

## Title: Linguistic “*mudes*” and the de-ethnicization of language choice in Catalonia

**Abstract:** Catalan speakers have traditionally constructed the Catalan language as the main emblem of their identity even as migration filled the country with substantial numbers of speakers of Castilian. Although Catalan speakers have been bilingual in Catalan and Castilian for generations, sociolinguistic research has shown how speakers’ bilingual practices have always been sensitive to keeping a clear sense of the boundaries between the languages and between their communities of speakers. The norms of language choice in everyday life have reflected this as Catalans have tended to use Catalan basically between those considered to “be” Catalan. This paper shows that this situation is gradually changing due to new conditions of mobility and access to language, that is, because most native speakers of Castilian are now bilingual and speak Catalan often in everyday life. On the basis of a corpus of 25 interviews and 15 group discussions conducted in Catalonia with a sample of young people of different profiles, we show that young people in Catalonia increasingly rely on prima facie linguistic behavior rather than ethnolinguistic classification to decide which language to speak in specific contexts, so that language use loses its earlier function of ethnolinguistic boundary maintenance.

**Keywords:** Catalan, ethnicity, multilingualism, language choice, second language acquisition

**Word Count:** 7897

### Introduction

Modern ideologies of language have traditionally posited that languages are a fundamental component of personal and group identities and that they are clearly bounded objects separate from one another. This has been a basic tenet of linguistic minority nationalisms and nation-state building, whereby ideally monolingual native speakers make up the nation’s constituency and accord legitimacy to its institutions. Catalonia has been no exception and Catalans have traditionally constructed language as the main emblem of identity embodied in its speakers (Woolard 1989). This is why most native-speakers of Catalan identify themselves as such and very rarely as “bilingual” despite the fact that they have been proficient in Castilian for generations (Pujolar 2011). Sociolinguistic research in Catalonia has also observed how speakers’ bilingual practices have always been sensitive to keeping a clear sense of the boundaries between the two languages as well as between their communities of speakers. The norms of language choice in everyday life have reflected this fact as speakers have tended to use language according to the ethno-linguistic identities they attribute to interlocutors. Past research has repeatedly established that Catalan functioned as an in-group language only used amongst those categorized as “Catalan” (Woolard 1989; Boix-Fuster 1993). This state of affairs was arguably supported by the fact that only a minority of native speakers of Castilian had traditionally been able to speak Catalan. In this article, we intend to show that this situation is gradually changing due to the new contemporary conditions of mobility and access to language. On the basis of a corpus of 25 interviews and 15 group discussions conducted in Catalonia, we will show that young Catalans increasingly rely on contextual factors to decide in which language to speak and that the attribution of group identities is losing relevance. Because our argument relies fundamentally on life-history accounts, we have felt the need to coin a new term, linguistic “*muda*” (pl. *mudes*, pron. [muðəz]), to name the specific biographical junctures where individuals enact significant changes in their linguistic repertoire. We use this neologism to express changes in language use that are important for people’s self-presentations in everyday-life, but whose implications for ethnic ascription are open to negotiation and contestation.

The now classic appraisal of Woolard (1989) about the politics of language choice in Catalonia posited that native Catalans switched between the use of Catalan and Castilian according to the perceived identity of the person they addressed in face-to-face interaction. People were popularly categorized as “*Catalans*” and “*Castellans*” according to their native language and spoken to accordingly. As a consequence, Catalan was used amongst “Catalans” only and thereby defined or contributed to define the social spaces and the people to whom this category applied as opposed to the “Castilians”. Language choice both relied on and reproduced the social categories that constructed Catalans and Castilians as differentiated cultural groups, the former being the legitimate local dwellers, the latter the “outsiders” or “non-Catalans”. The two groups did not only differ in terms of linguistic repertoire; but also in terms of life trajectories and social standing, as “Catalans” stemmed generally from autochthonous families and occupied semi-skilled and skilled professions and “Castilians” largely came from immigrant families that had provided the less skilled workforce of the growing local industry. Thus there was an ethno-linguistic divide that corresponded with and potentially symbolized differences in socioeconomic status and access to symbolic capital.

