

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND LANGUAGE CHOICE IN THE FORMAL COMMUNICATIONS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN CATALONIA

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Abstract

This study looks into the language choices of social movements in the Barcelona metropolitan area, and the language attitudes behind them, taking into account that these grassroots movements sit between the public and private domains and the implications this may have in situations of diglossia. The methodology used were semi-structured interviews to a total of 12 activists, representing 9 cells of PAH (Mortgage Victims' Forum), 15M and Marees Ciutadanes (Citizens' Tides). The reported language choices were then compared to the actual practices in social networks and websites. The findings show that Catalan is overrepresented in formal outward communications if compared to its presence in in-group communication. The reasons for this are mostly related to the status of Catalan as the language of official institutions, and to cultural and historical reasons.

Keywords: language choice; language attitudes; Catalan; social movements; diglossia.

LES ACTITUDS LINGÜÍSTIQUES I LA TRIA LINGÜÍSTICA EN LES COMUNICACIONS FORMALS DELS NOUS MOVIMENTS SOCIALS A CATALUNYA

Resum

Aquest estudi examina les opcions lingüístiques dels moviments socials en l'àrea metropolitana de Barcelona, i les actituds lingüístiques que hi són subjacents, tenint en compte el fet que aquests moviments populars se situen entre els dominis públic i privat i les implicacions que això pot tenir en situacions de diglòssia. La metodologia emprada van ser unes entrevistes semiestructurades a un total de 12 activistes que representen 9 cèl·lules de les PAH (Plataforma d'Afectats per la Hipoteca), el 15M i les Marees Ciutadanes. A continuació, es van comparar les tries lingüístiques declarades dels activistes amb les pràctiques reals a les xarxes socials i a les pàgines web. Els resultats mostren que el català està sobrerrepresentat en les comunicacions formals externes si es compara amb la seva presència en les comunicacions intragrups. Els motius estan relacionats, principalment, amb l'estatus del català com a llengua de les institucions oficials i amb motius culturals i històrics.

Paraules clau: tria lingüística; actituds lingüístiques; català; moviments socials; diglòssia.

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1 Introduction

The language policy implemented in Catalonia since the 1980s has had an impact on the use of Catalan, both in quantitative and qualitative terms (Miley 2008, Pujolar 2010, Boix-Fuster & Strubell 2011). This is particularly noticeable in the public sphere, in domains such as government bodies or education, whereas private use of the language (interpersonal communications) is obviously less affected by regulatory changes. These dynamics can be understood from the theoretical framework provided by diglossia, where formal and informal uses are traditionally distinguished – a distinction that can often also be applied as one of public versus private uses. In other settings, norms of language use are shaped by speakers' attitudes, and in turn give hints to the vitality of the language.

The recently arisen social movements provide an interesting study field, in that they sit between the public and private domains, since they are but an aggregation of individualities, without the institutionalised character of political parties. This piece of research seeks to establish whether the language choice strategies used in new social movements resemble those of the public sphere or those of the private domain, and to delve into the motivations of speakers that may influence language choice.

2 Language attitudes and behaviours

The concept of diglossia has had a far-reaching influence in sociolinguistics literature, particularly when the idea of public and private domains enters the equation of language choice, as is the case here. The term was initially used by Ferguson (1959) to describe a situation where two varieties of one language are used within a speech community. What defines diglossic situations is the functional specialisation of the varieties, which are employed in a distinctively distributed manner whereby one, the low or L variety, is used in the private sphere, with the high or H variety being the language of formal and public interactions. From this ensues that only one variety is appropriate in any given situation (Romaine 1995), depending on the functional domain.

As noted by Hudson (2002), diglossia must be differentiated from societal bilingualism, since these two phenomena have distinct features in terms of the potential relationship between the nature of the complementary functional distribution of linguistic varieties as well as in the way language shift potentially operates in each case. In diglossic situations, «linguistic realization as opposed to language acquisition (...) is a function solely of social context, and not of social identity of the speaker» (*ibid*: 3). In such scenarios, the «attitudes, behaviours and values associated to each language are culturally legitimised» (Sanz 1991: 49, my translation), placing language prestige at the core of typically diglossic situations (Miller & Miller 1996), since that is what separates the high and low varieties.

Yet, diglossia may not suffice to understand bilingual scenarios. In settings where the distribution of codes by domains is not as rigid as that of the canonical diglossia posited by Ferguson, language attitudes have proven very helpful to explain language behaviour and therefore the specific configuration of language norms. Language attitudes have been extensively studied, in what Cargile and Giles interpreted as recognition that «language is a powerful social force that does more than convey intended referential information» (1997: 195). They have also been frequently studied as an indicator of the vitality of a language and therefore in processes of language shift or language substitution.

Hymes (1971) placed language attitudes at the core of communicative competence and posited that such attitudes influence people's reactions to other language users. This in turn involves that our language choices will also be influenced by the anticipation of this type of reaction (Garret 2010). Language attitudes, thus, both shape and are shaped by language choice, and in this sense are closely related to norms of language use, which prescribe what choices are appropriate in a given situation as a function of factors such as formality, participants or domain.

Norms of language use, being norms, are socially imposed rather than bargained and agreed upon on a per-conversation basis, as Vila i Moreno (2005) noted, and these norms in fact «translate the power balances existing in the community into linguistic practice» (*ibid*: 85). Looking into the motivations behind language behaviours, Cargile et al. ruled out intrinsic linguistic or aesthetic reasons and pointed out that those

behaviours reflect «the levels of status, prestige, or appropriateness that they are conventionally associated with in particular speech communities» (1994: 227).

Similarly, Woolard and Gahng (1990) stressed that language choice depends on social significance rather than institutional policy, in other words, language choice is a result of speakers' attitudes towards languages. However, if we bring in the idea of domains that stems out of the diglossia framework, it may be worth drawing a distinction between institutionalised and interpersonal relationships. Corbeil (1980) hypothesised that in institutionalised communications (those that exist because of and in relation to the institutions or organizations –official and non–official– of which society is made up) speakers do not act as individuals but rather on behalf of institutions, which would influence their patterns of language use. Interpersonal or individualised communications (everyday, private informal language actions), on the other hand, are dependent on personal features such as the link between speakers. Corbeil suggested that modifying institutional patterns of language (for example through language policy) would eventually result in changed interpersonal patterns too. This vision acknowledges the fact that language use is indeed influenced by a number of factors, including speakers' attitudes and institutional context.

Moreover, if one of the codes is a minority language, the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality may also be useful to understand those underlying attitudes. Ethnolinguistic vitality, defined as what «makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations» (Giles et al. 1977: 308), depends on demographic factors, institutional support and status. This concept aims at linking the social psychological processes of group behaviour to sociocultural settings (Hamers & Blanc 2000) and shows a strong relationship with the frequency of language use not only in status-oriented domains but across all domains, public and private (Landry and Allard 1994). In this sense, the higher the degree of a group's ethnolinguistic vitality, the more likely it is that its language and culture will be preserved.

The three-fold concept described above (with cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions) measures objective ethnolinguistic vitality. However, most studies have approached this concept by measuring subjective ethnolinguistic vitality – that is, taking people's perceptions and representations of vitality as mediators of linguistic behaviour. Perceived ethnolinguistic vitality is often credited as a better predictor of language behaviour (Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal 1981, Hamers & Blanc 2000) and therefore providing insights into people's attitudes to language (Garrett 2010).

It should be noted that diglossia and ethnolinguistic vitality are not mutually exclusive as conceptual tools to analyse multilingual situations. Bourhis (1979) proposed a link between the two, suggesting that the language choice strategies of speakers in a diglossic situation are related to the vitality of their language group as well as the formality of the communicative situation. On a similar note, Cargiles et al. stated that «ethnolinguistic vitality reflects the range and importance of functions served by a given language variety and the social pressures toward shifts in language use» (1994: 226).

