Language and Linguistics Compass 9/7 (2015): 285–294, 10.1111/lnc3.12141

Language Policies, Ideologies and Attitudes in Catalonia. Part 1: Reversing Language Shift in the Twentieth Century

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Abstract

This and a paired article to appear in a subsequent issue of this journal review the sociolinguistic and allied research on language attitudes, ideologies and practices in Catalonia in the context of two major sequential official language policies. The present article is devoted to the first policy called *Normalització Lingüística* (*Linguistic Normalization*), implemented in 1983 by the autonomous government of Catalonia. The policy was a language planning effort in a then bilingual society to reverse language shift from Catalan to Spanish in the aftermath of a dictatorship and linguistic repression.

Our review of the research on that policy shows that language planners assumed modern constructions of languages as bounded units tied to distinct groups. Given the conflictive history of Spain, they explicitly set out to provide a supportive framework for Catalan that would not overly antagonize the large sector of Catalan society that was at the time mostly monolingual Spanish-speaking. Normalization has been seen as largely successful, but a deeper look at the research shows much of the Catalonian population moving beyond those assumptions; for instance, a number of researchers point to a valuing of bilingualism as indexing a cosmopolitan identity. Even sectors that show more monolinguistic tendencies do so less out of pure ethnolinguistic loyalty than complex intersectionalities and personal ideological stances.

The two stories behind each of these periods will be of interest to language planners as well as to researchers interested in the societal and individual challenges and changes emerging from the implementation of official language policies in bilingual and multilingual societies.

1. Introduction: Scope of the Article and Historical Overview

Despite its modest size and lack of full state status,[1] Catalonia has been the subject of an impressive amount of research about language in society. There are two obvious related reasons for this interest: one is the role of Catalonia's post-1977 language policies supporting the Catalan language as the most hopeful case for reversing language shift in Europe (Fishman 1991), and the other is the remarkably high degree of language maintenance for a European non-state language. Apart from Catalonia, Catalan is also spoken in three other Spanish territories, which, like Catalonia, have autonomous governments (Valencia, the Balearic Islands and parts of Aragon) and has official status in microstate of Andorra. It also is traditionally spoken in the southern French region of Rosselló (Roussillon) and the small town of Alguer (Alghero) on the Italian island of Sardinia. Nevertheless, Catalonia has been by far the most successful in promoting Catalan (Pradilla 2004), so research conducted there has led to practical findings for language planners. Furthermore, the Catalan case has been significant in the field of sociolinguistics with impact on the interface of societal and individual bilingualism and multilingualism, interactions between language attitudes and identity, how government entities implement official language policies, adaptation of immigrants to entrenched societal bilingualism and how almost universal bilingualism spawns translingual repertoires and practices.

In this and a paired article to appear in a subsequent issue of this journal, we summarize the sociolinguistic and allied research in and about Catalonia with each article focused on one language policy and the attitudes, ideologies and practices the policies are designed to impact. This article is devoted to the first policy called *Normalització Lingüística* (*Linguistic Normalization*) legally implemented in 1983 and revised in 1998 by the Autonomous government of Catalonia. The second article explores the current policy called the *Pla per la Llengua i la Cohesió Social* (*Plan for Language and Social Cohesion*) implemented in 2004.

The rationale for separate treatments is twofold. First, a full enough account to make sense of both policies would require more space than is available here. Second, the *stories* surrounding the two policies are very different. Normalization begins with an effort by language planners to reverse language shift in the aftermath of a dictatorship and linguistic repression. Although this effort is largely successful, much of the interest lies in how public reactions to the policy challenge the classically modernist premises that underlie it. By contrast, the Pla (as we will call it) appears at first to be simply an adaptation of Normalization to new conditions, in particular globalization and external immigration. However, by this time, language planners already assume much more sophisticated late modern premises than their predecessors. The interest in the story lies in the reaction of civil servants, especially educators, charged with policy implementation and the challenges they face when carrying out the policy along. Finally, this policy takes place in a new political environment regarding Catalonia's relationship to Spain. Therefore, the article ends with current linguistic and political developments in order to outline important questions and possibilities for the future.