As these patterns of social and ethno-linguistic difference emerged while Catalan was banned from public usage, the establishment of regional autonomy during the 1980s, with Catalan as a co-official language and explicitly treated as the “national” language, challenged the sociolinguistic status quo. The Catalan political elites wished to construct the Catalan population as “*un sol poble*” ‘a single people’, so that the common dichotomy between “Catalans” and “non-Catalans” became problematic and largely taboo in public discourse. The Catalan language had to be, as the first campaign expressed it, “*cosa de tots*” ‘something belonging to/applying to all’ (Boix-Fuster, Melià, and Montoya 2011). The programmatic solution was to make the whole population bilingual and hope that Castilian speakers would eventually feel that Catalan was “their own language” too. The educational policies set up in the early 1980s were the main means to achieve this end, as their explicit aim was to ensure that all Catalan citizens became fully bilingual, an objective which has been successfully achieved (Arnau 2004; Pujolar 2010).

However, the norms of language choice and linguistic ideologies in everyday informal talk proved more resilient than expected or wished by language planners. These norms, as we pointed out above, defined the occasions in which Catalan was spoken and the participants eligible for such occasions. It was not so easy to change these dynamics. First, in the early years of the new policies, millions of Castilian speakers could not be expected to become bilingual immediately. Second, millions of Catalan-speakers felt safer sticking to the patterns of linguistic practice they had used so far. Although the administration encouraged Catalan-speakers to conduct bilingual conversations instead of switching to Castilian when addressed in this language, this was generally interpreted as rude, too formal or politically aggressive, even when most speakers of Castilian could in fact comfortably understand spoken Catalan. This means that although public discourses about language changed quickly in the media and among politicians, language practices in everyday life changed much more slowly. The politically-inclusive, nationalist, liberal representations of Catalan linguistic identity lived side by side with the traditional practices that mobilized language in the production of ethnic and class divides (Boix-Fuster 1993; Pujolar 2001; Woolard 1989; Woolard 2003). Woolard (2008) has recently proposed to conceptualize this situation in terms of contrasting ideologies of anonymity and authenticity, as language practices and discourses in Catalonia dwell in this ambivalence between Catalan as a common public language that belongs to both everyone and

nobody, and as an identity marker that reproduces ethno-linguistic categories and acts as a mark of distinction or difference.

What we wish to show here is that the sociolinguistic changes envisioned by the language planners of the 1980s may well be taking place now as a result of 30 years of Catalan schooling combined with contemporary conditions of both social and geographical mobility. In short, Catalan is becoming increasingly “anonymous” or ethnically unmarked. The most recent studies of linguistic practices in Catalonia provide evidence of substantial changes taking place in the new generations (González et al. 2009; Pujolar, González, and Martínez 2010; Woolard 2011). Here we wish to argue specifically that the evidence suggests that the de-ethnicization of Catalan is reaching the types of social contexts and people that had so far sustained the ethno-national paradigm of language choice and identity, i.e. the so-called “man in the street”. We document and propose some explanations for these changes, which point towards a de-ethnicization of Catalan due to changing linguistic ecologies at various levels.

One key element in this process of sociolinguistic change has to do with the ways in which native speakers of Castilian adopt the use of the Catalan language in everyday life. To examine this issue, we have developed the concept of “*muda*”, which we define and characterize below as a change of linguistic repertoire in one’s life trajectory. Our exploration of linguistic “*mudes*” basically shows that Catalan language users have become so diverse that the language can no longer operate as a practical index of specific group belonging in everyday life. In this context, people must increasingly rely on the behavior made available by specific actors in specific contexts to make decisions in ways that rarely allow for ethnic classifications to be reliably established. As a result, language choice is moving from a collective to a personal paradigm: it gets connected with specific personal life trajectories rather than ethnic affiliations. However, our argument must make allowance for ambivalences: ethnolinguistic categories still linger in people’s minds and are used to structure and interpret behavior in various ways. They appear in narratives as actors seek to create a sense of what constitutes consistent linguistic behavior and particularly in occasions when events appear incongruent with the traditional expectations. They also linger, as Frekko (2011) observes, in the ways in which speakers “contain responsibility” in code-switches into Castilian. In a situation like this, where the old and the new coexist, we argue that de-ethnicization is gaining ground by showing that the old patterns of language choice based on ethnic ascription are only followed by a minority.

### **Linguistic “*mudes*” in life trajectories**

In this section, we describe how native speakers of Castilian become speakers of Catalan and how this upsets the procedures whereby Catalan ethnicity had traditionally been constructed. We begin by explaining how this previous state of affairs worked, then we provide statistical data on language use and finally we explain the notion of “*muda*” and the sociolinguistic processes it allows us to describe and characterize.