In multilingual settings, a group's ethnolinguistic vitality is particularly relevant in processes of language maintenance or substitution (Landry & Allard 1994). Along these lines, Bastardas-Boada (2007) pointed out the strong relationship between ethnolinguistic vitality, bilingualism and language substitution processes when noting that, despite the link between bilingualism and language substitution, those groups that have a positive self-image use their language in many or all interpersonal functions, and need not be heading towards language substitution.

3 The sociolinguistics of Catalan

The sociolinguistic map of Catalonia owes much to the country's recent history, and in particular to the different waves of immigration it received in the early- and mid- twentieth century and again in the early twenty-first century (Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics 2007).

The first two of these were made up mostly of workers from other Spanish regions, effectively changing a quasi-monolingual Catalan-speaking region into a de facto bilingual society. The effect of the earlier waves was particularly intensified in the city of Barcelona and its surrounding area, which is the focus of the

present study. In 1975, the time of Spain’s democratic transition, over 40% of the population in that area had been born outside Catalonia (*ibid*) and «Castilian-speaking immigrants from the rest of Spain had come to constitute clear majorities in most of the municipalities in the industrial belt surrounding Barcelona, and significant minorities throughout most of Catalonia» (Miley 2008: 2).

It must be borne in mind that these demographic changes took place against the backdrop of Franco’s regime, which aimed for the substitution of all languages other than Spanish (Webber & Strubell i Trueta 1991; Casesnoves Ferrer et al. 2006). However, unlike what happened in other Catalan-speaking regions such as Valencia and the Balearics, the intergenerational transmission of the language was not interrupted in Catalonia, and neither did the language carry the low prestige that led many speakers in those other territories to abandon the language (Casesnoves Ferrer et al. 2006).

Following the onset of democracy and the devolution of powers, the Catalan parliament passed the Law of Linguistic Normalisation in 1983, with a cross-cutting approach that targeted the areas of public administration, media, education, commerce and industry, cultural, and social sectors (Miller & Miller 1996). Arguably, the areas where it has been most noticeable and successful are public administration, education, and the media (Sinner & Wieland 2008).

Regarding the media, Catalan has «growing presence in the daily press (...), up to 50 per cent of normalisation on the radio; [and the public TVC Group enjoys] great prestige and a share close to a quarter of television viewers» (Gifreu 2011: 196). The use of Catalan in public administration is substantially normalised in the lower levels of administration (those whose scope stays within Catalonia: municipalities, *comarques*, provinces and the Generalitat), if not in bodies dependent from the central government (Pedreño & Genovès 2008). Similarly, the educational model arising from Catalonia’s language policy has led to a substantial increase in competence in the language (Vila i Moreno 2005, Pujolar 2010).

Although the most recent wave of immigration spread more equally throughout Catalonia, in 2014 people born outside Catalonia made up 38% of the population in the Barcelona metropolitan area¹ (Idescat 2015). However, as a result chiefly of the language policy in education (both schools and adult education), knowledge of the language is not exclusive to those born in the country.

According to the latest Survey on Language Uses of the Population (*Estadística d’usos lingüístics de la població*, EULP), although less than a third of the population declare Catalan as their first language, over 95% claim they can understand it and over 80% say they can speak it (see tables 1 and 2). If the data is broken down by geographical area, the results for the metropolitan area of Barcelona show lower rates for Catalan and higher rates for Spanish in all categories.

Table 1. Knowledge of Catalan among the population.

	Catalonia		Barcelona metropolitan area	
	Catalan	Spanish	Catalan	Spanish
Can understand	94.3%	99.8%	93.7%	99.8%
Can speak	80.4%	99.7%	77.6%	99.8%
Can read	82.4%	97.4%	80.6%	98.1%
Can write	60.4%	95.9%	57.1%	96.8%

Source: EULP 2013

¹ As per the Regional Plan of Catalonia (*Pla territorial general de Catalunya*), the Barcelona metropolitan area is made up of the *comarques* of Baix Llobregat, Barcelonès, Maresme, Vallès Oriental and Vallès Occidental.

Table 2. First language, language of identification and habitual language.

	Catalonia				Barcelona metropolitan area			
	Cat	Spa	Both	Other	Cat	Spa	Both	Other
First language	31.0%	2.4%	55.1%	11.5%	23.3%	2.5%	64.3%	7.4%
Language of identification	36.4%	7.0%	47.6%	9.0%	28.7%	7.7%	56.1%	6.6%
Habitual language	36.3%	6.8%	50.6%	6.3%	27.8%	7.2%	60.0%	4.9%

Source: EULP 2013

The figures in Table 2 are particularly relevant bearing in mind that there is a strong link between the first language and the language of interpersonal use (Vila i Moreno & Sorolla i Vidal 2003). In any case, the majority of the population in Catalonia, but also in the Barcelona metropolitan area, knows and normally uses both languages, and arguably «the society is far from being polarised on this issue» (Vila i Moreno 2005: 53).

Catalan has received much attention from the sociolinguistics literature. This is partly due to the peculiar nature of bilingualism in the country, what Miley (2008) labels ethno-linguistic heterogeneity – the fact that not just Catalonia is bilingual, but also its residents are bilingual themselves. Indeed, fewer than 5% of Barcelona’s inhabitants describe themselves as monolingual (Vila i Moreno 2005) and, more importantly, «both speakers of Spanish and Catalan feel legitimized as native languages» (Boix-Fuster & Paradís 2015).

This reality, which was not the case a few decades earlier, may explain some disparities in the literature regarding the ethnical value of Catalan. Woolard and Gahng, for example, argued that «the identity-marking value of the Catalan language restricted it to use only between native speakers», making it an «ingroup, ethnic language» (1990: 315). In a more recent work, Pujolar and González, on the other hand, referred to the de-ethnicisation of Catalan, and suggested that Catalan is becoming «increasingly ‘anonymous’ or ethnically unmarked» (2013: 140).

With regard to language use in the public domain, both Spanish and Catalan are employed in government institutions, as pointed earlier, and the use of Catalan in education is widespread, even though «social bilingualism is still clearly asymmetrical in favor of Spanish» (Boix Fuster & Sanz 2008: 89). On a similar note, Vila i Moreno (2005) recognised the impact of the extensive learning of Catalan upon language ideologies and use, but cautioned that it has not seeped through to the domain of interpersonal use.

This is in accordance with Miley’s (2008) analysis of a 2001 CIS survey whereby the use of the two languages across domains showed systematic differences – whereas Spanish is spoken in more households, Catalan is more extensively used in relations with the public administration. Bilingual linguistic habits, on the other hand, «appear to occur most often among friends» (*ibid*: 12). This author concluded that Catalan society is diglossic, albeit with «shifting patterns of diglossia» that have formed as a consequence of the «Generalitat’s efforts to ‘normalize’ the Catalan language» (*ibid*: 9). Similarly, Miller & Miller defended that although the rigid distribution of typical diglossic situations is not present in Catalonia, «undoubtedly diglossic functions and diglossic attitudes still remain in certain contexts» (1996: 118).

However, Sanz argued that, while diglossia was a characteristic of Barcelona society in the 1960s, today «the linguistic situation in Barcelona cannot be considered as diglossic» (1991: 55) given that language switch goes both ways: Catalan speakers may switch to Spanish in a given conversation, and vice versa. Along the same lines, Vallverdú (1983) cited the lack of a clear-cut distribution to argue that the linguistic behaviour of Catalans cannot be considered diglossia. In fact, it could be argued that «in current Catalonia there is not an evident mainstream group (...), the dichotomy between majority and minority may prove to be very often ambiguous, or even contradictory» (Boix-Fuster & Paradís, 2015).

