

The visibilisation of teaching and learning Spanish to SL in Nijar's settlements

*La visibilización de la enseñanza-aprendizaje del español como L2 en
los asentamientos de Níjar*

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Abstract:

This paper is the result carried out as part of a final degree research focuses on Spanish teaching-learning as a second language (SL), specifically, in an almost unknown context of language learning such as the migrant settlements in the Region of Níjar (to the East of the Province of Almería, Andalusia). The main characteristic of these settlements is that their population lives in a precarious and irregular situation of residence in Spain. Learning Spanish is a necessity for social integration, but above all, in order to be able to work and to be able to do so with better guarantees of security, salary, etc. On the other hand, it will allow them to regularise their residence status in this country. Therefore, based on this context, we present the results of this exploratory qualitative study to analyse, on the one hand, which entities are in charge of this type of teaching and, on the other, to find out about various aspects related to this complex teaching framework, such as the needs of these learners or the processes and resources used by teachers to teach Spanish as a SL, among other issues. For this purpose, we used participant observation, a survey and a semi-structured interview as research instruments. Among the findings, it is worth highlighting the diversity of the students, their resources (both in terms of time and the need to create flexible learning spaces, with materials adapted to their needs and possibilities and with teachers trained to deal with this type of teaching. Undoubtedly, this research provides information on a specific context which is very unknown in the academic field context yet unknown.

Keywords:

Adults, migrants, Settlements, Teaching-Learning Spanish as Foreign Language/Second Language (SFL/SL).

Resumen:

El presente trabajo es el resultado llevado a cabo como parte de una investigación fin de grado centrada en la enseñanza-aprendizaje del español como segunda lengua (LS), concretamente, en un contexto casi desconocido de aprendizaje de lenguas como son los asentamientos de inmigrantes en la Comarca de Níjar (al Este de la Provincia de Almería, Andalucía). La principal característica de estos asentamientos es que su población vive en una situación precaria e irregular de residencia en España. Aprender español es una necesidad para la integración social, pero, sobre todo, para poder trabajar y poder hacerlo con mayores garantías de seguridad, salario, etc. Por otro lado, les permitirá regularizar su situación de residencia en este país. Por otro lado, les permitirá regularizar su situación de residencia en este país. Por tanto, partiendo de este contexto, presentamos los resultados de este estudio cualitativo exploratorio para analizar, por un lado, qué entidades se encargan de este tipo de enseñanza y, por otro, conocer diversos aspectos relacionados con este complejo marco de enseñanza, como las necesidades de estos aprendices o los procesos y recursos que utilizan los profesores para enseñar español como L2, entre otras cuestiones. Para ello, utilizamos como instrumentos de investigación la observación participante, una encuesta y una entrevista semiestructurada. Entre los hallazgos, cabe destacar la diversidad de los estudiantes, sus recursos (tanto de tiempo como la necesidad de crear espacios de aprendizaje flexibles, con materiales adaptados a sus necesidades y posibilidades y con profesores formados para abordar este tipo de enseñanza. Sin duda, esta investigación aporta información sobre un contexto específico muy desconocido aún en el ámbito académico.

Palabras claves:

Adultos, Asentamientos, enseñanza-aprendizaje del español como lengua extranjera/segunda lengua (LE/L2), migrantes.

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1. Introduction

Migration is one of the main challenges facing societies around the world, especially in the last twenty years due to the exponential increase in the number of people on the move in the World over the last twenty years (between 2000 and 2020) and it growing (United Nations, s.d.).

In the specific case of Spain, the latest available statistics on the number of foreigners from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE in Spanish) indicate that 1,258,894 foreigners reside in Spain (INE, 2024). Within these figures, the largest non-Spanish speaking and non-EU foreign population is Moroccan with 25,800 people (INE, 2024). Andalusia is one of the Autonomous Community with the highest number of migrants. In fact, Almería is the Andalusian province with the highest percentage of resident immigrant population by municipality size with 21.78% (Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2023). It should be borne in mind that this Province is internationally known for being a pioneer in intensive cultivation under plastic (greenhouses) with fruit and vegetable production, which also generated a need for labour.

In general, more of these immigrants tend to live near agricultural areas, concentrated in towns in the western part of Almeria, such as El Ejido, or in the eastern part of Almeria, such as Níjar. Moreover, more of them work irregularly in this sector, taking into account that this situation is also conditioned by their irregular residence status.