The traditional patterns of language choice in interaction were based on the fact that ethno-linguistic identities were easily available in social life, either because social relationships had a relatively long trajectory or because interactants could easily classify each other on the basis of readily available evidence in face to face encounters. When few other than native Catalans could

speak the language, the very fact of displaying this ability could suffice to diagnose identity. Alternatively, accent or specific forms of linguistic interference *gave away* the ethno-linguistic position of interactants. Additionally, those displaying their ability to speak Catalan could be assumed to possess an enduring disposition for doing so within the boundaries of the group thereby defined, so that their *catalanity* would equally be displayed in all contexts possible, such that no Castilian would be spoken to anyone qualifying as “Catalan”. Therefore, ethno-linguistic classification could also be safely done on the basis of overhearing or otherwise learning about the choices of others with others. Such a paradigm could of course lead to confusions and misunderstandings, and Woolard (1989) describes some of those; but these threats to the paradigm must have been rare enough and resolved without questioning it (Bastardas 1985; Bastardas 1986; Boix-Fuster 1990; Calsamiglia i Tusón 1980; Erill, Farràs, i Marcos 1992).

Nowadays the situation underlying interactional language choice is very different. First, a substantial number of native speakers of Castilian in Catalonia (actually, the majority, and almost all who are under 40) are fluent in Catalan. Most of them have studied in Catalan-medium schools and are accustomed to perform classroom activities and coursework in this language even when they may use mainly Castilian in other contexts. This minimizes the significance of linguistic competence as an indicator of group membership and hence as the basis for deciding what language to choose in a given interaction. Second, accents and interference phenomena have become less salient to the community of speakers, owing both to the fluency of Castilian speakers and also to the fact that native Catalan speakers growing up in metropolitan areas have nativised numerous linguistic features formerly constructed as L2 interference<sup>1</sup> (see Argenter, Pujolar, and Vilardell 1998). Third, as a consequence of this, a speaker’s choice to use Catalan in one context cannot be assumed to be directly consequential for his or her interactions in other contexts and with different interactional partners. In short, the choice of speaking Catalan is becoming less of a statement of ethnolinguistic group belonging than a statement of simple personal preference, which can be fluid, or of perceived appropriateness in a given context.

Existing survey evidence about linguistic usages is helpful to appreciate the overall scale of these changes. In Figure 1<sup>2</sup>, we can see how the language learned in primary socialization (i.e. language used with parents and/or tutors and/or siblings at an early age) compares with the language presently used habitually by respondents in everyday life.

Insert Figure 1 here

In this article, we consider the language of primary socialization as defining what has traditionally been understood as “native speaker” of either language. The values in figure 1 were elaborated on the basis of questions that invited respondents to assess the relative weight of each language in a range of contexts or with particular types of interlocutors expressed in percentage terms<sup>3</sup>. As we can see, Castilian has overtaken Catalan as a language of primary socialization mainly due to continued immigration and to low birth rates amongst Catalan-speaking families (see Subirats 1990). However, in this age group, the use of the two languages is presently balanced in people’s everyday lives. An incipient but significant share of the young population claim both languages to be “their own” (7%) or their “habitual languages” (16 %) (González et al. 2009: 46).

56,7 % of youth in Catalonia now claim to use both languages regularly at least more than 20% of the time (González et al. 2009: 46, 58). In short, functionally monolingual Castilian speakers have become a minority amongst native speakers of Castilian, and the numbers of people who use Catalan more than 20% of their time (75,7%) more than doubles those who had “only” or “mostly” Catalan as the language of primary socialization.

How do we get from a largely monolingual primary socialization to such a widespread bilingualism? It was through our qualitative data that we explored this issue, which led us to develop the concept of “*muda*” (González et al. 2009). The concept of “*muda*” as noun or “*mudarse*” as verb in Catalan commonly refers to changes of appearance, be it color or skin in animals or, for people, when they adopt a more carefully monitored appearance especially in dress (as in English ‘do up’ or ‘dress up’). Here we use this term to express the fact that adopting a new language in specific situations does involve a noticeable performative change, though not necessarily a claim to a specific ethnolinguistic ascription for self and/or others. Thus, seen from the traditional ethnolinguistic perspective, adopting a language was constructed as a form of boundary crossing involving assimilation. But if we do not wish to make this analytical assumption, what we have is a change in language use in which the scope and the implications for self are not predefined and more negotiable: this is a “*muda*”.