Norms of language use in Catalonia «have traditionally prescribed different language choice patterns as a function of both speaker and addressee’s first language» (Vila i Moreno 1996: 85), as opposed to the patterns based on degree of formality that are typical of diglossic communities. Therefore, although Catalan and Spanish do not show a complementary distribution in terms of functions, different settings arguably trigger

different linguistic behaviours. In private settings (that is, in conversations with friends and family), each language group uses only its mother tongue (Sanz 1991). In public ones, language attitudes seem to be having more of an impact.

Arguably, one of the reasons why it is not easy to label the Catalan sociolinguistic situation as one of diglossia is related to the prestige of the language. Whereas in a diglossic situation the high variety is normally also the most prestigious one, the reverse is true in Catalonia (Miller & Miller 1996).

In this sense, the link between language use and social class structure in Catalonia has also been worthy of academic attention. Language ideology tends to identify Catalan with the middle class, while the working class is related to Spanish (Boix-Fuster & Sanz 2008, Frekko 2009) thus influencing the prestige associated with each language. The unity that was created amongst opposition groups under Franco's dictatorship has also been suggested as a factor in the building of the prestige of Catalan, as these groups developed a «form of civic nationalism (...) which adopted the Catalan flag as a common, democratic symbol» (Vila i Moreno 2005: 53).

Woolard (1989) found that participants in her study assigned greater status value to Catalan, something that had been maintained or even become more accentuated over the twenty years that passed until a further study (Woolard 2009). Guiu's (2013) study of the perceived prestige of Catalan and Spanish in different towns of Catalonia found that even in towns whose population was mostly Spanish-speaking, over 80% of the sample chose Catalan as the most prestigious language. In a piece of work that bears similarities with the context of the present study, Frekko argued that the use of Catalan in a protest campaign carried out in the Raval neighbourhood was part of a strategy on the part of the neighbours aimed at depicting themselves as «respectable people who deserved to participate in a Barcelonan public» (2009: 228).

The solid prestige of Catalan, therefore, seems to be clearly established in the literature, and it has been cited as the key factor to explain its maintenance (Sanz 1991). However, it is also worth noting that in terms of «the evolution of linguistic identities and linguistic practices (...) the Castilian-speaking portion of Catalonia's general population constitutes a relatively consolidated community, in the sense that (...) it is not showing any signs of linguistic substitution» (Miley 2008: 12). In terms of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, Catalan seems to be in a better position (Viladot & Esteban 2011, Boix-Fuster and Paradís 2015).

4 New social movements

The austerity policies implemented in Spain as a reaction to the deep financial crisis of the late 2000s gave rise to grassroots movements that protested against cuts in social expenditure, corruption, and perceived lack of democracy, among other grudges. A number of these got together in a Forum of Groups For Citizen Mobilisation (later rebranded as *Democracia Real Ya*) and called for a demonstration on March 15, 2011 in most Spanish cities. Following the most massive of these rallies, that in Madrid, some demonstrators decided to turn it into a sustained protest and camped in the city's Plaza del Sol. This was soon replicated in other cities and squares, such as Plaça de Catalunya in Barcelona, thus giving origin to the 15M movement (after its birth date), also referred to as the *Indignados* movement or Spanish Revolution.

The 15M was the cornerstone of a wider context of rallies and protest groups that have appeared in Spain over the last few years, some before March 15, 2011, others later. The anti-eviction group PAH (*Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*, Mortgage Victims' Forum), for example, had been created in early 2009. Another massive rally held on February 23, 2013 in most Spanish cities visualised the sectoral protests *Mareas Ciudadanas* (Citizens' Tides) that focused on specific areas (public education, health, corruption, etc.).

That 15th of March displayed to the world what had been brewing in Spain. From that day onwards, protests and rallies would take the streets week in, week out. This was a new development in Spain's politics, and so was the way the protestors were organised and communicated – some of the key features of these new social movements are their decentralised structure and the heavy use of information and communication technologies both for internal communication and for outward dissemination (Peña-López, Congosto &

Aragón 2014, Martín Rojo 2014). In fact, the latter was a salient characteristic of 15M, which considered communication «a key element in its emergence and conformation» (Martín Rojo 2014: 585).

These movements were initially not linked to political parties, and very often opposed institutionalised political ideology. Although this has changed with the creation of parties and alliances such as *Podemos* or *Guanyem Barcelona*, which are to a large extent the institutionalisation of those early, informal movements, it continues to be the case that the social movements themselves are grassroots in nature, and flat in their structure. They often have an extreme open-door policy, with meetings held in squares that anyone is welcome to join. In-group communication is commonly done via distribution lists, and working documents are created using collaborative tools such as Google Docs or TitanPad. These features facilitate the entry of activists into the movements, and also set them apart from institutionalised groups such as political parties.

5 Methodology

This study was conducted in the spring of 2015, and was geographically constricted to the Barcelona metropolitan area. This is relevant considering the different make up of this area in sociolinguistic terms when compared to the rest of Catalonia.

The participants were or had been involved in social movements in different boroughs of the city of Barcelona or in other neighbouring towns, namely Esplugues de Llobregat and El Prat de Llobregat. The movements represented in the sample are: *Plataforma d'Afectats per la Hipoteca* (PAH, Mortgage Victims' Forum), the 15M movement, and the different *Marees Ciutadanes* (Citizens' Tides) and related movements protesting against cuts in specific public policy areas such as education (Marea groga), health services (Marea blanca), or public transport (Stop Pujades).

In order to select the movements to be analysed, and since no census of participants is available, the degree of visibility in the media was used as an indicator of their size and impact. An analysis of the general press over the years 2013 and 2014 was conducted, and the most frequently cited movements were selected as long as the following requirements were met: that the movement was not a political party, and that it did not seek the independence of Catalonia.

In order to understand the restriction on political parties, it must be borne in mind that the public discourse in Catalonia is overwhelmingly done in Catalan (Frekko 2009), to the extent that a recently founded party, *Ciutadans*, stirred up the political arena when it began using both Catalan and Spanish in speeches at the Catalan Parliament. Although this had some impact on the language practices in this chamber, only 8% of deputies used Spanish in their addresses ("Once diputados catalanes"). It could therefore be argued that specific norms of language use exist among political parties.

The restriction regarding pro-independence movements was put in place considering the close link they have with language and identity. Regardless of whether or not the recent rise in independence support is a local version of the anti-austerity discontent, it can be argued that pro-independence movements use language not just as a means of communication but also as an end in itself, as a policy object, and thus these movements ought to be studied separately.

Applying the first restriction, *Podemos* was ruled out of the sample, for example. Because of the second restriction, movements such as the *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (ANC, Catalan National Assembly) or *Procés Constituent* (Constituent Process) were not taken into account, even if they were among the most frequently cited in the general press.

The participants of the study were contacted both through personal connections and by cold calling (via email). Whenever the habitual language of the contact person was known beforehand, the researcher used that one when approaching them for the first time. Participants were initially informed of the general topic of the research («languages and social movements»). The researcher made sure to use the plural *languages* every time, to indicate that the two languages that make up the bilingual reality of Catalonia would be

considered equally for the purposes of the study.² A total of six interviews were conducted for this study (see Table 3).

Table 3. Sample

Interviewee*	Age group	L1	Interview type	Movement	Geographical scope of the branch they belong to
Eduard	30-39	Catalan	Individual	15M Stop Pujades (Transport)	Barcelona (Sarrià-Sant Gervasi) Barcelona Metropolitan Area
José	50-59	Spanish	Individual	PAH	Esplugues de Llobregat
Sara	40-49	Spanish	Individual	Marea groga (Education)	El Prat de Llobregat
Miquel	50-59	Both		15M	Barcelona (Sants)
Laura	20-29	Catalan			
Daniel	40-49	Spanish	Group		
Alba	20-29	Catalan		15M	Barcelona (Les Corts)
Toni	30-39	Spanish			
Marta	40-49	Spanish			
Neus	30-39	Catalan	Individual	15M	Barcelona
Roberto	30-39	Spanish	Group	Marea blanca (Health)	El Prat de Llobregat
Pedro	50-59	Spanish		Marea blanca (Health)	Catalonia

* All names of the interviewees used here are pseudonyms.