This precarious situation also translates into the impossibility of accessing decent housing due to the impossibility of formalising a rental contract or the lack of housing in the area, among other reasons that would be enough for a study of their own. The truth is that many of these people are forced to live in improvised shelters or “shacks”, which are usually rudimentary constructions of plastic and wood, only a small number of which vaguely meet the minimum conditions of habitability and sanitation. Non-governmental organisations refer to these dwellings, which often form large residential areas, as “settlements”.

In this paper, we focus precisely on this context in relation to the teaching-learning of Spanish as a second language (SSL). Specifically, this research explores endolingual language learning in a highly vulnerable population at risk of social exclusion where, as we have already said, language is crucial for their survival and for forming an inclusive and intercummunicated social framework (Asensio-Pastor, 2023).

More specifically, to analyse how immigrants in the settlements of Níjar acquire SSL. This implies knowing who is in charge of this teaching, understanding the processes used in this teaching and learning, as well as knowing what tools are available to them to make it an effective process. At the same time, this research investigates the personal learning environments of these migrants, observing their needs and the resources available to them to learn Spanish.

Undoubtedly, the data not only serve to provide an insight into the social reality and the teaching of Spanish but are also intended to help provide realistic and effective solutions for teaching Spanish. In order to achieve these objectives, we started with the following research questions:

- What organisations or institutions are in charge of teaching Spanish to this sector of the population? What resources are available (material, human, etc.)?

- What are the teaching-learning processes for learners of Spanish in settlements?
- What resources are available to organisations or institutions that teach Spanish as a second language, and are they accessible and effective?
- What resources are available to migrants to build their own Personal Learning Environment? - What do they consider necessary to learn Spanish?

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, we offer an epistemic framework to provide a context for readers who are less familiar with the reality of migration and life in settlements such as those of Nijar, in the east of the province of Almeria, in southern Spain.

2.1. Status of the issue

A review of the specialised bibliography reveals, in our opinion, the intermittent interest in the teaching of Spanish to the migrant population resident in our case, in Spain. Among them, we can highlight some works that can be considered pioneers in this area like Miquel (1994, 1995), Mateo (1995) or Hernández and Villalba (2003); Villalba and Hernández (2002) or Villalba et al. (2001), etc. which the label of «immigrant»/ «refugees» and «adult». The importance of these labels lies in the fact that the learning of Spanish is done in an endolingual context, and, in addition, it is considered a necessary learning process for survival reasons, as well as for social relationships, work or studies.

Although, since 2000, many studies have focused on the learning of Spanish by non-Spanish-speaking immigrant children or children descended from immigrant parents (Villarrubia-Zúñiga, 2009; Asensio-Pastor, 2016; Fernández-López, 2018; Asensio-Pastor & Medina-Beltrán, 2023, between others).

More recently literature focused on the literacy of non-Spanish-speaking adult immigrants (Sosiński, 2017; Sosiński et al., 2020; Fonseca-Mora & Sosiński, 2023). Otherwise, other studies more recent in has been giving way to other more general ones that could cover the broad spectrum of the migrant population such as refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, etc. (Asensio-Pastor et al., 2020; Tudela-Isanta and Ándújar-Molina, 2023).

Research found on the settlements of Nijar focuses on other problems faced by this group, such as housing problems and possible solutions, but not on the learning of Spanish. However, these are recent works, such as the final dissertations of Hernando (2020), Martínez-Artero (2021). In this context, it is worth mentioning the reports of organisations working in the settlements in the Nijar area such as the report of the Federación Andalucía Acoge (2022) of the Spanish State *Diagnóstico sobre los asentamientos de personas trabajadoras agrícolas en Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha y Murcia*.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that this work is groundbreaking due to the limited documentation and research on the chosen topic, despite migration being a significant issue in Spain since the late 1990s.

2.2. The settlements and population profile

To understand the conditions of the individuals participating in this research, it is important to comprehend the population profile and what settlements are and the characteristics of the settlements in the Níjar region.