Thus a *muda* does not mean, say, that an individual changes from speaking always or mostly Castilian in their daily life to using only or mostly Catalan. It may; but this is rare. More often, a *muda* takes places in a very specific context and affects a limited number of relations; but it nevertheless entails an important change in qualitative terms. Thus, the most widespread *muda* by Castilian speakers consists of adopting Catalan to speak with teachers or perform specific classroom activities in early childhood, as most of them attend Catalan-medium schools. This *muda* is important because it provides the space to develop both spoken and written skills in the language. However, its impact in the language uses outside the classroom context is generally very limited. Most Castilian speakers use Catalan exclusively in this context for many years. In this article, we focus on all the other *mudes*, which do have an important impact on the ways people organize their language choices in different contexts of their lives. We identified six main biographical moments in which these “extracurricular” *mudes* took place: a) when entering primary school; b) when entering high school; c) when entering the university; d) when entering the labor market; e) when creating a new family and f) when becoming a parent.

Thus, a *muda* of type “a” typically occurs when a child enters kindergarten or pre-school and finds that all or almost all of her schoolmates speak *the other* language. The result is generally that the child adopts the predominant language to speak with her peers and continues to use her native language within the home. In our sample 23,7 of Castilian speakers and 10,8% of Catalan speakers experienced such a change (i.e. they got used to speak Castilian with school mates even when the language of tuition was Catalan). Type “b” *mudes*, on the contrary, occur when adolescents move to a secondary school and meet new friends with whom they use a language different from the one they had exclusively used before with peers and family (16,9% of Castilian speakers and 2,7% of Catalan speakers). In these cases, they begin to have a bilingual social life outside both home and school, with acquaintances and spaces associated with either language. Type “c” “university” *mudes* were respectively 13,6% and 16,2%. In our qualitative sample, we found most *mudes* happening when people entered the labor market (d, 50,8% and 40,5% respectively) or

with their children (e, 45,8% and 5,4%). Adopting a different language with one's partner was also common amongst our participants (20,3% and 13,5% respectively).<sup>4</sup>

In any case, all these mudes were invariably associated with important changes in the everyday routines of respondents: they met new friends, teachers or employers, and joined new institutions in new locations. And they entailed important changes in the way people organized language choice in their lives, as now the language to be used became open to negotiation. And the new language adopted typically became associated with new people and new contexts. Most of these processes went in the direction of Castilian speakers adopting Catalan, although mudes in the opposite direction occurred too, such as when Catalan-speakers entered school in predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, or when they had a Spanish-speaking partner.

### The crisis of ethnolinguistic identity

In this section, we shall depict some of the ways in which mudes undermined the significance of language use for ethnic categorizations. We will show examples that are interesting because they show ambivalence: the terms *català* 'Catalan', *catalanoparlant* 'Catalan-speaker', *castellanoparlant* 'Castilian speaker' or *Castellà* 'Castilian-speaker' are still used to designate linguistically-defined social categories; but the increasing diversity and indefiniteness of the social categories and associated practices makes them imprecise and problematic, in need of qualification or explanation. Extract 1 helps to appreciate the extent to which language choice can get detached from ethnicity in some situations. Participants reported how they created a Catalan-speaking clique at high school whose members were all native speakers of Castilian.

#### *Extract 1 (Gender-mixed focus group of university-trained Castilian speakers from the Barcelona metropolitan area, aged over 25)*

- 1 **Int.:** O sigui que tu, la immersió forta amb el grupet d'amigues que vas fer a l'Eso diguem  
2 que eren catalanoparlants la majoria  
3 So I gather that your main [Catalan] immersion was with the clique of friends you made in secondary  
4 school, so they would have been Catalan-speakers, most of them  
5 **Su.:** Sí, o sigui, catalanoparlants... de família totes castellanes i entre nosaltres ens parlem en  
6 català  
7 Yes, that is, Catalan-speakers... from Castilian families all of them and, amongst us, we speak Catalan.  
8 **Int.:** I com, com va ser això?  
9 And how, how did this happen?  
10 **Su.:** Tothom s'ho pregunta...Va ser, ens vam conèixer així i això que passa que quan  
11 coneixes algú  
12 We all ask ourselves that... It was because we met [speaking] that way, and that's what happens when  
13 you meet someone  
14 **Lx:** sí.  
15 **Te:** sí.  
16 **Su.:** Ja et costa molt de canviar d'idioma  
17 It becomes very difficult for you to change language  
18 **Su.:** Sí, elles anaven a una escola pública i elles ja feien les assignatures en català. Jo venia  
19 de fer-les en castellà i l'entorn i tot era propici pel castellà no pel català. I després ens  
20 vam trobar i ja et coneixes parlant català i ja continues amb un idioma. Llavors vas



