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Languages of origin and education in Europe: A systematic review

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Abstract

European education policies have tended to cultivate linguistic hegemony and preserve cultural uniformity, which has made it difficult for schools to support different cultural backgrounds. This has contributed to the promotion of artificial monolingual interactions that reinforce linguistic decapitalisation processes. The aim of the review on which this article reports was to investigate the treatment and education of languages of origin in Europe. We present findings from a systematic review of scientific articles published during the period 2010–2020. The main findings indicate that language and nationality are equated in European discourses and that public policies are promoted accordingly. These articulations draw on models that alternate between assimilationism and multiculturalism. Both assimilationist and multiculturalist approaches are detrimental to the supposed objective: that of promoting multilingualism. Thus, it is urgent that a consensus be reached, and certain public policies and educational practices promoted which are respectful of linguistic diversity, since the future social cohesion of our multicultural societies depends on this.

1 | INTRODUCTION

There are around 7,000 languages in the world, distributed among 193 states (Eurydice, 2019). The coexistence of several languages within one country is therefore commonplace in most states (González & Sevilla, 2016). In

Europe, there are currently 24 official languages and 60 more that form part of the European Union's (EU) heritage. However, many other languages are present in Europe, as a result of migration (Bianco & Cobo, 2019). More and more families and children are arriving in Europe and must assume the challenge of schooling and immersion in a language they do not know (Corona et al., 2013). That being said, languages of origin go unnoticed despite being very widespread throughout the territory (Cuconato, 2016).

Although linguistic diversity very much forms a part of reality in schools nowadays (Llompart, 2016), it is often made invisible behind the priority of *protecting the national language*. This encourages artificial monolingual interactions that reinforce processes of linguistic decapitalisation (Reyes & Carrasco, 2018). In this vein, education institutions in Europe have tended to cultivate linguistic hegemony and preserve cultural uniformity (Hélot, 2012; Thioune, 2020), which has hindered the incorporation of other languages and the acceptance of different cultural backgrounds in schools (Aguirre, 2016).

The school plays a fundamental role in this multilingual context (Reyes, 2021; Sáez, 2007), because it not only reproduces the linguistic configuration of an entire state, but also acts as its representative through certain policies and a specific ideology (Rojo & Mijares, 2007). The education language policies promoted in Europe to date are based on the ideal of learning the official language (Presas, 2011) with the aim of integrating immigrant children into the host country (Vila, 2000). However, diverse student languages and cultures are not represented in such a political framework (Piller, 2001), and student identities are eroded as a consequence of assimilation processes (Gámez, 2017). Various authors (Mijares, 2006; Reyes & Carrasco, 2018; Vila, 2000) provide conclusive results of how languages go hand in hand with culture and the construction of identities. Denying languages of origin also means denying the contribution of knowledge from other cultures and encouraging children to renounce the construction of flexible and multiple identities.

Years ago, Thomas and Collier (1997) stated that, since education policies based on linguistic and cultural homogeneity do not take into account the cultural and linguistic background of the students, they move schools away from promoting access to knowledge and sharing diverse cultures and identities. According to Álvarez de Sotomayor and Martínez-Cousinou (2016), this contributes to a greater distance between migrant and native students. Also, Cummins (2001) found that developing linguistic skills in the native language helps with acquisition of new skills in the second language (García & Lin, 2017). Thus, immigrant students can quickly acquire considerable fluency in the dominant language of a society when exposed to it in the family environment and at school (Vila, 2006). In the same vein, other studies have concluded (Hakuta et al., 2000; Huguet & Navarro, 2005) that partial schooling in the mother tongue allows students to extrapolate knowledge from their own language to learning other languages. This is especially relevant when it comes to learning the language of the host country and integrating within the community. Hence, from the perspective of which language is used at school, it is not a question of organisationally addressing linguistic diversity at origin. Rather, it is about addressing the diversity of students' knowledge of the school language in educational practices and school organisation (Palacios-Hidalgo, 2019; Vila, 2006).