2. *The Birth of Catalan Sociolinguistics in the 20th Century and the Linguistic Normalization Period*

Although Normalization was established by the fledgling Autonomous Government—called The Generalitat—in 1983, its roots lie much earlier. Catalan had survived centuries of marginalization in favor of Spanish, in particular after 1714 when Catalonia lost the last remnants of its independence. However, there had been a late 19th Century revival associated with Romanticism and a burgeoning interest among the powerful Catalan bourgeoisie, for whom it came to be associated with an emerging Catalan nationalism. Consequently, the paraphernalia of a modern standard European language had long been in place. These include not only a written standard—developed by an industrial engineer turned grammarian, Pompeu Fabra ([1904, 1911] 1980). There was also a language academy in the form of the Philological Section of Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC) founded in 1911. As soon as political autonomy was recovered during the Second Spanish Republic from 1932 to 1939, Fabra's standard was there to be implemented in schools, government and commercial communications. It was also in place to be restored upon the recovery of autonomy in the late 1970s.

The intervening years, of course, had brought severe challenges that the restorers needed to address. The Republic's defeat in the Spanish Civil war (1936–1939) led to four decades of linguistic repression under the Franco dictatorship. The persecution was most severe in the early years but, although it moderated, repression continued to some degree until the dictator's death in 1975 (Vila i Moreno 1996). This period also saw a massive immigration of monolingual Spanish-speakers (mostly working class from Southern Spain) that reduced native Catalan speakers to being a minority in their own land.

Nevertheless, this period also brought hopeful signs. First, most new arrivals shared an antipathy to the dictatorship with the great majority of Catalan society. Catalan therefore became an icon of resistance although the immigrants did not on the whole shift to this language (Vila i Moreno 1996). Also, this period saw the birth of Catalan sociolinguistics with the Valencian

Lluís Aracil, arguably the father of the field, followed by Lluís Alpera, Rafael Ninyoles, Vicent Pitarch, Francesc Vallverdú and Antoni Maria Badia i Margarit. In 1973, these sociolinguists formed the *Grup Català de Sociolingüística*, which began the journal Treballs de Sociolingüística Catalana (Catalan Sociolinguistic Papers).

Apart from a language attitude survey by Badia i Margarit (1969)—showing positive evaluations of Catalan in Barcelona—there were few empirical investigations. Instead, there was much speculative theorizing on the potential future linguistic profiles of Catalonia and other Catalan-speaking areas. Two common tropes reveal the profound linguistic insecurity of this period. One involves a fear of bilingualism imagined as a stage in a language shift to Spanish and the other was a preoccupation with borrowings and calques from Spanish referred to as *castellanismes* seen as reducing the language's integrity. A representative illustration of the degree of purism is provided by Garolera (2009 [reprinted in Pla 2014]). Garolera, the editor of the third edition of El Quadern Gris (*The Grey Notebook*) of the essayist Josep Pla, recounts the case of the 1969 second edition. Pla is recognized as a stylistic master, but overzealous proofreaders purged the edition of his *castellanismes* and colloquialisms, a situation analogous to, say, Mark Twain's slang being "cleaned up" by guardians of English.

Whatever the worries, this complex history set the stage for the recovery effort as soon as that was feasible. That chance came with Spain's Democratic Transition, which began after Franco's death in 1975 and which took the form of a series of compromises between elements of his former regime and various opponents to create a modern quasi-federal democratic state. Catalan was established as co-official for Catalonia, and language policy became a priority for the new autonomous government.

As Vallverdú (1980) notes, the term *Normalization* was adopted from a seminal article by Fabra ([1929]1980),[2] although Fabra actually meant only establishing norms. However, the 1983 policy encompasses not only that aim but also another derivation of *norm*, as in *normal*. The two senses are linked because the goal was that Catalan would function "at the same level as a normal European language" (Bastardas 1991:58), entailing recovering widespread use in all registers alongside re-establishment of the standard.

The normative component appeared in various forms. The IEC was granted authority to set the standard by the Generalitat in 1991 (Kailuweit 2002),[3] and a plethora of dictionaries, style guides and educational materials soon emerged. A campaign advertising the policy was personified in the shape of the friendly preteen character called, naturally, Norma. Norma modeled policy goals by speaking Catalan to Spanish speakers competent in both languages and correcting "errors" in Catalan and Spanish (Direcció General de Política Lingüística 1983:14–16). She also embodied the core message that Catalan was a "valuable element of collective identity" (Riera Gil 2011:158), an idea legally and popularly expressed through the labeling of the language as Catalonia's *llengua pròpia*, i.e., Catalonia's own language.