This case can arguably be presented as a form of “passing”, given that disclosing her native language might have created in the interlocutor the expectation that she should speak Castilian at least with native speakers of Castilian. The interviewee both acknowledged and rejected the existence of the principle of ethnolinguistically-determined language choice, so that if her linguistic or ethnolinguistic ascription were eventually disclosed, it could be disregarded by sticking to a coherent linguistic front. It is examples such as this (and others below) that illustrate the ways in which the ethnonational linguistic paradigm remains a referent even as it gets constantly contested.

Extract 3 shows the long-term implications of *mudes*, which usually entail that the new language is used with the people newly met in the new spaces, while the “original” language remains in previously established relationships. It is therefore a *social bilingualization* that was sometimes portrayed as a social divide, such as in the case of Boe:

**Extract 3 (Castilian-speaking woman of 33 with university education from Barcelona)**

- 1 **Int:** Abans comparaves el que ha fet la teva germana amb els fills del que has fet tu... Tens  
 2 altres aspectes de la teva evolució que sigui diferent del que han fet els teus germans  
 3 o amics... Com aquell amic d’origen andalús que deies que parla català als seus  
 4 fills...? Tens altres canvis que tu ho hagis fet diferent que altres?  
 5 Earlier, you were comparing what your sister did with her children with what you did. Are there other  
 6 aspects of your development that are different from what your siblings or friends have done? Like that  
 7 friend of Andalusian origin who you said speaks Catalan to his children? Are there other changes that  
 8 you made differently from other people?
- 9 **Boe:** Home, doncs per exemple, tinc... Amb amics amb què parlo castellà i tal... amb els que  
 10 per exemple no comparteixo... el posicionament amb el català, no? O sigui, que amb  
 11 això sí que em veig... Sí que em veig com amb dos móns diferents... De fet, és com si  
 12 ting-... No vides paral·leles, que això és una xorrada, però sí dos compartiments, no?  
 13 I aleshores... De la mateixa manera que... Mmm... A vegades hi ha gent d’aquestes  
 14 que... (és una xorrada això, però) que fa festes i ajunta a tothom... a dins de... a tots  
 15 els seus amics... A mi em costaria fer això, és veritat...  
 16 Gosh, well, for example I have... With friends with whom I speak Castilian and all... with whom for  
 17 example I don’t share... their position vis-à-vis Catalan, right? I mean, yes, in this sense I do see  
 18 myself ... I do see myself in two different worlds. In fact, it’s as if I ha- ... Not parallel lives, that  
 19 would be silly, but I do have two compartments, right? And then... In the same way as ... Mmm ...  
 20 sometimes there are those people who ... (this is really silly, but) who organize parties and bring  
 21 everybody together... in the... all their friends... It would be difficult for me to do this, that’s true.
- 22 (...)
- 23 **Boe:** No és que siguin contràries al català, eh? Ojo, però no són... Diguéssim... És més aviat  
 24 políticament, no estarien... Diguéssim que podria haver-hi alguna discussió... O  
 25 simplement és una qüestió d’afinitat. No sé com dir-t’ho... És difícil d’explicar,  
 26 però... crec que no em sentiria còmoda barrejant aquests dos compartiments... Si ho  
 27 hagués de fer, i de fet ho he fet en alguna ocasió... són dos móns que no acaben  
 28 d’encaixar...  
 29 Not that they have anything against Catalan, right? Mind you, but they are not... let’s say... It’s more  
 30 that they would not be politically... let’s say that there could be an argument... Or just a matter of  
 31 compatibility. I don’t know how to say it... It’s hard to explain but... I think I would not feel  
 32 comfortable mixing these two compartments. If I had to do it, and I have on some occasions... they are  
 33 two worlds that do not quite fit together...

Boe felt that the people and the spaces that she associated with either language might be difficult to bring together, thus implying the existence of some form of cultural or social difference



that she was not able to define. It is also noticeable, in any case, that she was concerned about the affinity between the members of these spaces and not so much about her position as someone who could navigate between them.