The aim of the review on which this article reports was to investigate the treatment and educational response that languages of origin have received in Europe, from a socio-critical perspective. The main research question explored the role granted in the scientific literature and political frameworks to languages of origin in the field of education in Europe. We use the expression *languages of origin* as defined by Mijares (2005) to refer to "*different linguistic realities related to the presence in schools of children who in their homes may use a different language or languages, to the official language of the State and, therefore, of the school*" (Mijares, 2005, p. 112) considering them as the result of migratory processes. In this article, the distinction between a *language of origin* and a *second language* is important, second language refers to the acquisition of an additional language that is not spoken by the family nucleus. The official status of languages, and languages of origin, varies by country. The language of origin concept is here used, as in research literature otherwise, as a synonym for a *minority language* or *mother tongue*.

This article reports on a systematic review of research articles published during the period 2010–2020. Some of the approaches highlighted relate to the debates on the use and scope of languages of origin in education

systems in Europe; the importance of linguistic capital in society; and revising normative principles for treating languages of origin in Europe. The article concludes with a consideration of responses in schools in Europe in relation to languages of origin.

2 | METHOD

This article is based on a systematic bibliographic analysis of the Dialnet, Science Direct and Eric databases. This systematic review was conducted for examining the normative and historical framework in use in education systems where language of origin learning takes place in Europe. These databases were selected for the following reasons: Dialnet is the largest online archive of Hispanic scientific papers; Science Direct provides online access to the full texts of one of the world's leading sources for scientific research; finally, Eric is the world's most widely used index for literature in the field of education. The keywords that guided our search were: 'linguistic diversity', 'language of origin', 'minority languages', 'education', 'language policies' and 'mother tongue'. The lack of consensus regarding the meaning attributed to 'language of origin' forced us to initially use multiple keywords, to which we later added 'immigration', 'linguistic diversity', 'cultural diversity', 'foreign language', 'multilingualism' and 'acquisition of a language'.

The systematic review was constructed following the recommendations of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, incorporating the Network meta-analysis (PRISMA-NMA) extension (Hutton et al., 2016) (Figure 1). The included articles were from the period comprising January 2010 to January 2020 and written in either Spanish or English.

The search yielded 6,777 articles. We excluded articles that appeared in more than one search engine and those that did not meet our selection criteria. The selection criteria were: for Dialnet, full journal articles from EU countries after 2010, in Spanish or English; for ERIC, full journal articles from EU countries, in English since 2016 and in Spanish since 2019; and for Science Direct, full journal articles from EU countries in English since 2016, from education and language journals. This left us with a total of 4,671 articles (Figure 2).
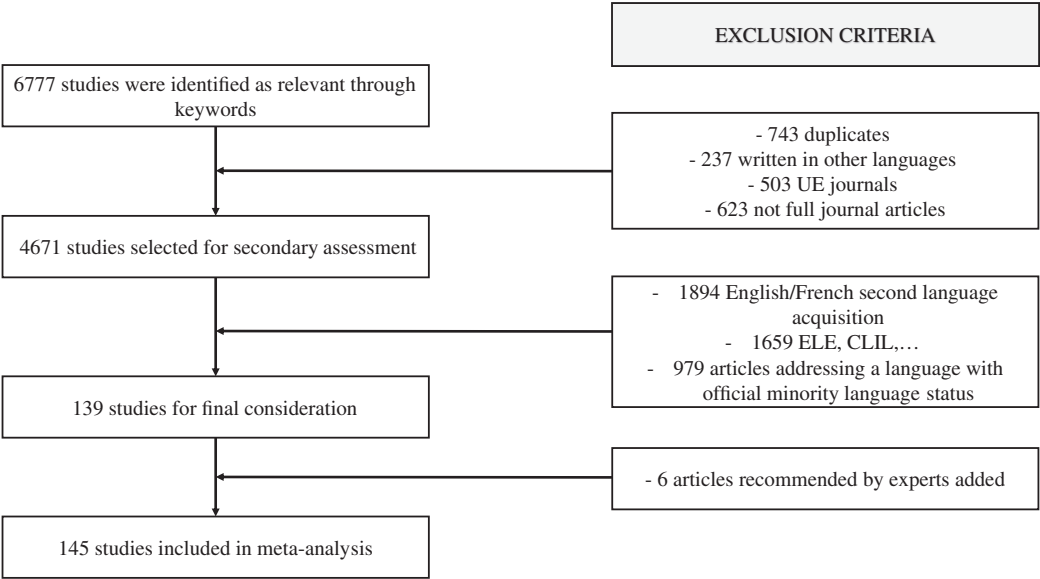