Although respondents were initially approached on an individual basis, whenever they suggested that other activists joined, the researcher agreed. For this reason, four of the interviews were done on a one-to-one basis, while two were group interviews. This was motivated by the ‘cueing phenomenon’ identified by Morgan and Krueger (1993), whereby participants in a group interview help each other divulge information. As a result, the total number of participants in the study is 12 people.

As is often the case with activists, many of the respondents were involved in more than one movement, and during the interview were asked to draw on their experiences in general rather than constraining their responses to the one movement. In this manner, the information gathered refers to a total of 9 organisations.

The method used were semi-structured interviews, which were held at a place suggested by the interviewee (two took place in cafés, the other four were conducted in meeting rooms of the community centres where the respondent’s movement normally met). This method was selected as it allows for flexibility within the framework of the relevant topics, and is an adequate tool to delve into the reasons behind behaviours. All the interviews were recorded using a mobile phone after first obtaining the interviewees’ permission. The recordings were then transcribed, and their contents analysed using the software package NVivo (NVivo for Mac version).

Additionally, an analysis of the groups’ online communication tools was conducted in order to confirm the reported language use. This analysis covered all Facebook and Twitter communications during 2015, as well as the groups’ websites. In the analysis of social networks, only posts or tweets where text had been included were considered – that is, content that had been reposted, shared or retweeted by the studied group without adding anything to the original publication were dismissed, as were those that consisted exclusively of images, even if those included text.

² Interestingly enough, many interviewees would then rephrase it as «*language and social movements*», as if implying that only Catalan (and not Spanish) was the object of the study.

6 Results and findings

The first part of this section covers the findings regarding language choice, whereas the second part focusses on the reasons behind it.

6.1 Language choice

With regards to the languages used for outward, formal communication, 7 out of the 9 movements for which information was gathered reported to do it either totally or mostly in Catalan (see Table 4). The subsequent analysis of online communication was consistent with this, since it confirmed that actual language behaviour largely coincided with reported language choice. The measure for this dimension was made up of 5 equally-weighted elements, namely the language or languages of (1) the Twitter account information, (2) tweets, (3) the Facebook account information, (4) Facebook posts, and (5) the group's website. The result was expressed as a percentage and categorised as *Catalan* or *Spanish* when one of the languages reached 90%, as *mostly Catalan* or *mostly Spanish* if the most present language represented between 65% and 89%, and as *both* in the remaining instances.

For the purposes of this research, it is important to compare language behaviour in outward, formal communication with interpersonal language use (the *In-group* column in Table 4). In this sense, it is clear that Catalan gains ground as the level of formality increases. Only two movements claimed to use only Catalan as their usual in-group language, while another group (admittedly the most extreme example) said that its internal communication was in Spanish but its outward written messages were always in Catalan. The analysis of online communication for the latter group, however, showed that it was actually a mix of both languages.

Table 4. Language of in-group, reported formal communication, and actual formal communication

Movement	In-group	Reported formal	Actual formal
15M Sarrià-Sant Gervasi	Catalan	Catalan	Catalan (100%)
Marea blanca Catalonia	Catalan	Catalan	Catalan (92%)
Marea groga El Prat de Llobregat	Both	Catalan	Catalan (100%)
15M Sants	Both	Catalan	Mostly Catalan (83%)
Stop Pujades Metropolitan Area	Both	Catalan	Catalan (100%)
15M Barcelona	Both	Mostly Catalan	Mostly Catalan (74%)
15M Les Corts	Both	Both	Mostly Catalan (81%)
Marea blanca El Prat de Llobregat	Mostly Spanish	Both	Mostly Spanish (81%)
PAH Esplugues de Llobregat	Spanish	Catalan	Both (Cat 60%, Spa 40%)

Language of in-group communication

As a general trend, there is a mismatch in language behaviour between internal and outward communication in that the latter tends to lean more towards Catalan, compared to the former. In fact, in-group communication is very likely to include both languages. In general, respondents strongly emphasised the non-problematic nature of bilingualism in their groups³.

³ Although the questions were worded in a way that considered any language option as legitimate and that openly acknowledged societal bilingualism, most participants were adamant to make it clear that language is not a problem. Arguably, this is a preventive defence mechanism that many Catalans have developed to counter a certain niche political discourse according to which there is a discrimination against the Spanish language in Catalonia.

«Allà [Stop Pujades] estàs a Nou Barris, doncs allà ve... ve qui vol i es fa servir català i castellà indistintament, i ningú diu res.» (Eduard)

«There [Stop Pujades] you are in [the borough of] Nou Barris, so there... anybody who wants to come can come, and Catalan and Spanish are used interchangeably, and nobody says anything.»

Laura: *Jo sóc catalanoparlant a casa i em surt [...] més normal fer-ho en català, i a una altra persona li sortiria més en castellà... [...]*

Daniel: *No trobem, no ho trobem problema això.*

Miquel: *Jo et puc contestar en castellà tranquil·lament, eh? Sí, en català o en castellà, escrivint inclús, eh? No és una cosa que no... que sigui un problema.*

Laura: I speak Catalan at home and to me it comes more naturally to do it in Catalan, and to someone else it will come more naturally in Spanish.

Daniel: We don't find, we don't find that a problem.

Miquel: I can easily reply to you in Spanish, huh? Yes, in Catalan or in Spanish, even in writing, huh? It's not something ... that poses a problem.

«... no hubo ningún tipo de problema, la gente se expresaba en su idioma y... y... y totalmente respeto.» (Roberto)

«... there was no problem of any kind, people spoke in their language and... and... and fully respect.»

«Sortien a parlar uns i parlaven en català, l'altre parlava en castellà, fins i tot un dia va sortir un parlant en anglès. No hi havia massa problema, a la plaça.» (Neus)

«Some would come up and speak in Catalan, someone else would speak in Spanish, one day someone spoke in English even. There wasn't much of a problem, in the square.»

«Cadascú parla amb la llengua que es troba més a gust. És que no hi ha... amb això no hi ha...» (Sara)

«Everyone speaks in the language they feel most comfortable in. There isn't... with this there is no...»

Remarkably, the «it's not a problem» discourse seemed to come up in the conversation when Spanish came into the picture. Only José, who belongs to the organisation with the most extreme distribution of language use, hinted at the not-a-problem discourse talking about Catalan: «[la comunicació interna es en castellano] pero a la hora de comunicar pues tratamos de comunicar en catalán, sin... sin ningún problema» («[in-group communication is in Spanish] but when we communicate, well, we try to communicate in Catalan, without... without any kind of problem»).

Communication strategy and languages

From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is also interesting to note that none of the groups had considered the language issue (in the sense of code) as part of their communication strategy. In fact, some of the groups did not even have one such strategy, as Eduard stated very clearly: «No, no, no hi ha una estratègia comunicativa, en general jo no l'he viscut» («No, no, there isn't a communication strategy, in general I have not seen one»). Neus did report having some protocols or style guides, which included things such as how a social media account ought to be used.

Very often, the groups have guidelines on what type of language to favour (inclusive, gender-neutral language) or avoid, although again, given the nature of these movements, the specifics are not set in stone but rather are flexible and often revisited. And sometimes they are more presupposed than anything, as Toni admitted: «Diguem que tot això ve una mica heretat [...], això ja estava assumit allà al nucli central [Plaça

de Catalunya]» («Let's say that all this is sort of inherited [...], this had been taken on at the central core [Plaça de Catalunya]»).