Imagine 1. Map of the Levant of Almeria (Spain)



Source: Sistema de Información Geográfica del Levante Almeriense

As already stated, it is a very heterogeneous population where, at the level of nationalities, the population from Africa stands out. Specifically, from North Africa, from the region known as Maghreb (Morocco and Algeria) and the region of sub-Saharan Africa, made up of all the countries from Mauritania to Ghana (Fundación Cepaim, 2018). It is also possible to see people of many other nationalities and origins in the settlements of Níjar, such as Eastern Europe, Latin America or Southeast Asia. However, the information available is limited, since it is internal to the associations in the area and is not published periodically, but it is estimated that there may be around 4,000 migrant persons in the settlements of Níjar. Likewise, the level of education presented by the population of the settlements is very different.

Concerning to the settlements, Almeria is the territory where the phenomenon of shantytowns linked to agricultural activity made its earliest appearance and where it has been most persistent, since the late 1980s and early 1990s motivated by (Fundación Cepaim, 2018, p. 19; Gobierno de España, 2022):

- Progressive development of the industrialised agricultural sector, which requires a lot of unskilled labour.

- Prolongation of the agricultural seasons thanks to innovation in the sector (cases have been identified of farms producing up to 10 months a year). In addition, working hours are often extremely long during these periods.
- High growth of agricultural holdings and therefore of the job offer.
- Lack of interest and abandonment of this type of work by the local population or institutional neglect.
- Arrival of foreign workers in extremely vulnerable conditions.
- Limitations in access to housing: Structural shortage of rental housing supply, very high prices, refusal by many agencies and private landlords to rent housing to foreigners, abuses by landlords who rent unacceptable dwellings (substandard housing: warehouses, farmhouses in very poor condition) or material impossibility of accessing the mortgage market with extremely precarious working and salary conditions.
- In the settlements, you can find undocumented people, with deportations, but also people with residence and work permits (and probably with jobs), whom cannot access housing in the nearby localities.

We do not have current concrete figures, although in 2018 the Fundación Cepaim report counted around 70 settlements. More than 60% of the immigrant settlements in the Province of Almeria are located in Níjar (Gobierno de España, 2022).

There are locations where people reside in substandard housing, dwellings that do not meet minimum habitability requirements, or "shanties" constructed with precarious materials such as greenhouse plastics or wooden pallets. Settlements are usually located away from urban centers and often lack electricity and water supply, as well as basic services like waste disposal and other essential amenities (Fundación Cepaim, 2013).

These new housing areas, as stated in the Fundación Cepaim report (2013), are known to have emerged around the 1990s, with a significant increase in the early 21st century. A key factor driving the development of settlements is the high demand for workers generated by agriculture in greenhouses. The increase in agricultural campaigns, lack of interest from the local population in these types of jobs, vulnerability of these foreign workers, and the housing supply deficit are the factors that, according to the Fundación Cepaim report (2018), have shaped the situation of settlements in the Níjar area since the beginning of the century.

In the introduction to this study, we already indicated that they are practically residential neighbourhoods built with precarious materials (plastic, wood, uralite, etc.) which, as Hernando (2020) explains, do not comply with basic standards of health and habitability, where there is no drinking water or sewage disposal. Nor does it make it possible to register migrants, which is necessary to prove that they have roots in the country to apply for residency or nationality. On the other hand, this complexity of space does not favour the implementation of educational contexts, to cite an issue related to this research.

Despite being a situation that has persisted for decades, the lack of knowledge that exists about the existence of these settlements among the population of the province of Almería is striking.

Imagine 2. Photo of a settlement in the Nijar area (Spain).



Source: P. Pérez

Studies such as Checa and Arjona (2005) drew attention to the situation of marginalization and vulnerability of migrants residing in these settlements; however, there is still a lack of awareness about their situation and the normalization of these living conditions and it has even expanded with new settlements and other issues related to coexistence or more serious cases with burned settlements where the population has been evicted and not always relocated. A map with settlements is available, but in order to protect the privacy of the residents, we decided not to publish the location of the settlements surveyed.

2.3. *The legal status*

This section outlines the legal status of residents in Spain and the administrative limitations when it comes to regularization. It analyzes the Royal Decree that defines the Spanish law regarding the procedures and requirements necessary for different types of regularization, referred to as “arraigo.” In this context, “arraigo” refers to the procedure for obtaining documentation that allows legal and regulated residency in Spain. Living in a settlement is also a great obstacle to obtaining residency.

The Royal Decree 557/2011, which approves the regulation of Law 4/2000, later amended in Organic Law 2/2009, covers all aspects related to residence authorization based on “arraigo” concept located in Article 124.