FIGURE 1 Four-level flow chart. CLIL, Content Language Integrated Learning; ELE, Spanish as a Foreign Language Teachers. *Source*: Authors.
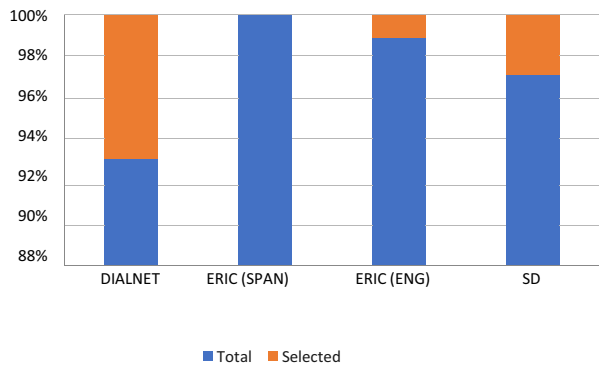
FIGURE 2 Percentage of selected papers. SD, Science Direct. *Source*: Authors.

TABLE 1 Combinations of keywords used

Keyword 1	Boolean	Keyword 2	Search results	Selected articles
Linguistic diversity	AND	Language of origin	100	12
Linguistic diversity	AND	Minority language	654	22
Linguistic diversity	AND	Education	532	39
Linguistic diversity	AND	Language policy	183	8
Linguistic diversity	AND	Mother tongue	50	2
Minority language	AND	Language policy	170	2
Minority language	AND	Education	268	24
Language policy	AND	Education	221	3
Language policy	AND	Mother tongue	49	2
Language policy	AND	Language of origin	2091	4
Education	AND	Mother tongue	206	5
Education	AND	Language of origin	147	22
			4,671	145

Note: All searches were carried out with the keywords in English and Spanish.
Source: Authors.

Despite this large volume of work, one major challenge that we faced was closely related to the lack of results directly linked to the subject in question. Another was that we had to combine a long list of keywords at the beginning in order to finally narrow our search field and thus reduce the number of keywords to six (Table 1). After a first reading of the abstracts was added to the aforementioned filters, the analysis led to the selection of 145 articles.

The reasons that led us to discard the other articles were:

- The combination of the keywords 'linguistic diversity' and 'education' resulted in research articles on the acquisition of English and French language as a second language, a subject that is far from the focus of study in this article. Likewise, when using the keywords 'education' AND 'language policy', articles that appeared were related to Spanish as a Foreign Language Teachers (ELE) and Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), teacher training, topics that also depart from the analysis of this paper because such articles focus on the teaching and learning of second languages in general, not specifically languages of origin or mother tongues. Accordingly, those investigations were left out because languages such as English or French are considered

within the school curriculum as a second language and not treated as the students' mother tongue.

- It also was extremely difficult to find articles related to the keyword 'minority language' used as a synonym for 'language of origin'. This is because the term 'minority language' is generally used to refer to official languages, whether co-official or not, which are indigenous languages of a region spoken by a minority (Nagore & Giralt, 2018).

The table shows the combination of the different keywords; however, it should be added that the words 'minority language', 'language of origin' and 'mother tongue' were not combined, since these are used interchangeably as synonyms in some articles. At the beginning, we also discarded 'foreign language' and 'acquisition of a language' because the articles that appeared as a result were mostly related to the second language acquisition of English or French, which was not our focus. Similarly, the use of words such as 'immigration' and 'cultural diversity' yielded articles that were far removed from the scope of this article. Other articles were discarded as they were closely linked to teacher training in linguistic matters and generally related to the acquisition of second languages such as English, French, Spanish or German.