Even if some guidelines are in place, however, they very rarely include the issue of which languages to use when. All interviewees were enquired about this, but only one of the groups reported having such guidelines, although these seemed to be merely suggestions, from the way Neus explained them:

«... depèn una mica: si és una campanya [local] es procura tuitejar en tots els idiomes, o sigui, possibles, no? [...] Si és una campanya estatal, es procura fer tuits propis una mica [...] en català, i... i pots retuitejar com si diguéssim en altres idi... en castellà, o en anglès; [...] a internacional sí que ho tenim clar, el protocol és... de... les coses d'aquí cap enfora, en anglès, vull dir, perquè la idea de la comissió d'internacional era comunicar les coses que estan passant aquí cap enfora.» (Neus)

«... it depends a little: if it's a [local] campaign, you try to tweet in all possible languages, right? If it's a state-wide campaign, you sort of try to do your own tweets in Catalan, and... and you can retweet as it were in other lang... in Spanish or English; in International we are clear, the protocol is... things from here outwards, in English, I mean, because the idea of the international commission was to communicate outward the things that are happening here.»

None of the other groups had any agreed guidelines on the issue of language choice. In fact, most said that this issue had never been discussed in any of their meetings, like Sara, who simply said *«No ens ho hem qüestionat mai, no ho sé!»* («We've never thought about it, I don't know!»). Even Neus herself hinted in another moment of the interview that language choice may come down to a default issue: *«Hi ha hagut molts [...] moments que un diu, 'hòstia, ens posicionem a favor o és en contra?' Bueno pues si no es a favor és en contra, mira, què vols que et digui?»* («There have been many times when you say, 'damn, do we position ourselves for or against?' Well, if not for, then against, look, what can I say?»).

Interestingly, when asked if the issue of what language should be used had come up at all, many respondents mostly referred to the issue of Catalan independence. That is, rather than quoting examples of discussions around language, the question made them think of occasions when a pro-independence group was adamant that their perspective be included in the group's political stance. When asked about whether a debate or any sort of informal conversation around language had taken place, Daniel answered in the following way:

Daniel: Si algú ha intentat fer el debat, s'ha deixat de banda. Perquè no és... no és una qüestió de... de desunir, per exemple; tenim altres... altres objectius més... més vitals a nivell social.

[...]

Investigadora: Perquè quina... quina confrontació podria...

Daniel: No, de definir-se, per exemple va haver-hi un moment algú que plantejava que... que l'assemblea es definís, no? Per exemple, el 15 M s'ha declarat a favor de l'autodeterminació simplement...

Daniel: If anyone tried to start the debate, we sidelined it. Because it's not... it's not about separating, for example, we have other... other goals that are more... more pressing at the social level.

[...]

Researcher: Because what... what sort of confrontation could there...?

Daniel: No, to define ourselves, for example there was a time ... when someone suggested the assembly defined its position, no? For example, 15M simply declared itself in favour of self-determination...

Other participants reported anecdotes related to groups or individuals who mixed the two issues (languages and the group's position regarding independence), but none recalled a specific debate on language choice from the point of view of the group's communication strategy.

Remarkably, during the interviews most respondents repeated that the issue of language was not important:

«*Lo important per nosaltres no és això, lo important és arribar, comunicar que tenim un problema a nivell d'educació, que s'estan fent unes retallades brutals.*» (Sara)

«This is not what's important for us, what's important is to reach, to communicate that we have a problem in terms of education, that massive cuts are being made.»

«*Aquí no es un problema de lengua, es un problema de actividad y de... y de lucha, ¿no?*» (José)

«This is not an issue of language, it is a matter of activity and ... and struggle, right?»

«*No és una cosa que ens preocupi massa.*» (Daniel)

«It's not something we worry much about.»

When asked whether they thought the language used could affect the way the message was received by an individual, the replies went in many different directions. José, for example, who has been involved in grassroots movements since the seventies, simply said: «*En todos los años que llevo nadie me ha venido a decir: 'hostia, ¿qué pone ahí?'*» («In all my years no one has ever come to me saying, 'damn, what does that say?'»).

Neus had a clear idea that it is important to consider your audience («*Quin és el target, quin és... o sigui una mica pensar en retòrica, no?, en retòrica bàsica: a qui em dirigeixo*»; «What is the target, or what is ... I mean, thinking of rhetoric a little, right?, basic rhetoric: whom am I addressing»), which tallies with the fact that hers was the only group to have some guidelines on which language to use. In fact, the description in their Twitter account states that they tweet in «Catalan, Spanish and English». Yet at another point in the interview she reflected that although the movement happened to choose the right language to communicate considering the target audience (Catalan for a middle-class target), this was probably not a conscious choice.

Roberto and Pedro, who belonged to the group with the smallest presence of Catalan in the sample (see Table 4), were also the only other ones to say that you had to consider your target and ensure «*que nadie se sienta, digamos, desplazado por el tema del idioma*» («so that no one feels, say, alienated by the language issue»), in Roberto's words. Alba also reflected that it was probably easier for the message to reach the target audience if it was in their language. Hers was, however, a thought that arose from the interview, as she admitted:

«*Jo crec que el missatge si que arriba més, [...] al final el llenguatge és una estructura cerebral, i arriba més [...] en funció de la [...] llengua principal. [...] però és curiós que de cara a l'exterior –jo no ho havia... no ho havia pensat mai, però és veritat– de cara a l'exterior s'elegeixi el català.*» (Alba)

«I do believe the message is better received, at the end of the day language is a brain structure, and it's better received based on the main language. But it is interesting that outwards –I hadn't ... I'd never thought about it, but it's true– outwards we choose Catalan.»

6.2 Reasons for using a language

Since none of the groups reported having discussed the reasons for their language behaviour in formal, outward communication, participants were asked to give their opinion as to why they had naturally ended up doing it in a particular manner. Table 5 details the different reasons that were alluded to, and the number of participants who mentioned each of them.

Table 5. Reasons for use of each language in formal communication and people citing them

Reasons for using Catalan

Language of Catalonia	6
Language of government	6
All can understand	5
Down to the individual	5
Historical reasons	4
Language policy	4
Needs to be defended	4
Coherence	2
Formality	2
Respect	2
Social class	2
Out of common sense	1

Reasons for using Spanish

Down to the individual	4
Age	2
Foreigners	1
State-wide	1

The fact that 7 out of the 9 organisations claim to use Catalan or mostly Catalan for their outward communications (see Table 4) explains that this language gathered a larger number of reasons. Interestingly, out of the four reasons for the use of Spanish detailed in Table 5, three are related to lack of proficiency, which in effect is lack of choice.

The factor *Age* was mentioned by Roberto, whose organisation is based in a town with a very high percentage of Spanish speakers. As a result of the language-in-education policy, younger age groups are generally proficient in both languages, whereas people over 50 years of age from a Spanish-speaking background may not have learnt Catalan. This effect will be more noticeable in areas such as the city of El Prat de Llobregat, where immigration has traditionally had a strong impact.⁴ According to Roberto, «*la juventud no se mueve*» («young people don't get involved»).

⁴ Fabà and Torrijos (2014) identified that Spanish is more widely present in older age groups. According to Idescat's 2001 Census, knowledge of Catalan among the age groups over 50 in El Prat de Llobregat is on average 18% lower than in Catalonia as a whole, whereas it is comparable or even slightly higher for the population between 20 and 50 years of age. Source: <http://www.idescat.cat/>

The factor *Foreigners* comes from Neus’s intervention, who spoke about a particular social media account which was mostly managed by people from other places («*hi ha un chileno, un no sé què, un no sé quantos... Llavors clar, tothom tuiteja en castellà*»; «there’s a Chilean, a this, a that... So of course, everyone tweets in Spanish»). Although it was not made clear, lack of proficiency may arguably constitute a key factor in the linguistic behaviour of this group. With regard to the *State-wide* reason, it was also Neus who mentioned another social media account aimed at an audience across Spain, rather than a local target, something that effectively leaves it out of the scope of this study.

