bilingual practice appears to be a deliberate parental strategy to strengthen their children’s bilingualism. A clear example of this in our research is the family of Pilar and Rien; she is Spanish and he is German. After living for a few years in Germany, they moved to Granada, where both their children were subsequently born. In Granada they implemented an intentional bilingual practice at home. This is how Pilar describes it:

We used to speak Spanish at home but from the moment he was born we were speaking German with him because to do it properly and meaningfully I had to do it that way, that is, we agreed to do it like that, Rien in German and me in Spanish and we still do it like that. (PT2M38)²

There are however other bi-national cases where a deliberate bilingual daily practice was not implemented after the birth of children.³ The degree of variation between families in relation to bilingual practices in the home has been very interesting. Equally our analysis demonstrates a degree of variance between families in relation to their use of resources offered by the non-formal educational sector; that is, associations and non-governmental organisations that work mainly with the objective of offering support to migrant families in host and destiny societies. These resources were mainly used by the interviewed families to enhance the learning of languages and strengthen the bilingual practices used in their family context. In the Spanish case and specifically in Granada, the Association for Returned Emigrants of Granada provides a weekly German language class, focusing principally on the children of returned migrants. This is an option that many families, who lived in Germany and decided to return to Spain, choose.

Other informal but important strategies used by the families to support and develop bilingualism in their children were identified during analysis. Amongst others, these included reading stories and texts in a different language, watching German or Spanish television, sporadic attendance of extra classes, talking with their children in their mother tongue language and maintaining social relations with friends and relatives who speak the second language.

Life-world theories on bilingualism and the promotion of interculturalism

For the purposes of this research project we understand ‘life-world theories’ as implicit pre-academic and non-systematised theories embedded in actors’ accounts of their life-world. Locating these theories can help identify the reasoning behind actors’ decision-making processes, opinions and experiences (Zimmermann 1993; Rodrigo, Rodríguez, and Marrero 1993). Working principally from parental motivations and justifications, embedded in their interview narratives, we identify personal life-world theories about their own bilingual practices and/or acceptance or rejection of culturally diverse situations. In our analysis we identified three categories/levels of parental reflexivity. Reflexivity was determined according to the type of argument used by each interviewee to explain their experience of cultural diversity and their own bilingual practices. We describe these levels of reflexivity as follows:

- (1) Explanations and justifications of diversity, interculturalism and bilingualism expressed mainly through knowledge of phenomena that illustrates cultural, linguistic, religious and social diversity in their social environment. This category emerges from an *unquestioned/simple perception* of how diversity is realised in their *life-worlds*.
- (2) Explanations and justifications of diversity expressed through reflections based on their personal knowledge, reasons and causes of diversity phenomena. This category deals with their ability to reflect in a synchronic and/or diachronic way in relation to diversity.
- (3) Explanations and justifications for diversity expressed through their willingness to understand their cultural traditions and moral beliefs in relation to the wider cultural pluralism that characterises a diverse, open and democratic society.

The first category, the unquestioned/simple perception of diversity in their life-worlds, also refers to the presence of an ‘intercultural conscience’ (Moreno 2005). In this category our analysis distinguishes different ways of perceiving diversity among the interviewees. In some cases these are related to feelings and emotional memories of festivals in their place of origin:

We had a big festival which was the carnival of Basilea. It was among one of the ten largest in the world and it’s a huge party. It’s very nice. People are on the streets not in costume, but in organisations or groups called *criques*... that they have spent all year preparing, they make floats similar to those in Cadiz with many songs, political themes, everything that has happened during the year. ... A group always wins. (AM1 M31)

In other cases informants tended to reproduce certain social stereotypes related to the context and circumstances of their migratory process. These arguments were rarely reflexive, remaining at the level of *simple perception* and consciousness. Pilar is a clear example of this type of *simple perception*. While demonstrating an ongoing interest in knowing new places and cultures, she rarely references cultural enrichment when describing the multicultural reality that defines her life trajectory. Instead her commentaries tend to be based on casual arguments and anecdotes. The following quote is taken from her reflections on her travels as a young person, prior to marriage:

... I liked everything very much... the Andalusia accent is very funny and I also remember a friend from Cadiz who wrote me a note and he wrote it just as he speaks and for me this was very funny, I liked it a lot. (PT1M39)