Norma's preoccupations with a correct Catalan purged of *castellanismes*, however, marked the institutionalization of the linguistic insecurity that had led to hypercorrection of Pla, and pushback was not long in coming. Two Catalan philologists working as journalists and editors (Pericay & Toutain 1986) produced a polemic attacking the IEC's norms titled *Verinosa Llengua*, loosely translatable as *Poison Tongue*. Their thesis was that the IEC standard was archaic and its enforcement alienating to the vast majority of Catalan speakers and the Spanish speakers that the language would want to attract. They proposed acceptance of many common castellanismes and less obsession with correctness and higher registers. Their proposal came to be termed *català light* as opposed to the *català heavy* associated with the IEC norms.[4] Kailuweit (2002:175–176) points to the rival words for *ship*, which came to take on a particularly emblematic role. The historical form *vaixell* was sanctioned by the IEC instead of the popular castellanisme *barco*, pronounced [barku] i.e., with Catalan phonology:

> [T]he effort to bring to general usage the poetic word *vaixell*, which evoked [català light supporters] believed the image of pirate sailing vessel, meant using the school to substitute the real language for an invented one. Since *barco* although a castellanisme had been the normal Catalan word for centuries, light supporters were angered at being corrected by their own children, for whom *vaixell* was now the natural word[5].

The response could be no less strident. One book (Pazos 1990) was, for example, titled *L'Amenaça del Català Light* (*The threat of light Catalan*).

The virulence of the dispute has diminished as more than a generation—including many non-native speakers—have been educated in Standard Catalan. Words like *vaixell* are now commonly accepted, but the more extreme *heavy* positions have been mostly (though not entirely) abandoned. Garolera's (2014) edition of El Quadern Gris, for instance, replaces only some castellanismes, puts others in italics and uses without comment those now accepted by the IEC.

The other major thrust of Normalization—spreading the knowledge of Catalan and increasing its domains and functions—consisted of publicity campaigns, promotion of Catalan-language media, requirements for Catalan knowledge for civil servants and a bilingual educational model in which Catalan played a primary role. Branchadell (1996) lays out three possible aims for this effort:

- Minimal: People who wish to can live their life in Catalonia in Catalan.
- Weak: People who wish to can live their life in Catalonia in Catalan, which is the preferred language of official institutions.
- Strong: People live their life in Catalonia in Catalan.

Branchadell, who supports the strong position, claims that authorities have tended to avoid specifying exactly which objective they are pursuing but that it is clear that they aim for the "weak" objective. Yet Aina Moll (1983), then Director-General for Language Policy, lays out that goal quite explicitly as…:

> …to make normal in practice what the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia establishes: that Catalan is Catalonia's own language, and that Catalan and Spanish are official languages. …, that each citizen has the right to express themselves in either of the two languages … without anyone being able to impose on them the use of the other; that everyone working in the public service has to know both languages well to be able to serve each citizen or client well in their preferred language; that all who live and work in Catalonia must have sufficient understanding of both languages to handle their responsibilities as much in the personal and professional spheres in either one, etc.

These principles justified the two areas where linguistic obligations regarding learning of Catalan were imposed: the civil service and education. Outside these areas, it was and remains entirely possible to live in Catalonia speaking only in Spanish.

Legally, bilingualism is implied by the constitutional mandate of co-official languages in Catalonia; so, the "strong objective" is impossible without political rupture, but the "weak objective" has other attractions. Strubell (1999a:9) notes the widespread preoccupation with avoiding an ethnonationalist construction of Catalan identity, "largely in order to avert the threat of a social and even political division along ethnolinguistic (and probably urban class) lines." The official motto of a 1982 advertising campaign, for instance, was significantly "*El català, cosa de tots*" ("Catalan, everyone's business").

As a middle position, this approach was inevitably caught between those who felt it went too far and those who felt it was insufficient, although the two sets of critiques are crucially asymmetrical. Within Catalonia, almost all opposition involved charges of insufficiency. In 1979,

even before the campaign, a group of prominent professors (Argenté, et al. 1979) analyzed the predicament of Catalan in a manifesto titled suggestively *Una nació sense estat, un poble sense llengua*? ("A nation without a state, a people without a language?"). They argue that there would be the inevitable replacement of Catalan by Spanish, so the survival of Catalan depended on Catalonia's acquiring independent political institutions. Writing some years later, Branchadell (1996) avoids claiming that full language shift—of which intervening research had showed no sign—is inevitable, but he maintains that the weak or minimal objectives are not realizable. Therefore, he argues, Catalan will remain in an "abnormal" situation and so be constantly threatened unless the strong objective of Catalan monolingualism is achieved.