With regards to the factors cited as determining the choice of Catalan, they have been grouped into five categories in order to structure the discussion (see Figure 1).

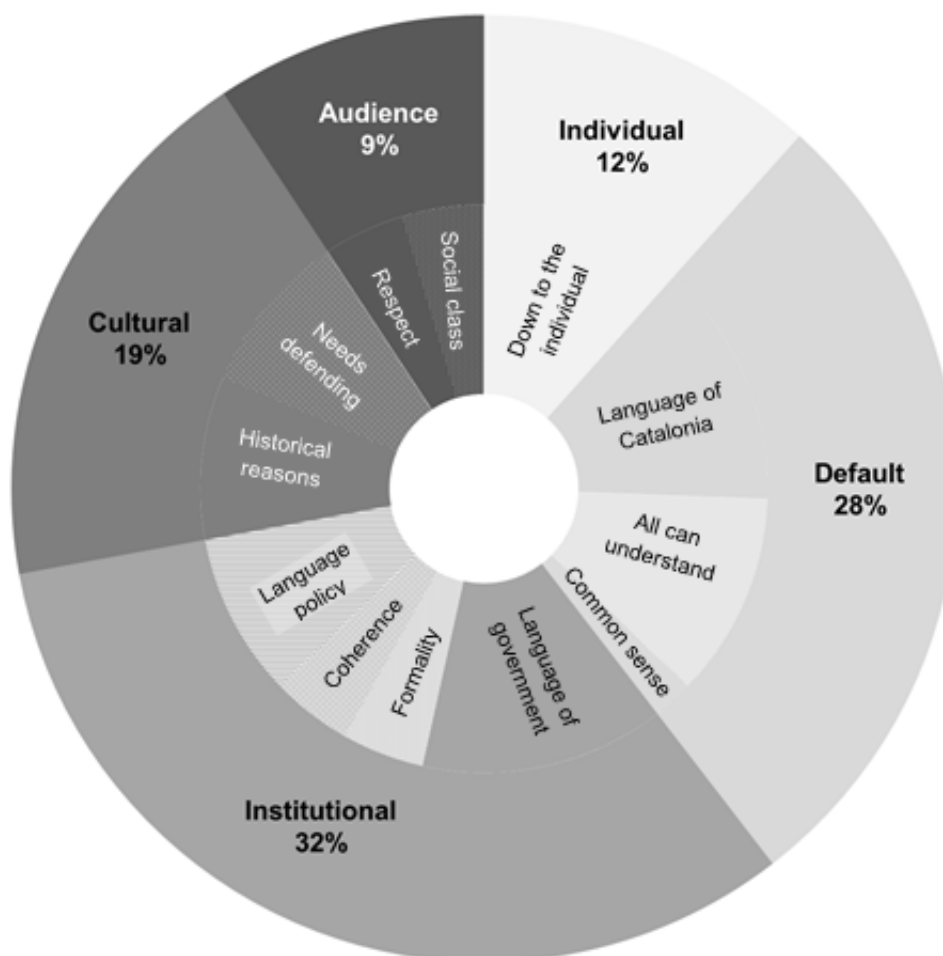


Figure 1. Reasons for using Catalan, by categories, and percentage of participants citing them.

Individual choice

It is worth noting that the factor we have labelled *Down to the individual* shows up for both languages, something that reinforces Vila i Moreno’s (1996) view on norms of language use in Catalonia (see above). This category groups all interventions where a respondent stated that the reason for using a specific language was because whoever was typing up the posts or tweets would simply do it in the language of their choice.

In the group interview with the 15M assembly of Sants and Les Corts, we were lucky enough to have the main community manager for each area taking part⁵. Marta, who usually manages the social media accounts of 15M Les Corts, stated that she felt more comfortable writing in Spanish, as it is her mother tongue, but made an effort to also use Catalan because she knows that this is the language of a lot of people in her *barri* («*a Les*

⁵ Sants and Les Corts are two neighbouring *barris* or boroughs of the city of Barcelona, each of which had a 15M cell at the start of the movement. When momentum began to wear down, the two cells decided to merge, although they maintain distinct online profiles.

Corts hi ha molta gent... hi ha un sentiment molt independentista. Llavors clar, no sé, em sap greu [...] no escriure en català»; «in Les Corts there's a lot of people... there's a strong pro-independence feeling. So of course, I don't know, I feel bad to not write in Catalan»). In fact, in 2015 their tweets were evenly distributed between the two languages, whereas 62% of their Facebook posts were in Catalan. Toni, the community manager for 15M Sants, is also Spanish L1, but said he wrote all posts in Catalan. Daniel concurred: «*ell [Toni] de cara enfora en català, ara, de cara a nosaltres...*» («him [Toni], in Catalan outwards, but towards us...»), and confirmed once more the disparity in language behaviour in these two domains.

Yet, as Figure 1 shows, individual choice only accounts for just over 12% of the reasons given by the respondents for using Catalan.

Thinking of the audience

The factors *Respect* and *Social class* have been included in a category called *Audience*, since both take into account the target audience of the message and adjust language behaviour in accordance. Marta's statement in the previous subsection, for example, also touches on this. No such reasons, however, have been used to include more Spanish in the communications of these movements, despite the fact that this is the majority language in the Barcelona metropolitan area (first language of 64% of the population here, habitual language of 60% and, more importantly, language of identification of 56%, see above).

Catalan by default

Many of the answers on Catalan being used as the language of outward communications did not delve deep into the motivations, as if no specific reason was required. These responses have been included under the label *Default*, as they configure a scenario where Catalan is perceived as the default language for these types of communications and therefore its use does not require much argumentation. As Neus said, it may just be common sense:

«Aquí estàs parlant més aviat [...] de les coses que estan passant per aquí al voltant [...] O sigui no té massa sentit parlar en... en castellà, no? Quan hi ha campanyes de retallades estatals i tota la pesca, llavors sí que pots fotre algun tuit en castellà, evidentment, no hi ha massa problema. O sigui, en general és sentit comú.» (Neus)

«Here you're talking rather about the things that happen around here. So it doesn't make much sense to speak in... in Spanish, right? When there are state-wide campaigns on cuts and all that jazz, then we can tweet something in Spanish, of course, there isn't much of a problem. I mean, in general it's common sense.»

Another oft-cited reason is the fact that Catalan is the language of Catalonia, something that was typically uttered in a matter-of-factly fashion:

«Das prioridad al catalán, estamos aquí, en Cataluña, por lo tanto yo creo que... que eso se debe aceptar.» (Pedro)

«... you give priority to Catalan, we are here, in Catalonia, therefore I think that... that people have to accept this.»

«Simplement tens una identitat respecte a l'espai on estàs, llavors, el català ... sembla més natural de fer-ho.» (Neus)

«You simply have an identity with respect to the place where you are, then, Catalan... it seems more natural to do it.»

«Assumim que això és la llengua de Catalunya i, claro, nosotros somos de aquí, estamos centrados aquí en Barcelona, pues... es el idioma del país.» (Toni)

«We accept that this is the language of Catalonia and, of course, we're from here, we are focused here in Barcelona, so... it's the language of the country.»

It could certainly be argued that Spanish is also a language of Catalonia, particularly bearing in mind the linguistic make-up of the region where the researched groups operate, yet this argument was not mentioned by any participant. Once again, the default value of Catalan seems to be taken for granted by most respondents.