Once the selection of the 145 records was completed, these articles were thoroughly analysed—87% were qualitative articles; 9% were quantitative articles and 4% were only systematic reviews. It should be noted that expert recommendations resulted in a further six articles being added to the analysis, in addition to legislative documents published by the EU over the past 20 years. The detailed reading of these documents allowed us to inductively identify the following four analytical meta-categories: (1) definition and meaning attributed to languages of origin; (2) language of origin as linguistic capital; (3) from subsidiarity to intercultural policies; and (4) education policies and responses to the treatment of languages of origin. The procedure employed to identify the meta-categories was based on selecting article fragments, each fragment being associated with a code and the resulting codes then being grouped into categories (Figure 1). Once the emerging categories had been listed, they were grouped under the four meta-categories based on characteristics associated with their meaning (Table 2).

3 | FINDINGS

3.1 | Definition and meaning attributed to the term languages of origin

An analysis of the lexicon used to refer to what in this systematic review is called 'languages of origin' is clearly limited by the lack of a consensual definition of the term, due to the polysemic use of associated terminology. The results of our analysis show that the following terms are used indistinctively: 'non-territorial languages' (Verdaguer, 1997), 'language of origin' (Mijares, 2006), 'foreign language', 'L1 or L2' (Moscoso García, 2013); 'first language' (Escarbajal et al., 2015), 'mother tongue' (Aiub & Rodrigues, 2019; García Parejo & Ambadiang, 2018), 'language of immigrants' (Akoglu & Yagmur, 2016) 'people's language among immigrants' (Berasategi et al., 2019; Casco, 2017) and 'minority language' (Bellón, 2019).

In general terms, articles such as those compiled by Bellón (2019); Berasategi et al. (2019); Huguet et al. (2014); and Lukic (2019) call the co-official languages of a country and regional languages 'minority languages', while in other articles we find the use of this same word as a synonym for 'language of origin' (Abchi & Calderón, 2016; Etxeberría et al., 2019; Lozares & Sala, 2011).

A more in-depth analysis reveals still further ways of identifying the same concept. Some researchers identify language of origin as mother tongue, considering that there are no classifications that make one language different from another (Piller, 2001; Presas, 2011). Another point of view is the one adopted by Aiub and Rodrigues (2019), who theorised on the subject's identification process in relation to other languages: people have their own mother tongue and any other language they learn through life is a second, or non-native language. Thus, it would seem that in the scientific community there is no consensus as to how to name them, let alone a clear definition. Along

TABLE 2 Meta-categories, categories and subcategories

Meta-categories	Categories	Codes
Definition and meaning attributed to language of origin	Language of origin (23.45%)	–
	Mother language (2.75%)	First language (0.04%) Mother tongue (2.03%) Family language (0.68%)
	Minority language (17.93%)	Territory (12.71%) Regional (5.22%)
	Foreign language (1.40%)	Language of immigrants (0.21%) L1 (1.03%) L2 (0.16%)
Language of origin as linguistic capital	Multilingualism (61.64%)	Linguistic tolerance (0.20%) Diversity (57.43%) Respect (3.01%)
	Linguistic benefits (32.42%)	Cognitive processes (12.03%) Linguistic competence (8.21%) Acquisition of second language (2.07%) Transferring L1-L2 (10.11%)
	Cultural identity (47.59%)	Access to culture (12.31%) Identity stability (21.05%) Approach to another world (14.23%)
Principles and regulatory framework for languages of origin in education in Europe	European political treatment of language of origin (2.07%)	Number of speakers (0.03%) Political position (1.02%) Institutional support (1.02%)
	Territorial political treatment of language of origin (11.73%)	Regional language (8.01%) Indigenous language (0.22%) Non-territorial language (10.50%)
	Social treatment of language of origin (exclusion/inclusion) (26.21%)	Social identification (16.01%) National belonging (5.10%) Conception of citizen (5.10%)
	Political position (17.24%)	Subsidiary vision (10.92%) Intercultural vision (6.32%)
	Linguistic programmes (8.28%)	European Commission (6.16%) European Parliament (0.78%) Council of Europe (0.78%)
Education in language of origin	Education programmes (4.82%)	Interpreters (1.81%) Orientation staffing (3.01%)
	Education policies (12.41%)	Types (5.36%) Limitations (7.05%)
	System of Education (17.93%)	Curricula (6.71%) Practice at schools (8.03%) Learners' perspective (2.19%)

Note: The percentages refer to the number of articles that each category contains with respect to the selected articles. View in a diagram: http://go.bubbl.us/b05fb4/5a28?/CATEGORIES.
Source: Authors.

these lines, Weiner (2014) pointed out that the lexicon used inhibits the social and cultural acceptance of non-European immigrants, who continue to be perceived as '*foreigners*', even if they are second or third generation immigrants.