Extracts 1 to 3 depict the experience of native speakers of Castilian who had adopted Catalan. Extract 4, in contrast, reflects the perspective of Catalan speakers living in predominantly Catalan-speaking areas. In these contexts, linguistic spaces were more actively policed and more consistent linguistic displays were still expected. Bb and F, for instance, showed surprise at the “discovery” that some of their schoolmates were native-speakers of Castilian. This happened as they moved to high school and these Castilian speakers met students from other neighbourhoods

- 1 *Extract 4 (Gender-mixed, educationally-mixed, focus group of Catalan speakers of 23 or*  
 2 *above and living outside the Barcelona metropolitan area)*  
 3 **Bb:** Al <TAL ESCOLA> era impensable que algú parlés en castellà  
 4 At <MY SCHOOL> it was unthinkable for anyone to speak Castilian.  
 5 **F:** Hosti! A la meva classe no hi havia ningú que parlés en castellà!  
 6 Christ! In my class no one spoke Castilian at all.  
 7 **Bb:** A la meva tampoc.  
 8 Not in mine, either.  
 9 **F:** I quan vaig anar a l’institut vaig pensar: On has anat?!  
 10 And when I moved to highschool I thought: where have you gone!?  
 11 **Bb:** Jo també.  
 12 Me too.  
 13 (...)  
 14 **Bb:** amb tu es dirigien en català fora...si els podies conèixer de fora de classe i era amb  
 15 català amb tu. Per tant, tu no sabies que amb els seus amics parlaven en castellà  
 16 With you they would speak to you in Catalan outside the school... if you got to meet them outside the  
 17 classroom then they would speak in Catalan with you. So you did not really know that they spoke  
 18 Castilian with their friends.

F in 5-6 showed surprise about the amount of Castilian being used by students in the new high school, his comment “where have you gone!?” implying a negative assessment, as if the environment had become more “vulgar” (a class undertone is noticeable here). Bb observed that his old school mates had so far been speaking exclusively Catalan and he had wrongly assumed that they did so outside school, which they obviously did not always do. In short, native speakers of Castilian had been “invisible” in his primary school. F and Bb still entertained the notion that Catalan-speakers were all native speakers; but this new experience had proved the assumption wrong.

Finally, extract 5 shows another case of incongruence due to the circumstance of encountering someone not seen for a long time. Nm met an old schoolmate who never spoke Catalan in his school years; but who now apparently used Catalan spontaneously at least with some Catalan speakers.

- 1 *Extract 5 (Castilian-speaking male of 30 with highschool qualifications and from outside the Barcelona*  
 2 *metropolitan area)*

3 **Nm:** Bueno, a l'altre dia em vaig trobar un de <TAL VILA> i li vaig parlar en castellà, tio!  
 4 Perquè clar, com el vaig conèixer aixís, ja em surt, saps, ja em surt. I li vaig parlar  
 5 així, no sé. Ja està acostumat, ell ja està acostumat. I en canvi, amb... i estava al  
 6 costat <NOM DE PILA>, i a <NOM DE PILA> li parlava en castellà, ai! en català. I  
 7 que em vai quedar tope pillat, saps, perquè et quedes sense jo què sé.  
 8 Well, the other day I ran into this guy from < VILLAGE NAME> and I spoke to him in Castilian,  
 9 man! Because, of course, that's how I had met him, it just comes out like that, you know? It just  
 10 comes out. And I spoke to him like that, I don't know. He's used to it, he is already used to it.  
 11 However, with ... standing next to him was <NAME>, and to <NAME> he spoke in Castilian -oops!  
 12 in Catalan. And I was flabbergasted, you know? Because you are left there wondering.

What also makes this case interesting is the fact that Nm was a native speaker of Castilian too, having been raised in a Castilian-speaking family in a Castilian-speaking neighborhood of a predominantly Catalan-speaking region. He had spoken little Catalan until relatively recently, when he changed place of residence, got a new job and started going out with a Catalan-speaking woman. Even though his own biography probably provided the best material upon which to understand his friend's situation, his first reaction had been to assume that people would display the linguistic coherence he himself was not displaying. The assumption here was apparently that the ethnolinguistic divide could indeed be crossed; but then one had to behave consistently (linguistically) as a Catalan, i.e. to *assimilate* to the linguistic behavior of the target group. Thus failing to recognize and duly respond in Catalan to another Catalan (no matter his Castilian-speaking past) was an exposing lapse, albeit a minor one. His bafflement might also be due to the presence of a native speaker of Catalan before whom he felt it was important to maintain a coherent linguistic front.