The final group of reasons within this category, labelled *All can understand*, is probably the one that more strongly suggests the idea that Catalan is default: if everyone can understand my message in the default language, there is no need to switch to another one or send it in more than one language. The most interesting example in this sense was one provided by José, who said that the in-group language for his cell was Spanish yet tweets or protest signs would normally be in Catalan, even if he acknowledged that the latter language might pose comprehension problems in longer texts:

«*Cuando son noticias de: 'vamos al banco tal [a hacer una protesta]' se entiende perfectamente, o sea que no es... No es decir un texto grande que a lo mejor habría gente que tendría dificultades, ¿no?»* (José)

«When it's news like: 'We're going to such and such bank [to do a protest]' it can perfectly be understood, so it's not ... It's not as if it's a long text that maybe there would be people who would have trouble [understanding], right?»

Eduard also acknowledged that some people might not be proficient in Catalan, but assumed that this is not a big deal, and appears to deal with it rather nonchalantly:

«*I llavors quan vas repartint i veus algú que no hi entén, dic: 'és en català, eh?, però així practiques!'*» (Eduard)

«And then when you're handing out [flyers] and you see someone who doesn't understand, I say 'it's in Catalan, huh?, but this way you can practice!」»

Clearly, the bottom line seems to be that there needs to be a reason to use Spanish, whereas none is required for Catalan. This perception of Catalan occupying the default position among the languages of Catalonia deserved further exploration.

Catalan as the institutional language and the effects of language policy

When asked to reflect on what the reasons for this might be, most participants provided arguments that touch on the effects of language policy and the level of formality. These have been grouped under the category *Institutional* and account for almost a third of the answers, as Figure 1 shows. According to six respondents, one reason is the fact that Catalan is the language of government and the public administration in Catalonia (one of the main intervention areas of language policy, as explained earlier). Roberto, for example, was very clear about this point: «*Lo oficial, aquí, es el catalán. [...], ya es una forma, no sé, se ve... lo oficial se ve más en catalán*» («The official thing here is Catalan, it's already a way, I don't know, you see... you see the official things more in Catalan»). Sara too acknowledged this fact: «*a nivell d'institucions sí que és veritat que com t'ho fan en català, suposo que ja fas una mica de dir, pam!, ho haig de fer en català*» («in terms of institutions, it's true that since they do it in Catalan, you sort of say, alright, I must do it in Catalan»).

Alba reflected on this during the interview, and realised that their group is applying the modus operandi of official institutions:

«*Com a organització s'adopta... e... lo institucional, no?, que és l'expressió en català, i després en castellà, no? A lo millor la barreta, i després en castellano... la traducción, para que llegue a más gente. [...]* Realment no ho havia pensat mai a la vida, fins aquest moment.» (Alba)

«As an organisation, we adopt the... uh... the institutional way, no?, which is expression in Catalan, and then in Spanish, right? Maybe the slash and then in Spanish... the translation so it can reach more people. The truth is I'd never thought about this in my life, until this moment.»

Some respondents referred to the effects of language policy in a wider sense, not restricted to the use of Catalan in official institutions. Specifically, schools and the media were considered to have had a substantial impact on current language behaviour:

«*Jo crec que té més influència això, que hi hagin ràdios i televisions en català, perquè clar tu veus a casa... arribes a casa, poses la tele, vull veure la meva pel·lícula favorita i tal i, escolta, és en català, i li dona més formalitat que no diguem-ne que sigui una... una llengua per la burocràcia, no?» (Toni)*

«I think this has more of an influence, the fact that there are radios and televisions in Catalan, because I mean at home you see... you get home, turn on the telly, I want to watch my favourite movie and stuff, and look, it's in Catalan, and this gives more formality to it than the fact that it's, so to speak, a... a language for bureaucracy, right?»

Laura: [si no fos per l'escola, el panorama] lingüístic seria tan diferent, perquè pensa que tota la immigració a Catalunya, els fills d'aquesta immigració parlen el català, [...] jo sóc mig mig, no?, però, bueno, som fills de... de la immersió lingüística aquesta educativa, saps?

Toni: Jo diria més que del Club Súper 3.⁶

Laura: [if it weren't for school] the language [situation] would be so different, because you have to bear in mind that all the immigration in Catalonia, the children of this immigration speak Catalan, I'm half and half, right?, but, I mean, we're the children of... of this education language immersion, you know?

Toni: I'd say of *Club Súper 3*, rather.

«*Durant tots els 80 i tot això es va generar una identitat en aquest... en aquest país, es va treballar per generar una identitat, recuperar una identitat, no?, d'alguna forma. Jo puc estar més o menys d'acord amb el... amb els mètodes que es van fer servir, no?, però el cas és que es va fer, vull dir, aleshores, que som fruit d'allò, sembla estrany no fer-ho [comunicar en català].» (Neus)*

«In the 80s and stuff a certain identity was created in this ... in this country, they worked to create an identity, to recover an identity, right?, somehow. I can be more or less in agreement with the methods that were used, right?, but the thing is that it happened, I mean, then, that we are the result of that, it seems weird not to do it [communicate in Catalan].»

For most participants, it is clear that these elements have positioned Catalan as the language of formal situations:

«*Quan estàs en una AMPA [...] estàs en el teu àmbit, és com més... més íntim, no? Però clar, quan vam crear la comissió, és que dius a veure, aquí representem a pares, a mares, a alumnes, a professors, [...] i estem defensant també lo que és l'escola pública, l'educació pública. I llavors... el nivell, el puges.» (Sara)*

«When you are in an AMPA⁷ you are in your realm, it's like more... more personal, right? But obviously, when we set up the commission, you say, well, we're here representing fathers, mothers, students, teachers, and we are also defending state schools as such, public education. So then you raise your standards.»

⁶ *Club Súper 3* is a television block programme that includes cartoons and other children's shows. Produced and broadcast by Catalonia's public television, this Catalan-language show has been highly successful since it was launched in 1991.

⁷ AMPA stands for *Associació de Mares i Pares d'Alumnes* (School Parents' Association).

One of the interviewees, Roberto, was asked what language he used with most of his friends. He said it depends on the person, but with most of them he speaks in Spanish, and in any case when the whole group of friends is together, they all use Spanish. He was then asked what would happen if he were to get together with his group of friends and stage a protest, what language would they use in that scenario? His answer was: «*El cartel será en catalán y la protesta y reivindicación en castellano*» («The sign will be in Catalan, and the protest and demand in Spanish») – that is, the written message in Catalan, the spoken word in Spanish.

Toni also used the idea of formality to justify the fact that all written communications were in Catalan even if their in-group communication was normally bilingual. In his opinion, it is advisable to strive for coherence: «*un canal oficial [...], una mica més per estètica, si més no que no sigui tan caòtic, no?*» («an official channel, a bit more for aesthetics, at least so it's not as chaotic, right?»). Remarkably, coherence in Toni's view entails using only Catalan in the «official channel».

One interesting side to this is the fact that the movements studied in this research are defined by their anti-establishment nature. They were asked whether adopting the institutional approach to language, even if not as a conscious decision, could somehow compromise their rebellious flare. All answers in this respect were very straightforward – the establishment is one thing, the people another, and the language belongs to the people:

«*El 15M el que ha pretès és comunicar-se amb la gent, no ser contestatari amb la gent.*» (Neus)

«What 15M has aimed for is to communicate with people, not to be rebellious against people.»

«*Nosotros no vamos contra un partido político, [...] protestamos contra lo que consideramos abusos del poder, [...] digamos que el idioma es neutro para estas cosas.*» (Toni)

«We do not oppose a political party, we protest against what we consider to be abuse of power, let's say that language is neutral for these things.»