Another element that must be considered is the vocabulary used by different international organisations in relation to 'languages of origin', since there does not appear to be a consensus here either. By way of example, the European Parliament uses in official documents the term 'immigrant languages' and 'regional or minority languages' to refer to *"languages other than the official language of the State (...) does not include dialects of the official language of the State"*. These documents delimit the concept of a minority language and the rights to which the speakers of that language are subjected, moreover it excludes and does not mention which languages are considered languages of immigrants. For its part, UNESCO has produced reports and projects—e.g., the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2010)—with the aim of promoting awareness of linguistic heritage. It makes a clear distinction between 'minority language' (spoken in a territory by a minority), 'mother tongue' (which each individual has acquired from their family), and minoritized language (which is in danger of extinction). In addition, the way in which these bodies use the term "languages of origin" contributes to preserving the leading role played by the languages of the dominant cultures (Bastardas, 2014).

According to Kraler et al. (2015), host societies develop advanced statistical procedures to classify society into ethnic, national and linguistic groups. The International Index of the Importance of Languages was created in this vein to recognise languages, although this in itself has generated controversy. While some authors have defended it as a mechanism for recording the development of different languages (Otero, 1995, cited in Moreno, 2015), others have argued that it generates unpleasant attitudes towards certain languages (Pié Jahn, 2018).

In general terms, we observe that the terminology used in some articles from middle-income countries to identify languages of origin has a strong pejorative load. This reflects dominance of some groups over others. This kind of language use contributes to hierarchies in public and official discourses on ethnic minorities, not only in Europe, but throughout the world (Conde, 2019). We can therefore identify a semantic load in the language used to refer to languages spoken by ethnic minorities. This entails certain underlying attitudes towards these groups that can culminate in behaviours that cultivate social exclusion (Escarbajal et al., 2015).

3.2 | Language of origin as linguistic capital

Another inductive category identified in our findings relates to learning a language. There is a high degree of agreement in the research carried out on the importance of learning languages of origin (Bertelli, 2016; García & Otheguy, 2020; Lagos, 2015; Lozares & Sala, 2011; Piller & Takahashi, 2011). However, it is also pointed out that people who live in a country where their first language is not the official language of the country face very complex circumstances when it comes to learning their first language (Muñoz-Comet & Miyar-Busto, 2018; Nina-Estrella, 2018; Presas, 2011; Rodríguez, 2018). Despite efforts of governments in Europe, to put forth education policies for regional and official languages of the different member states and to support multilingualism, languages of origin have lagged behind for various reasons. These are mainly economical (Casco, 2017), but also include the stigmatised position they occupy at the bottom of the hierarchy of social prestige (Schalk-Soekar, Van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004, cited in Akoglu & Yagmur, 2016).

Many other authors have complemented the research done by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), who understood languages of origin as linguistic and cultural capital, variously conceiving them as an underlying mechanism and powerful tool in the acquisition of second languages (Leung & Williams, 2014); a tool for transferring learning from a first language (L1) to a second language (L2) and vice versa; also favouring multilingualism (Abchi & Calderón, 2016); and serving as a basis for learning other languages and offering the necessary support for this learning to take place (Gregory et al., 2012). In this respect, Reyes (2017) related the concept of linguistic capital more closely to languages of origin, defining them as an

> [...] invisible cultural capital of [people from another country] which is an example of how students' cultural capital operates according to their social origin through the symbolic violence that establishes which knowledge is legitimate and which is not.
>
> (Reyes, 2017, p. 722)

Consequently, the learning and mastery of a language not only result in that language being valued, but also facilitate the acquisition of other languages. Learning a language therefore has many distinct advantages, some of the most well-known and widely-mentioned in numerous investigations being cognitive ones, e.g., greater cognitive flexibility and an increase in processing functions (Barac et al., 2014). Others that have been proposed (Bialystok, 2010) include a greater development of executive functions; interrelated processes of inhibition, working memory and attention control—since speaking more than one language requires speakers to switch between two language systems with different interlocutors and in different contexts.