Within “arraigo,” there are different paths, depending on the individual or group’s situation seeking regularization. These paths are labor “arraigo,” family “arraigo,” and social “arraigo.” Each of them has its prerequisites and procedures but grants access to the same authorization, i.e., residency (Art. 124, R.D. 557/2011 of April 20).

For labor “arraigo,” the requirements include: a presence in Spanish territory for 2 years with supporting evidence, no criminal record, and a demonstration of employment relationships lasting at least 6 months.

For social “arraigo,” the following conditions are required: no criminal record, a promise of a labor contract signed by the employer and the employee for at least one year, and proof of connections with family members who are already residents or an “arraigo” report confirming social integration (Art. 124, R.D. 557/2011 of April 20).

Finally, for family “arraigo,” the following requirements are considered: when it concerns the parent of a Spanish minor or when it involves children of parents who were originally Spanish (Art. 124, R.D. 557/2011 of April 20).

Apart from these residency acquisition routes, there are others such as asylum, mentioned in previous sections, and asylum due to sudden illness, also contemplated in the Royal Decree. However, in the settlement context, which is the focus of this research, social “arraigo” is the most common.

3. Methodology

The adoption of a paradigm on which to base this research like the basic set of beliefs that guide action (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012b; Asensio-Pastor, 2024) is the qualitative paradigm.

In situating research from the qualitative plane, one of the fundamental issues is that we are conducting a situated research activity in which we locate the observer in the world” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012a, p. 48). In fact, this research stems from the personal experience of one of the researchers working with migrant populations in the settlements of Níjar (Spain). With the information obtained from the participate observation, we designed this research.

We have carried out an exploratory qualitative study, as stated in the theoretical framework, there are no studies focused on migrant populations in settlements. We were employing the analytical-synthetic method.

The unit of analysis is composed of two profiles of participating:

- The social entities working in the Níjar area, Almería (Andalusia, Spain).
- Migrant persons who have resided or currently reside within the settlements in the Níjar region (Andalusia, Spain).

The criteria for the selection of the study sample were entities whose projects include Spanish language learning activities and beneficiaries. With this concept *beneficiary* we refer to each of the individuals who, in some way, receive the positive impact of the activity of a non-profit organisation. Normally, they are part of a social group: elderly people, people with disabilities, people at risk of exclusion, sick people, children in vulnerable situations, refugees...

In particular, we contacted five associations: *Cruz Roja Española*, *Fundación Cepaim*, *Almería Acoge*, *Médicos del Mundo* and *Mujeres en zona de conflicto*, but in particular the first three met the

3.1. Profile of Participating Entities and Individuals

above-mentioned criterion. The names of the associations mentioned maintain in this dissertation the Spanish names.

To select the migrants persons through trustworthy contacts within settlements and social entities in the area, appointments were scheduled to privately interview the participating individuals.

Ultimately, we selected seven migrants whose mother tongue was not Spanish, but who had a certain level of Spanish proficiency to discuss their experiences in learning the Spanish language. Alternatively, they may know languages such as English or French to facilitate understanding. It was important to include individuals from various settlements and different nationalities. Seven individuals from this group, currently residing in the Níjar area, participated in the study.

3.2. Ethical Criteria

In this research, certain ethical criteria necessary for handling information from third parties and working with profiles that may be in vulnerable situations were followed. During the transcription and coding of the interviews, efforts were made to avoid any data considered personal. Additionally, interview participants participated freely and consensually, giving their consent both verbally and through a private document. This way, the research is authorized to use the obtained information while preserving the identity and privacy of the participants.

3.3. Research Instruments and procedure

Two qualitative data collection techniques have been used in this research: bibliography in speciali database, the survey, and the interview. These instruments were implemented in distinct phases of the research.

The first part of the research consisted of researching the state of the art in specialised databases, specifically Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, followed by a search for epistemic and legislative foundations in relation to the field of study. Specifically, three search concepts were used in Spanish: «asentamientos - Níjar - enseñanza-aprendizaje de español como lengua extranjera/ segunda lengua (alternating SFL/SL)».

The second part of the research consisted of the construction of the survey validated through expert judgement. We were made an initial contact via email with the entities, explaining the purpose of the research and why their participation was necessary. After receiving responses, it was distributed to the entities mentioned above and it was conducted online using the survey tool provided by Google with the application "Google Forms".