### **Native language and linguistic preferences**

Extracts 1 to 5 have provided illustrations of how mudes are performed and their implications. They also exemplify occasions in which Catalan was used in situations that were incongruent with the traditional paradigm whereby it was a language to be used amongst native speakers only. In this section we will show that, in fact, most of the participants in our qualitative study organized their linguistic repertoire in ways that were not congruent with the traditional procedures found in the 1980s. To do so, we shall explore how they reportedly organized their language choices. We have constructed seven groups defined on the basis of their language preferences and patterns of choice in everyday life.

1. People who generally refuse to speak Castilian and sustain passively bilingual conversations if necessary. (16 people: all native Catalan-speakers)
2. People who resist speaking Castilian but who accommodate to Castilian if the other person clearly refuses to speak Catalan. (15 people: 11 native speakers of Catalan, 2 of both languages and 2 of Castilian)
3. People who display a preference for speaking Catalan but switch to Castilian if addressed in this language. (19 people: 6 Catalan-speakers, 2 bilinguals and 11 Castilian-speakers).

4. People who do not display clear linguistic preferences. (11 people: 8 native speakers of Castilian, 1 of both languages and 2 Catalan-speakers)
5. People who display a preference for speaking Castilian but switch to Catalan if addressed in this language. (22 people: 1 Catalan-speaker and 21 Castilian-speakers)
6. People who resist speaking Catalan but who accommodate to Catalan if the other person clearly refuses to speak Castilian. (8 people, all native speakers of Castilian)
7. People who generally refuse to speak Catalan and sustain passively bilingual conversations if necessary. (10 people, all native speakers of Castilian)

What we believe is highly significant are two points: a) the fact that most categories are internally diverse in terms of native language, and b) the fact that the patterns of language choice formerly described as constitutive of Catalan ethnic boundaries (mainly, linguistic accommodation towards Castilian speakers) are becoming marginal. In relation to the first point, only groups 1, 6 and 7 contained exclusively native speakers of the corresponding language. Group 3 is particularly important here, as it contains the group displaying preference to speak Catalan but more readiness to accommodate, that is, the type of behavior traditionally associated with being a native Catalan. This group is not only internally very diverse; but actually dominated by native speakers of Castilian, which illustrates both points. Most Catalan speakers, on the contrary, are located in groups 1 and 2, precisely the ones that expect Castilian speakers to accommodate and hence use Catalan as a public “anonymous” language. Thus, what these results suggest is that most native Catalan speakers no longer use Catalan as an “insider” language, and that the display of linguistic preference is a poor indicator of nativeness.<sup>5</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, the first sociolinguistic studies in the 1980s provided a picture of Catalan society where most people could readily identify who “Catalans” and “Castilians” were by observing their linguistic behavior. As most native speakers of Catalan could speak Castilian fluently but not the other way round, Catalan-speakers spoke their language only amongst themselves and switched to Spanish with “non-Catalans”. Catalan became therefore an insider, ethnically-marked, language, and this logic was eminently present and routinely repeated in everyday life.

Nowadays, the picture looks substantially different. Our data offers multiple testimonies of life trajectories and experiences that do not fit the traditional mould, basically the large numbers of native Castilian speakers who have adopted the use of Catalan in social life. This new community of bilinguals is much more diverse than the native speakers of Catalan: they have adopted the language in different biographical junctures and to different degrees. Those who reside in predominantly Catalan-speaking areas may be practically undistinguishable from native speakers. Those residing in the Barcelona and Tarragona metropolitan areas generally remain more fluid bilinguals, many of whom still display a certain preference for Catalan in everyday life. Our data has shown that their narratives often dwell on traditional models of social identity associated with consistent linguistic behavior, while at the same time they often contest these very categorizations. Moreover, as those who adopt more Catalan tend to be those that invest in academic qualifications,

the traditional role of Catalan as an indicator of class is reinforced even as its ethnic associations diminish.

The linguistic behavior of Catalan speakers is also important in this respect. Our data suggest that between a third and a half of the native speakers of Catalan expect Castilian speakers to accommodate and either refuse or resist accommodating to Castilian in the traditional way. For them, Catalan is no longer an insider language. We believe that this is one of the ways in which Catalan is increasingly constructed as a public, “anonymous” language rather than an ethnic, “authentic” one.