Valuing languages of origin also provides a basis for linguistic tolerance: speakers' awareness of pluralism can lead them to accord the same value to each of the language varieties that they and other speakers use (García & Otheguy, 2020). In other words, their learning makes it possible to unite cultural identity features of different invisible communities (Abchi & Calderón, 2016). Therefore, language learning goes beyond linguistic competence, since it fosters access to culture, promotes the stability of one's identity and enhances mutual knowledge (Bertelli, 2016), while giving rise to socialisation processes and attitudes of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and improves understanding of others (Lozares & Sala, 2011). Many authors emphasise this social vision (Lagos, 2015; Piller & Takahashi, 2011), proposing that the cultural identity of a person who lives in a given cultural context thinks, acts and conceives the world in a concrete way due to the sociocultural impact in which he or she is immersed. In line with this, Bertelli noted that

> [...] if we assume that a language expresses a discourse and that a discourse is articulated within one's own experience in the world, the possibility of approaching 'other worlds' through the mother tongue constitutes an added value for a more articulated understanding of diversity.
>
> (Bertelli, 2016, p. 56)

3.3 | Languages of origin: From subsidiarity to intercultural policies

Languages of origin have received unequal treatment in Europe (Escoriza, 2019). All national languages of member states in Europe are equal at the legislative level. Despite this fact, the results of our research show that some languages have greater social prestige than others due to the number of speakers, political position or institutional support, among other aspects. Beyond official linguistic minorities, the languages spoken by immigrants are not nationally recognised (Etxeberría & Elosegui, 2010). It is common practice to refer to their languages as non-territorial, non-regional, non-indigenous or non-European languages (Yagmur, 2019). This conceptual exclusion from the public discourse in Europe derives from a restrictive interpretation of the notions of citizenship and nationality. Thus, language is in Europe often used as the main element of identification for the citizenship of a nation (Piller, 2001), making it a key element in the processes of social exclusion and inclusion.

Initial attempts to devise language policies for supporting languages of origin in the 1970s saw practically all governments in Europe advocating for teaching students their languages of origin. This was in part intended to support families to return to their countries of origin. However, new forms of multilingualism management were imposed over time (Mijares, 2005). It was not until 2002, following the publication of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, Teaching and Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2002), that intercultural and multilingual competences were integrated within

the education framework for the first time, emphasising the relevance of the mother tongue as a very powerful resource for the transfer of learning a new language (Council of Europe, 2002). Clearly, an evolution in the political position on the management of languages of origin in the European Union took place. The emphasis shifted to multilingualism and cultural and linguistic diversity, proposing programmes and actions in this line. This initial subsidiary vision came to be replaced by other perspectives based on intercultural educational policies (Bertelli, 2016; Mijares, 2005).

Table 3 shows the main normative lines of action for languages of origin in the European Union over the past 20 years. It includes documents where the words 'languages of origin' or 'mother tongue' appear verbatim, ignoring all material that, despite emphasising multilingualism or linguistic diversity in general terms, does not make specific mention of languages of origin or mother tongue.

3.4 | Policies and education responses to managing languages of origin

At the request of the European Parliament (2018), some Member States have drawn up agreements with governments from other continents and promoted programmes to encourage people to learn their mother tongue and even obtain degrees that accredit the mastery of these languages (Extra, 2016).

According to Eurydice (2005), there are two main types of educational policies related to managing languages of origin in education. The first type corresponds to bilateral agreements between host countries and recipient countries. The second type are specific initiatives that each of the governments take following the guidelines of the European Commission (Mijares, 2005). In the former, the agreement usually establishes that the responsibility for allocating resources and making decisions is shared by the two countries signing the agreement (Table 4). However, the infrastructure is provided by the host country, while teachers are usually hired by the country of origin (Eurydice, 2005; Gámez, 2017).