The survey focuses on the research about the existing courses to learn Spanish as SL in the Níjar's region and the resources for do it. Initially, contact was made with local entities to request their participation.

The survey was divided into four blocks, and it was designed so that each section contains a mix of short questions, open-ended questions, multiple choice questions and Likert scale questions. This format was chosen to obtain the specific data needed for the research by giving different possibilities.

- Block 1. Control information: name of the entity; work it does and in which settlement it does it.
- Block 2. General information about the work of the entity in relation to Spanish language teaching.
- Responsible for this area
- Courses offered and their characteristics (levels, timetables, typology (literacy, specific groups of minors, for women, etc.), staff who teach (type, training, etc.), teaching spaces.
- Block 3. Teaching methodology. In this block we focus on more specific questions about teaching: materials available for teaching (specific manuals, books in general, photocopies, internet, own creation materials, etc.), conceptual approach or techniques used.
- Block 4. Student profile. The characteristics of the students were considered, ranging from control information on gender, nationality, previous education and mother tongue to more specific information on the classes, such as regularity of attendance, continuity, among other issues.

Once the survey data had been obtained, the third phase began. Through trusted contacts in settlements and social entities in the area, appointments were made to interview participants in private.

The interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions in an informal way to gather information about the process of learning Spanish as a SL for these people. The decision to structure the interviews in this way was taken in order to address possible comprehension and communication problems and to adapt them to the flow of the interview itself.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, but the language was adapted to the needs of the interviewees. Thus, simple questions were asked, allowing participants to elaborate as much as they felt comfortable, creating a safe environment throughout the interview so that they could talk about their migration experiences.

4. Research Data

Once the methodology has been explained and the processes have been carried out, this section will present the results obtained from the application of the different research instruments mentioned in the previous section.

4.1. Database search

The results of the scientific database search were carried out in three databases selected because they are three of the main world databases of bibliographic references and citations of periodical publications: Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar because they are the most frequent, above all, among students. The search data reveal, as already indicated in the introduction, that there is no specialised bibliography.

Table1. Database search results

Database	Results	Valid documents
Google Scholar	130	2 studies related to settlements in Níjar. - studies related to the teaching-learning of Spanish as a FL/SL.
Web of Science	0	-
Scopus	0	-

Source: own elaboration

4.2. Surveys

As previously mentioned, the responses from three social entities will be considered as mentioned in the previous section: Fundación Cepaim Convive, Cruz Roja Española, and Almería Acoge, all of which operate in the Níjar area and offer Spanish learning resources.

Block 1. Control information

In the first set of questions, both Fundación Cepaim and Cruz Roja extensively cover the majority of settlements in the area, whereas Almería Acoge focuses its efforts on two settlements, Cañaveral (Los Nietos 10) and El Viso (Locutorio).

Block 2. General information

Almería Acoge in Níjar does not have a direct person responsible for the teaching of Spanish as a second language, but at the headquarters in the capital, as opposed to Fundación Cepaim or the Cruz Roja.

The teaching of SSL by Cepaim is carried out only by technical staff with university training, while in Cruz Roja the teaching is carried out by volunteer teachers who have been trained by themselves - in addition to their own training; in the case of Almería Acoge, this type of teaching is carried out by both technical staff and volunteers. In total, Almería Acoge had six persons at the time the questionnaire was distributed to them.

Cepaim, on the other hand, conducts classes in a classroom within the settlements and a space provided Níjar Town Council daily, with morning and afternoon shifts. Almería Acoge gives its classes in various settlements such as El gitano, Avenida Constitución, Cortijo mali and El Viso, either in the open air or in a shack provided for this purpose; it also has its own classroom. It usually teaches three days a week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, in the mornings and afternoons.

All three entities offer literacy courses and a general Spanish course, with only two levels (A1- A2) following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages -in advance CEFR- (Council of Europe 2001, 2020). In addition, Cruz Roja and Cepaim conduct specific courses for women.

Cepaim also offers B1 level courses, specific courses for minors, and cultural courses for the entire population.

Block 3. Teaching methodology

In this section, the Cruz Roja states that it has its own manual created by the Cruz Roja called Horizontes; as a note from the authors of this article, it is co-published with the Instituto Cervantes and the SM publishing house. It also uses, in addition to its own material, material from the Internet and books by volunteers, but does not specify specific details of websites or publishers, among other things. Other resources that this entity reports using in the classroom are novels - we are not told that these are graded readings - or excursions to learn vocabulary, such as a visit to the market.