Moreover, the profiles of speakers that present the most “fluid” patterns of bilingual behavior, i.e. those more willing to accommodate the preferences of their audience, are predominantly native speakers of Castilian. Thus, if fluid bilingualism was originally associated with native Catalan-speakers, this is no longer the case, and we even find significant numbers of Castilian speakers who display an initial preference to conduct conversations in Catalan. This further undermines the ways in which linguistic behavior was used as an indicator of ethnicity.

Thus, changing social and economic conditions in Catalonia undermine primordialist, ethno-national ideologies about the Catalan language at least in the forms in which ethnicity used to be routinely reproduced in interaction. Other aspects need further exploration, such as the extent to which Catalan is still hailed as a national symbol. Our data suggests that linguistic nationalism is very much alive, although it appears to get dissociated in many ways from the internal forms of ethnic classification found in earlier studies in Catalonia. In fact, the idea that Catalan has a claim to a special status as the legitimate language of the territory is overwhelmingly accepted irrespective of people’s native language. This consensus is only matched by the idea that language issues should be separated from party-based political strife. What this shows is not necessary a depoliticization of language; but rather that its politics requires further analysis. Another aspect that invites further exploration is the use of ethnolinguistic categories in talk, such as “Catalan” and “Castilian” to name types of people. So far our data suggests that these categories are falling into disuse, as they now can only be applied to people with whom respondents have long-term relationships. Thus, in contexts characterized by fluid and ever-changing patterns of mobility and contact, particularly urban areas, the Catalan-Castilian dichotomy cannot really be sustained. However, new patterns are appearing, such as the custom of speaking Castilian to “immigrants” from outside Spain (see Corona et al., Newman et al., this issue). This points to the need to explore whether language might be mobilized again to construct new social categories that are different (but, in some ways, similar) to the previous ones.

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<sup>1</sup> Accents and evidence of “linguistic interference” are not good indicators of native language when those who have Catalan as a family language grow up in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and adopt many features of those who learn it at school. In a variationist study conducted some time ago, Argenter et al. (1998)(1998) found that “weak pronouns” *en, ho* and *hi*, a traditional feature of spoken Catalan, were very little used in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and normally used outside

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of it irrespective of the first language of the speakers. This indicated that L1 speakers of both languages tended to display the same patterns of linguistic interference of Castilian into Catalan.

<sup>2</sup> González et al.'s (2009) data is based on the *Enquesta d'usos lingüístics (2003)*, the '2003 linguistic usages survey'. It is a wide-ranging sociolinguistic survey conducted by the Generalitat de Catalunya through telephone interviews to a representative sample of 7257 residents of the Principality of Catalonia aged 15 and above.

<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 does not reflect respondents' direct answers in the survey; but an elaboration of their claims as to the extent to which they used the two languages in different contexts, such as with parents, siblings, at school, at work, with friends and so on. Thus, respondents classified as using "only or mostly Castilian" were those estimated to be using Catalan less than 20% of their time either in the contexts characterized as "primary socialization" or as (current) "habitual language". On the other hand, people's "own" language reflects direct responses to the question "what is your language?". For more details, see González et al. (2009).

<sup>4</sup> These data could be presented in many ways because people may experience more than one "muda" during their lifetime and in different directions. In this case, we have included all significant mudes, which is why percentages add up to more than 100. It is noticeable that Catalan speakers have many fewer mudes and they also adopt much more restricted uses of Castilian than the reverse. The figures obscure the fact that adopting Catalan is very usual amongst Castilian speakers who access higher education. This is because adopting Catalan is strongly correlated with academic achievement, so that many academically-oriented Castilian speakers start using Catalan already during their teens.

<sup>5</sup> The word "suggest" in this sentence is meant to provide the necessary room for qualification of what is after all a small sample of respondents. The survey data at our disposal (see endnote 2 above) contained a query as to the language used by respondents when addressed in Catalan or Castilian; but this does not allow us to discriminate between groups 2 and 3, and 5 and 6 (the difference being the higher or lower readiness to accommodate). So far, discrepancies between the qualitative sample and the survey do not undermine our argument (e.g. group 1 makes up 16% of the former and 12% of the later, 10 and 12 in the case of group 7); but the accuracy of the figures yielded by groups 2, 3, 5 and 6 cannot be confirmed through survey data.