There are two types of programmes promoted by the EU but developed by each of the member states that implement them: (1) the use of interpreters in educational centres to guarantee family-centred communication, in which countries participate at government level; (2) specific staffing for the reception and orientation of immigrant students. According to Eurydice (2005), these programmes are usually implemented by teachers from the same system, who offer classes in schools, implying that there is no solid structure to guarantee their continuity in schools (Casco, 2017).

Despite attempts by international organisations to devise policies aimed at enhancing the learning of languages of origin, some researchers (Alarcón, 2002; Bellón, 2019) have pointed out that the practice is restrictive and the limitations visible, since the necessary conditions for this to occur are not in place. One such limitation worth noting is that international tests such as PISA only measure mastery of linguistic skills—reading comprehension, oral communication and written expression—in the language of the host country rather than all linguistic skills, which may be better in an individual's first language. Thus, these results are interpreted as deficits and used to place the children of immigrant families in reinforcement classes (Akoglu & Yagmur, 2016; Álvarez de Sotomayor & Martínez-Cousinou, 2016).

Furthermore, multilingualism and the variety of registers that the learner already knows are often perceived as a problem rather than a starting point for learning (Nussbaum & Masats, 2012, cited in Llompart, 2016). In this scenario, research has revealed that school practice should extend to valuing linguistic and cultural wealth and be accompanied by curricular designs that represent this approach (Aguirre, 2016; Quiroz & Rojas, 2011). In this approach, students are not segregated within schools and compensatory education is replaced by practices focused on translanguaging (García & Lin, 2017). In other words, the focus should not be only on the linguistic aspects of the speaker, but on practices that allow the speaker's competence to be developed to use different linguistic repertoires, and in doing so create meaning and be able to communicate better.

TABLE 3 Regulatory framework for the management of first languages in education

Year	Institution	Actions	Contributions to language policies
2005	European Commission	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: the European indicator of language competence	Ensures that all citizens have practical skills in at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue
2006	European Parliament	Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, 18 December 18, 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning	Admits the fact that the mother tongue may not always refer to an official member state language
2004–2007	Council of Europe	Valeur project	Analyses the provision of different languages (including origin languages) in different contexts at school level to identify good practices for sharing
2007	European Commission	The High-Level Group on Multilingualism: Final Report	Offers strategies based on EU multilingualism, including languages of origin, minority languages and sign language
2001	European Commission	Eurobarometer: language skills of European citizens and their attitudes towards languages	Includes analysis of language learning and teaching in the EU, as well as analysis of the language of origin of immigrant students
2009		Eurydice: Integration of immigrant children in schools in Europe	
2009	European Parliament	Communication 24 March, 2009, on Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment	Support for EU policies in the field of multilingualism is reiterated and the Commission is asked to develop measures to promote linguistic diversity, including mother tongues
2011	Council of Europe	The Council's conclusions 28–29 November, 2011, on language skills to improve mobility	Promotes measures aimed at helping people with a migratory background to learn the official language, considering the possibilities of allowing children from different backgrounds to maintain and develop their mother tongues
2009–2012	Agreement between the British Council and the European Commission	Project on Europe's linguistic wealth	Proposes cultural and linguistic exchange with other countries, for supporting languages of origin
2013	European Parliament	Report on endangered languages in Europe and linguistic diversity in the European Union	Points out that if children are taught their mother tongue from the beginning, they will have an easier time learning the official language
2019	European Parliament	Recommendation 22 May, 2019, for a global approach to language teaching and learning	Invites member states to promote language learning at the end of compulsory education (including mother tongue instruction)

Source: Authors.

TABLE 4 Agreements to support languages of origin between governments of host and country of origin

Host country	Country of origin
Germany	Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal and Turkey
Flemish Community of Belgium	Greece, Spain, Italy, Morocco and Turkey
French Community of Belgium	Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal and Turkey
Slovenia	Germany, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Russia and Serbia
Spain	Morocco, Romania and Portugal
France	Algeria, Croatia, Spain, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey
Luxembourg	Portugal

Source: Table constructed by authors using data from Eurydice (2005).