Our second category of reflexive analysis, as described above, refers to discourses that explain or support their bilingual and intercultural practices (or lack/absence of them) by drawing on more elaborate arguments in which skills, competences and analytical abilities interact. On this level informants demonstrated a varying degree of reflexivity and analytical perception depending on the subject matter. The subject matter that appeared to trigger a deeper degree of reflexivity was the relationship between knowing a language and knowing a culture. For the majority, learning a foreign language does not only imply its grammar, spelling, vocabulary, etc, but also includes a much wider knowledge of certain cultural behaviors, history, etc:

Besides learning the language, one does not only learn the language, you learn its history, the poets, the political trends at that moment, all that... it goes parallel. You read the book, but also learn when it was written; who it was... I don't know... the influence... we had four or five hours of French during the week. (MM1M31)

Equally, issues related to the personal consequences of their bicultural or multicultural realities determined a more profound level of self-reflexive analysis. On this subject informant responses have been varied, ranging from a positive adaptation to change to a perception of cultural shock. Maria del Mar is a clear example of the former. She identifies strategies used by her parents to facilitate cultural adaptation which included embracing cultural traditions from both countries. Thus, she remembers receiving presents on the 24th of December and going to midnight mass, like they used to do in Spain. On the other hand, some life story narratives alluded to cultural shock, particularly in relation to the circumstances surrounding the decision to migrate. This was apparent in Mariela's life story when she related the impact on her family of leaving Switzerland to move to Spain. The migratory process triggered a specific crisis, not only on the cultural and social level, but also in the personal and family context. This greatly influenced the adaptation process to her new reality; a process which appears to be ongoing as she continues to negotiate different customs, ways of living, life rhythms, schedules, work, weather, etc. When reflecting on these aspects she references both positive and negative factors emphasising the benefits, the cultural enrichment and an improved quality of life stemming from the migratory process. We consider this to be a good example of second level analytical-reflexive intercultural competence.

That said the migratory context, contact with another country, customs, cultural expressions, etc, also generate a certain loss of identity for some of the informants. In the case of Ana, living so far from Spain for so many years has created an identity conflict:

For example, now we are here, but we are not from here and not from there, that's the way it is, there you are from here and here, since you've been away for so many years... but I feel very comfortable here, what happens is that my children are there and they are the only, no... (AP1M47)

We also found that the migratory experience enhanced our informants' ability to reflect on the socio-political and economic situation of the emigration countries as well as the situation of the emigrants in the target country. Informants also demonstrated an enriched awareness of intra-cultural diversity:

... because Italy is Italy everywhere... but each place has different traditions... I learned a lot, starting with the table. ... People think in Italy pasta is the only dish... but it's not like that. Also the dialects, in Italy there are many dialects, I understand the one from

Sicily, Rome, Napoli... I have been to the heel of Italy, in Puglia and they have another type of ... Being Sicily and Puglia from the South and how different they are. Customs, lifestyle, food, way of speaking, everything. (MM1M31)

Equally, education provision also stimulated a more developed level of reflexivity. The ability of educational institutions to adequately address the 'multiple' or diverse realities described above is questioned by most of the informants. The majority of the interviewees expressed doubts about the appropriateness of school management in relation to this multicultural educational reality. Pilar went so far as to question the appropriateness of teacher training and attitudes for addressing cultural diversity and bilingualism in the educational context.

Finally, the third level/category of reflexive analysis on bilingualism and interculturalism has to do with the subject's ability to apply their perceptions/theories to their daily life-world. We organised the findings for the third level into two groups. The first group includes cultural practices related to food, festivities, folklore, etc. We also include the promotion of values such as respect, tolerance, openness to change and empathy. These values suggest an increased capacity to adapt to other cultural realities; that is, an implicit 'cultural flexibility' in their life stories and future projects. On the other hand we identified cultural, individual or family practices that demonstrated a certain kind of imperviousness to change; a non-open attitude towards what is considered different.

Local and trans-local bilingual networks

We understand 'social networks' (Lomnitz 1994) as those social practices developed by our focus families to establish, maintain and/or expand and intertwine family, school, professional and/or social interrelations (the four contexts analysed in this paper). Other families, groups, associations and/or institutions concerned to address issues of bilingualism, interculturalism and transmigration are crucial to establishing these networks. These interrelations can be local/localised networks, they can occur in the place of origin or in the current place of residence. They can also be trans-local, articulating relations beyond one single locality (Pries 1999).