Cepaim also has its own manual produced by the organisation and uses a Spanish as a foreign language manual, although the responses do not include specific data on these.

Almería Acoge, in turn, mentions having its own manual, also uses its own material, other material taken from the Internet without specifying pages, and even uses Primary Education manuals. The working methods of the entities are discussed.

In the case of all three entities, the internet is an important source for the search of material and resources. However, Cepaim uses it to extract videos, films or music through the net. Almería Acoge uses it for material or other resources and indicates the use of participants' mobile phones and how other materials use images.

In any case, the students do not usually have a textbook, but rather work with photocopies. Moreover, the conditions for teaching are precarious, sometimes outdoors or in unprepared spaces, and it is not possible to project images or use audiovisual tools. At other times, students' own resources - such as mobile phones and internet data - are also a disadvantage.

Block 4. Student profile

The focus is on the characteristics of the population participating in the entities' activities. None of the three entities imposes prerequisites for access to Spanish classes. In general, the majority of participants are adult men.

On the other hand, the number of participants per year is 100 people per year in Cruz Roja, 75 in Cepaim and 300 in Almería Acoge, with an average of 20 people per course in Red Cross, 15 in Cepaim and 25 in Almería Acoge (data for the years 2019, 2021 and 2022). It represents only 12.5% of the total population residing in the settlements.

The last questions use different Likert scales ranging from 1 (very bad) to 5 (excellent). The first set of questions pertains to the perceived effectiveness of the entities in their various classes.

The data relating to the effectiveness of the levels they teach show that, in general, it is very good (4), except for the literacy classes in the Cruz Roja evaluated as good (3) or the A2 level in Almería Acoge evaluated as average (2); The value of level B1 only counts for Cepaim with 4 as it is the only entity that teaches in this.

The assessment made on the continuity of migrants in these classes, each entity rates it differently: Cruz Roja with 3, Cepaim with 2, and Almería Acoge with 4.

Finally, measuring the priority of learning Spanish in these entities, both Cepaim and Almería Acoge rate it as 5, while Cruz Roja rates it as 4. Cruz Roja prioritizes knowledge of the environment and socio-community resources, Cepaim prioritizes covering basic needs, obtaining documentation, and employment, and Almería Acoge focuses on regularizing the situation of migrants and reducing the risk of exclusion.

5. Interview General Results

The interviews began with a series of questions were asked that are solely known to the researchers due to data protection. These questions collect basic data such as the interviewee's name, residence, gender, phone number, email, etc.

In relation to the data that we can offer, the first is about the nationalities of the participants. There are diverse, including individuals from Morocco, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal among the seven interviewees. All these individuals have resided or currently reside in a settlement in the Níjar area.

The interviewees have a very different academic background. There are those who have studied in a rural or Koranic school the basic studies to others do a secondary education, this is not a cultural issue, but rather an economic one.

The participants have been living in Spain for three to five years, during which time they mentioned that most of their stay in Spain has been in settlements or substandard housing. They have recently moved to apartments provided by Fundación Cepaim. Moreover, none of them spoke Spanish before residing in this country and learned it after arriving here, either through resources provided by social organizations or through interactions at work. The mentioned resources include Spanish classes in Madrid in an unspecified association, classes in Granada and Valencia through Cruz Roja, and classes in the current Cepaim resource where they currently reside.

During their stay in the Níjar settlements, the interviewees explained that they were unaware of any Spanish learning resources in the Níjar area, but they were aware of the social work carried out by the three entities that participated in the surveys.

Regarding the classes, they have had access to, opinions vary. One of the interviewees mentioned that learning so many verbs and verb forms in Cruz Roja classes in Valencia did not seem useful, while the others are quite satisfied with the development of the classes both in resources in other cities and the current resource in Cepaim. They have not generally reported any issues with availability, except if the resources were located in large cities. However, they all agree on the impossibility of attending classes due to work, as the schedules are typically inconvenient for them unless they

are not employed. All participants stated that they are learning in the resources but would like more opportunities to practice speaking in their environment.