4 | DISCUSSION

Carrying out a systematic review of languages of origin in Europe has been challenging. There is a scarcity of scientific literature on the topic. Although there has been progress in the elaboration of documents issued by the EU to promulgate and protect languages of origin, even today they are not included in the school curricula. Based on our analysis of the materials that are available, we observe the following pressing debates associated with the management of languages of origin in educational contexts.

First, finding consensus on a definition for languages of origin in the scientific literature is no easy task. However, it has been shown that behind the terminology used to refer to *language of origin*, there are attributions and meanings that impact on the attached stigma and social and cultural acceptance of immigrants (Weiner, 2014).

Moving beyond the links established between language and identity (Piller & Takahashi, 2011), it is easy to run the risk of attacking the individual and collective identities of people whose mother tongue is different from the official languages of the country in which they reside. For this reason, the conception posited by Abchi and Calderón (2016) is in line with what we understand by languages of origin, since it does not seem to connote prejudice or stereotypes, nor does it build on territorial linguistic dominance. However, this definition does not offer a solution for second and third generation immigrants with respect to their languages of origin. The aforementioned authors define *languages of origin* as

> [...] a language different from the majority, with which children are in contact at home from an early age. It is a language spoken in the child's country of origin—in the case of first-generation immigrants.
>
> (Abchi & Calderón, 2016, p. 80)

We agree with other authors such as Barrera (2013) on the need to highlight the importance that future research commits to developing an epistemological frame of reference for languages of origin to address all these questions. Thus, one of the most widely used terms, in the articles reviewed, to refer to a language of origin is *minoritized languages*, which has a certain pejorative connotation to these languages. Therefore, one of the pressing challenges is to find another expression that does not to perpetuate stereotypes.

On the other hand, the importance of languages of origin as linguistic capital (Mijares, 2006; Reyes, 2017) and the relevance of learning them in various contexts (Bastardas, 2014; Cuconato, 2016) is once again confirmed here. Given the present scenario, it is not surprising that, despite the many advantages of learning languages of origin, they remain largely invisible in schools. With regard to learning languages of origin, the discourse should go beyond the linguistic characteristics of students, and instead be situated on the level of the Right to Education and respect for the Rights of the Child (Piller & Takahashi, 2011).

We find the equation of language to nation in education discourses in Europe. This is based on models that alternate between assimilationism and multiculturalism, but are detrimental to the supposedly pursued objective: the promotion of multilingualism. Such policies lead to reproducing difficulties encountered by children of immigrants in seeing their linguistic and cultural identities represented, since their languages of origin still do not receive the desired recognition (Bermúdez & Fandiño Parra, 2016; Martínez et al., 2012). It is therefore necessary to promote public policies for the management of linguistic diversity that promote equal treatment and respect for all languages. The education sector can undoubtedly offer a viable response to multilingualism in favour of this super-diversity, where classrooms are de facto constructed as spaces for multilingual practices in accordance with social linguistic practices that already exist on many occasions and in informal contexts (Crul, 2016). However, in schools, the use of—and consequently value attributed to—students' first languages should go beyond identity links and become an instrument that favours the acquisition of first languages and the continuity of academic pathways. Authors such as Fidalgo (2016) and Reyes and Carrasco (2018) have pointed out that learning languages of origin is still segregated and relegated to non-formal educational spaces such as community schools—mosques or places of worship—and weekend educational centres, among others. This is of great concern, and an issue that requires an urgent response from public policy in order to ensure learning of first languages in schools.

Finally, as with any systematic bibliographic approach to a topic, the limitations of our study are related to the selection of keywords, Boolean terms and search engines used. Their modification would result in a different form of review, not different content as such. A further limitation is related to the selection of articles in English and Spanish. The condition of not considering other languages excluded articles that could be of interest to the present study and is an aspect to consider for future research. Possible further limitations may arise from having translated the categories from one language to another.

All said, the systematic analysis carried out has helped us delve further into the corpus of works typical for this field. Our analysis highlights conclusive results and an urgency to reach consensus and promote determined public policies and educational practices that are respectful of linguistic diversity. The future of social cohesion in our multicultural societies depends on it.

DATA AVAILAIBILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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