Our analysis identifies shared practices among families in relation to social networking. Most of the families used informal local networks; that is, networks which emerge gradually in the place of residence among work colleagues, children, teachers, parents of the children, classmates, etc. However, it is important to point out that the development of these networks, combined with school pressures, tends to hinder the development of a bilingual practice. In the case of Maria del Mar for example, the opportunity to practice German is significantly diminished in the German context:

No, now I speak very little German with them, that is the way things are... maybe it happens because of the homework, they are always confused with the Spanish, that might be the reason too... it's not because I don't want to, it's because of the lack of time. The children have started with exams, maths homework, English homework... and then, they have no time. And after that they do not want either. Of course, I'm finished with studying and I still have to do more? And like this you start putting it aside, it's a shame. (MP1M40)

A common strategy used by many of the families to enhance bilingualism in the home was the employment of a childminder fluent in the minority language. This strategy promoted the use of the minority language in the family context. The

presence of a childminder also resolved issues of transport and access to the various associations, academies and institutes for after school language classes. These institutions, generally associated with migrants' groups, have been established in different countries to support the maintenance and development of migrant languages and culture. They are a good example of local networks to strengthen bilingualism. A clear example is the case of the Spaniards who live in Germany (Ruiz 2000), where the Spanish institute not only facilitated opportunities to contact other Spaniards but also provided a link with current affairs in Spain:

We had parties... I remember we also watched Spanish films, some which had been in the cinema or old films with Manolo Escobar and all these old ones I know. Juanito Valderrama, and all the other ones his age. When they showed films all the Spaniards gathered, we then talked, and we had a drink... what did we do? ... Well, like in Spain when you go to a bar and you get your snacks, tapas, shrimp or whatever and we all went there. I've always been interested and I've always liked going there. (MP2M40)

Trans-local networks, on the other hand, tended to rely on family relations and contacts in the place of origin. Friendship, as a basis for trans-local networks, was rarely successful as distances presented significant obstacles for friendship continuity. By contrast, all our subjects claim to have kept close contact with the relatives they left in the country of origin. It is worth mentioning that some networks are also kept in the emigration country, such as in the case of Ana's family. Ana explained that when the family decided to go back to Granada, the children chose to stay in Switzerland. This has increased and strengthened the link between Ana and her family in Switzerland:

Well, to be honest, the only things I really miss are my children, that we all would like them to be here. They come more often now, one has been here in August, the other one has not been able to come, no, when they have a few days off they come. Next year the youngest is going to do his First Communion and they both want to come. (AP1M47)

In sum, we observed that the existence and strength of local, social and family networks are favorably linked to the development of a bilingual practice in the interviewed families. That said however, it is also important to point out that while some families acknowledge the importance of these networks for their children's bilingual competences, the obstacles imposed by everyday life, working hours, school hours and their corresponding demands, acquired responsibilities, and the impossibility of travel have a negative impact on their involvement in such networks.

Interculturalism and 'cosmopolitan' discourse

Cosmopolitan discourse, as in all diversity discourses, attributes highly positive values and attitudes towards travel, pendulum migrations, cultural enrichment, knowledge of different languages and universal values, independent of whether or not the interviewed person participates in those practices (Appiah 2006; Beck and Grande 2006). A recurrent theme during interviews was the positive value placed on the knowledge and/or use of different languages. The experience of migration and the possibility of further migration appear in the interviews as recurrent arguments for the promotion of bilingualism or multilingualism. Margarita's testimony expresses how she understands the language and the value it has for her. According to her, language learning should be promoted independently of the correct usage:

... for me an important thing is to interact with people and therefore language is fundamental, the fact that I have been able to communicate where I have been to was very important... the important thing for me is that the child can become fluent in that language, the child can make more or less mistakes, but he/she can be able to communicate in those languages, that is my version of what managing a language is... (MT2M45)

Traveling, tourism and change are also given a highly positive value throughout the interviews. They are generally understood as opportunities to learn from socially and culturally diverse contexts. These aspects are also seen as opportunities to transmit and reinforce core values in their children such as respect and tolerance for cultural differences:

I think we are more open, the more places we know, the more open you become, open to cultures, more tolerant, the better you adapt to circumstances, I'm very good at it, and that's how I want it to be for my girls... I want them to know about many places, I want them to know there are people who live in a different way and think in a different way but are equal, that they speak a different language, but say the same things. (MM1M31)

Interestingly, this kind of discourse, bilingualism as something to be privileged and strengthened in the family context, was sometimes juxtaposed with a discourse of loss, generally associated with mother tongue or culture. This usually occurred when the discursive appreciation of bilingualism was limited to its practical usage. That is, the practical value of bilingualism for the job market or in other specific contexts:

It has been neither beneficial nor detrimental to me. Well, yes, at work many times people came and spoke Spanish and did not understand and I had the opportunity to speak with them and that was good. But when I had to apply for a job, I've always been lucky, but I have had other colleagues who were not. (MP1M140)

In this type of *practical* discourse, we identified a reluctance to be positive about the circumstances that determined change and movements in their lives. Instead they tended to emphasise feelings of loss and a certain opposition to the opportunities afforded by the acquisition of a second language.

Conclusions

In this research, we have empirically approached a new but rapidly growing phenomenon; trans-migrant families and the associated strategies used to transmit linguistic and cultural competences, in contexts which are often adverse to diversity. Using an ethnographic biographical-narrative approach we have collected and analysed discourses used by Spanish-German trans-migrant families to communicate their perceptions, desires, and strategies in relation to their trans-migrant life-worlds. Focusing specifically on four analytical categories, bilingual practices, life-world theories on interculturalism, social networks and cosmopolitanism, we identified and analysed how the organisational and discursive practices used by the families function to promote bilingual and intercultural competences in a trans-migrant context.

Our data analysis suggests a growing recognition of the value placed on bilingual skills in the European context. On the other hand, however, the definitions of intercultural and bilingual competences explored in this study also suggest an underlying complexity which requires further research. The majority of the interviewed subjects are conscious of the fact that the ability to speak Spanish and German contrib-

utes to their children's cultural capital. This perception of bilingualism and interculturalism however is still mediated by prevailing notions of national identity and lived reality. The data demonstrate that the strategies used to promote bilingualism can easily be marginalised in a context where a monolingual society dominates. As a result, bilingual practices used by parents can often be defensive in order to protect the minority language in a majority context. In these instances the home and family context persists as an isolated context for bilingual praxis. We suggest that further research is required to evaluate the implications of this position.

Other parents however engage with contemporary cultural diversity, not as a cultural or linguistic threat, but rather as a resource bank to be accessed by their children using their bilingual and intercultural capital. As shown above we analysed this position using three categorical levels: simple/unquestioned perception of diversity (first level), perceptive understanding and reasoning of underlying causes of diversity (second level) and the ability to translate these perceptions and reasoning into daily practices (third level). These analytical categories, used in our study, suggest that the potential to develop bilingual, cultural and linguistic exchange is dependent on the conditions determining the migratory experience in the first instance. It is also dependent on the individuals' pre-disposition to self-question and self-criticise as well as taking ownership of a cosmopolitan discourse that understands the *culturally hybrid* as something enriching rather than menacing. Finally, our data suggest that having access to bi-local or bi-national social networks is crucial to this process. These institutions not only facilitate the development of bilingual and intercultural competences but also support the cultural translation and implementation of intra-lingual and intra-cultural skills in a national context. We conclude on a positive note by suggesting that the overall perception, understanding and reasoning of transnational 'synergies' embedded in our informants' narratives indicate a positive and enriching engagement with the trans-migrant process.

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Notes

1. The HAVAS test intends to evaluate the linguistic production of bilingual children by means of a storytelling narration exercise. The present text does not include the results obtained with the application of the HAVAS test; rather the data collected through the survey and the narrative biographical approach.
2. In order to preserve our informants' anonymity, we are using codes that comprise: first letter of the interviewee's name, first letter of the interviewer's name, interview session number, gender and age of the interviewee.
3. The 'life-world theories' on bilingualism argue that reluctance to strengthen two languages in the family unit (see also Zimmermann 1993) is related to the idea that children will not learn any of the languages or will learn by mixing them, understanding this as inconvenient for their school and social development. But research, like that carried out by Peal and Lambert (1962), has shown how the effects of bilingualism are not always negative.

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