«*El català i la cultura catalana, [...] des de molt abans de que existissin, diguéssim, una Generalitat, un llenguatge oficial i uns mitjans oficials, havia estat adoptat pel... pel... per la gent progressista des de la guerra civil, [...], des d'abans, era el llenguatge del poble. [...] Després, això s'ha mixtificat, s'ha complicat bastant més perquè l'han absorbit... [...] Des d'una visió política d'una opció o altra, han intentat diguéssim apropiat-se'l.*» (Miquel)

«Catalan language and culture, since long before there existed, let's say, a Generalitat, an official language and official media, they had been adopted by... by progressive people since the civil war, since before, it was the language of the people. Later on this was falsified, it became rather complicated because it was taken over. From a certain political perspective or other, they have tried to let's say appropriate it.»

Language is culture

The argument pointed out above by Miquel links with the last of the categories identified in this research, that we have labelled *Cultural*. This umbrella covers the answers that either stated that Catalan constitutes a value in itself, and is therefore worth defending, or that alluded to historical reasons.

With regards to the need to defend the Catalan language, it is remarkable that the most crystal clear examples come from people who have Spanish as their first language, and sometimes also as their habitual language:

«*Directament ho hem fet en català perquè com també lluitem perquè creiem que la llengua és la que... hem de defensar que és la catalana, no?*» (Sara)

«We've done it directly in Catalan because, since we also fight because we think that the language is the one we must defend, and it's the Catalan language, right?»

«¡Yo creo que es un derecho! Estamos aquí... Yo nací en [Andalucía], eh? Desde los cuatro años estoy aquí, por eso. Pero es un derecho, e... *el defender la tierra.*» (Pedro)

«I think it's a right! We are here ... I was born in [Andalusia], huh? I've been here since I was four, though. But it is a right, erm... to defend the land.»

Toni: Hay una tradición en lo que es el... las izquierdas de que es un valor más a... a... a reivindicar.

Marta: Sí, sí, yo también pienso lo mismo. Es un valor más a reivindicar, sí.

Toni: There is a tradition in the whole... in the left, that it is one more value to... to.. to vindicate.

Marta: Yes, yes, I agree. It's one more value to vindicate, yes.

Arguably, this awareness that Catalan must be defended has its roots in the history of the language, specifically in the repression it has endured in different periods and especially (given its proximity in time) the prosecution under Franco's dictatorship. As Miquel said, «*potser sí que hi continua havent una... des [d] els grups o moviments que podríem dir progressistes, d'assumir la llengua i la cultura catalanes com un... com part de la seva pròpia diguéssim... esperit, no?*» («maybe there is still a... among what we could call progressive groups or movements, to adopt the Catalan language and culture as a... as a part of their own let's say... spirit, right?»).

7 Discussion and final remarks

Considering the data on language use in the Barcelona metropolitan area, where Spanish outweighs Catalan, and bearing in mind the norms of language use in Catalonia referred to earlier, it could be expected for social movements in this region to communicate outwards either in both languages or chiefly in Spanish. Yet the findings of the present research indicate that this is not the case.

The first important finding is that Catalan is overrepresented in the outward communication, both reported and actual, of new social movements in comparison to its presence in society at large or, indeed, in relation to its weight in the in-group communication practices of the movements themselves.

This behaviour could be analysed from the perspective of diglossia, in that what happens at the informal level is different from what occurs in formal domains. However, as has been pointed earlier, Catalonia can hardly be considered a diglossic society. This can be observed in this study too – the language behaviours in the two domains (in-group and outwards) can clearly be distinguished, but they are far from monolithic. Rather, what happens is simply that one of the domains, namely that of outward, formal communications, leans more towards Catalan than the other one does, but one would be hard pressed to say that there is a language behaviour that is inappropriate in either domain.

The reasons that lie behind the contrasting behaviours in formal and informal settings are more elusive, not least because what we see is but the result of a myriad of individual and largely unconscious decisions of language choice. As many respondents noted, which language is used is not something they care much about.

In fact, the lack of preoccupation for the language of formal communication is, in itself, another important finding of this study. In a bilingual society such as Catalonia, where most of the population can understand both languages, it is indeed possible for individuals to not consider this aspect (as opposed to what would happen in Canada or Belgium, for example). Still, the fact that none of the groups has discussed a communication strategy is noteworthy. Bearing in mind that in most cases the members of new social movements are young, educated individuals, lack of awareness on the importance of communicating effectively can be ruled out. Rather, the absence of debate seems to stem from the underlying language attitudes.

In other words, this lack of debate makes more notable the fact that most of those individual decisions happen to flow in the same direction. This is a clear indicator that a shared perception or attitude towards language exists in society. Shared perceptions, as noted by Vila i Moreno (2005), configure linguistic norms.

In the case at hand, it can be argued that the norm taking shape prescribes that Catalan is not just appropriate but also natural and sufficient for formal communications in a setting of political activism.

Previous works have concluded that Catalan enjoys a high prestige status, and the language behaviour identified in this research is clearly in accordance with this and also with previous findings regarding the strong ethnolinguistic vitality of Catalan. Moreover, this prestige seems to act in such a way that makes Catalan the default language, hence requiring no justification as to its use. It seems that, as Pujolar & González argued, «Catalan is becoming increasingly ‘anonymous’ or ethnically unmarked» (2013: 140). This would explain the converging behaviours in different groups despite the absolute lack of debate around this issue. The default value of Catalan stands out as another key finding of this study.

This research has also tapped into the factors that inform attitudes towards Catalan in the context of grassroots movements. The two main factors identified through the respondents’ contributions are related to historical reasons and to the effects of the language policy implemented since the advent of democracy and the devolution of powers. This is consistent with what was reported earlier, that public administration, the media, and education are the areas where language policy has been the most successful. Not only were all three factors mentioned by interviewees, but it can hardly be disputed that they have had a fundamental influence on the linguistic reality of Catalonia. This confirmation constitutes the last notable contribution of the present work.

Staying within the scope of the present research, it is clear that the language immersion policy in education has led to a situation where most citizens can actually choose which language to use. As exemplified by Roberto and Pedro’s organisation, where most members belong to the older age groups, lack of proficiency inevitably impacts on language behaviour by effectively limiting choice. With regards to the mass media, they have reinforced proficiency by providing a formal model of language (Strubell 2001) and helped normalise the language. Interestingly enough, two of the participants in the group interview (Laura and Toni) exchanged their views on which of these two (education and media) were more fundamental to explain the status of Catalan today.

In short, Spanish-speakers in Catalonia «have gradually become ‘new’ Catalan-speakers, i.e. functionally bilingual in the sense that they can routinely use both languages in daily life» (Pujolar & Puigdevall 2015).

The fact that Catalan is the language of power (even if only within the borders of Catalonia) cannot be underestimated. Along with the media, this has helped bring the language to life in the formal domain, and after all, as Roberto said, official things are done in Catalan.

Cultural and historical reasons made up the second factor that showed up in the findings. As Mole argued, «while the constructivist argument that elites construct national identities from above for specific instrumental purposes is persuasive, it does not explain why these identities would necessarily be accepted, indeed cherished, by society at large» (2008: 8). Applying this argument to the normalisation of a language, it could be said that culture (in other words, people) is the necessary glue to hold together any institutional efforts that may be put in place. Nevertheless, the culture factor is necessary but not sufficient – as explained above, language choice is not possible without language proficiency.

Finally, it’s worth noting the relevance of Corbeil’s (1980) distinction between individualised and institutionalised communications, which lies in the author’s view that modifying patterns of language use at the institutional level will eventually transfer to individualised communications. As Pujolar and Puigdevall posited with regards to new speakers of Catalan, «the institutional pressures that initially created the need to speak the language eventually led them to use it in informal contexts too, thus gradually blurring the contrast between Catalan as an institutional language and Spanish as both institutional and informal» (2015: 183). If new social movements can indeed be considered to sit between the formal and informal domains, and considering the rather sound position of Catalan in Catalonia in terms of its ethnolinguistic vitality, we might be witnessing the first stages of this process. This may prove a fruitful and interesting area for further research.

8 References

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