The participating individuals typically do not use other materials for their Spanish language development. However, those who have acquired literacy skills have expressed interest in reading news articles. One of the most common resources is watching Spanish-language sporting events such as soccer or athletics.

Finally, the participants are content with their current Spanish classes and do not feel any need for changes. However, they would prefer to have more language learning resources available in their native languages.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

In general, the objectives set for this research have been achieved. It should also be noted that the research questions formulated beforehand have been answered, providing an understanding of the SL learning process in the settlements of Níjar.

Based on the data obtained, as we have been insisting, the teaching of Spanish as a second language in the context that we present is practically unknown to researchers. In itself, this is a highly vulnerable population that, in many cases, is not only at risk of social exclusion, but actually is. In fact, the settlements are clearly ghettoized spaces. However, there are several Almeria entities that work to help improve the living conditions of this invisible and marginalized population. One of the tasks is to promote the learning of Spanish. Let us remember that it is a population, mainly male, that works hard days in greenhouses, which does not help them to study either.

However, as we observed, entities try to offer EL2 classes and work to have their own and varied materials, but taking into account the infrastructures of both them and the students themselves. These, whether through videos, music or excursions, look for adapted materials that may be interesting to the participants.

On the other hand, it is a teaching that tries to level up, covering a wide range that goes from literacy classes to B1 according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). Despite being levels where the basic tools to communicate in Spanish are learned, the lack of coverage of higher levels is notable. This could be because once minimal communication skills are achieved, learners lose interest, or it could be due to economic needs and vulnerability, causing improvement in Spanish proficiency to become a lower priority. It could also be due to the limited time participants can dedicate to language learning.

Furthermore, the majority of interviewees have learned the language in two ways: social organizations and work environments. The main barriers why participation is low are due to work schedules and the fatigue that comes with the activities they usually carry out, as well as the fact that they cannot afford to attend classes at the times proposed by the organizations. Consequently, they only attend classes if their basic needs are covered by a social entity or if they are currently unemployed.

In addition, most interviewees report having no social connections with native people beyond the workplace. This can indicate either the absence of spaces to establish these connections with native people or, on the other hand, the reluctance of native people to engage in such relationships. There is a gap in the integration efforts on the part of social entities and governmental bodies in this area.

As observed in the interviews, these individuals indicate a lack of spaces for practicing the language. Therefore, they resort to other strategies. Those with literacy skills often read news on their mobile phones, but in general, the most common methods are watching television, especially sports broadcasts. The interviewees have some materials provided in classes by organizations, such as worksheets, notebooks with notes, small manuals, etc. Despite this, they express a desire for more specific materials, such as dictionaries translating from their native languages to Spanish or textbooks for foreigners.

Based on the results of this research, the first is all these mentioned barriers could coexist, making it impossible for this population to access Spanish classes or continue with them.

As proposals to improve, it is necessary to create resources tailored to the needs of settlement contexts, with special schedules and efforts to cover economic resources, such as study materials. Simultaneously, materials should be developed for individuals lacking literacy skills, as well as resources in the languages of the participants. Furthermore, both social entities and local government bodies should work towards creating spaces where migrant and native people can interact, fostering networks among all residents of Níjar.

7. Limitations of the Research

It is essential to highlight that several difficulties or limitations were encountered during the interviews with research participants.

One of the most significant limitations is the scarce or absent participation of women in the interview section, as they tend to be more reluctant towards the researcher. Additionally, the number of women in settlements is lower than that of men, and cultural barriers further complicate such encounters, especially considering that women typically have family responsibilities, making it challenging to schedule appointments.

Another limitation encountered when searching for suitable interviewees is the limited knowledge of the Spanish language, greatly complicating conducting interviews in Spanish. Hence, in some cases, second languages such as English or French were used.

Due to the diverse employment situations of some individuals, additional difficulties arose in conducting some interviews, and in some instances, it was impossible to carry them out with certain individuals who had volunteered.

Furthermore, during the course of this research, the timing of the interviews coincided with the Ramadan festival for many of the interviewees, who follow the Islamic faith. During this period, it was impossible to arrange any appointments for interviews, significantly delaying the process.

Finally, one of the barriers encountered when asking participants if they wanted to participate in the research was their distrust due to negative experiences with previous researchers. Therefore, they were initially reluctant to participate. However, thanks to the researcher's previous work as a volunteer and social worker in the Níjar area, which established trust with them, these interviews were made possible.

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