A milder critique of insufficiency can be found in the work of a prominent Catalan sociolinguist, Bastardas (1991), who argues for policies that would lead to a majority of the population adopting Catalan as primary language. However, in the 1986 *2nd Congrés Internacional de la Llengua Catalana* still other voices contended that linguistic survival was in the hands of the population and their attitudes towards both languages. What the participants on both sides shared was a strong progressive and democratic political commitment, hardly surprising given recent circumstances of dictatorship and linguistic oppression. This committment was performed, as Badia i Margarit (1984, cited in Riera Gil 2011) put it, "out of patriotic duty." It was in this context of "identity of resistance" (Castells 2004, cited in Riera Gil 2011) that the Normalization period began. With time, the militant imprint and the debate around diglossia slowly faded. However, concerns about linguistic vitality remain.

By contrast, the opposition to the Normalization project remained strong as ever. The claim made—most importantly by the Spanish political party now in government—is that Catalan language policy marginalizes Spanish and that Catalan authorities are surreptitiously pursuing Branchadell's strong definition (Strubell 1999b). A stream of polemics in the Spanish press (see summary in Strubell 1999b) and manifestos (e.g., de Miguel et al. 1981, Vargas Llosa et al. 2008) have asserted these objections over the years. Lawsuits have been filed with varying outcomes in Spanish courts and (unsuccessful) complaints made even to international bodies attempting to change components of the policy (Strubell 1999b). The current Spanish education minister plans to implement a greater presence of Spanish in schools as part of a larger effort to, in his own words, "Hispanicize the students of Catalonia" (García 2012) challenging the political compromises reached in the democratic Transition of the 1980s. Specific charges include violating the linguistic rights of children to be educated in "their language" if their parents so choose. This polemic will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent article.

Given the large proportion of Spanish native speakers, there has always been a large community readily constructed as victims of this claimed "reversal of linguistic fortune" in Vann's (1999) words. Yet these charges have had less impact in that community than might be expected. For instance, the two parties advocating this position have never gained more than 15% of the vote in Catalonia. Webber and Strubell (1991:17) consider the lack of resonance of these efforts within Catalonia to be remarkable:

> In the light of the recent history of the Catalan language and the low levels of language consciousness, it is perhaps surprising that attitudes towards the Catalan language have proved so favourable. There has been widespread support for the teaching of Catalan in schools, and knowledge of Catalan is regarded, by a high proportion of non-Catalans, as a stepping stone to better job prospects.

It is telling that the manifestos are largely signed by individuals based outside of Catalonia, and that linguists are strikingly absent. Even applied linguists, who might be expected to argue in favor of a system that educates children in their first language following Cummins (2000), have been silent. One reason is that the linguistic nearness of the two languages enables rapid

acquisition, analogous to, say, a Venetian child being schooled in Standard Italian. However, the official discourse has played into the hands of the critics. The official term for the educational linguistic arrangement is "Catalan-Medium Education," which implies a greater marginalization of Spanish than is actually the case. The system is really asymmetrically bilingual with most subjects such as math, social studies, science and so on taught in Catalan, and language arts given in both languages. Outside of language arts, students are permitted to use either language in their written or oral work. Especially in primary school, Spanish Language Arts teachers and teachers of other subjects coordinate to incorporate materials in Spanish across the curriculum.

This does not negate the existence of linguistic conflict. In fact, the complexities and nuances of the responses to Normalization have provided much of the interest in sociolinguistic research in Catalonia. Before Normalization was fully implemented, Bastardas (1985, 1986) and Woolard (1984, 1989) in matched-guise tests, found that, although participants agreed that Catalan had higher Status, speakers favored their own language in Solidarity measures. Bastardas finds that Catalan-background speakers tended to accommodate to their interlocutors by switching to Spanish when spoken to in that language. By contrast, Spanish-background speakers were less liable to do the contrary. Woolard finds that Spanish-accented Catalan, i.e., persons identifiable as Spanish speakers, elicited highly negative solidarity ratings from Spanish background listeners. Actually she finds punitive response for linguistic betrayal among both groups and no reward from either.

Yet nearly a decade later after one generation had learned Catalan through the current educational system, attitudes changed radically. Woolard and Ghang's (1990) replication of Woolard's prior study found substantial diminishment of identity-based ethnolinguistic loyalties, particularly among the Spanish-background group along with a maintenance of prestige for Catalan. Boix (1993, 1995) moved beyond language versus language judgments. He used both ethnographic and experimental techniques (i.e., judges evaluating a spectrum of converging and non-converging behaviors between Spanish- and Catalan-background speakers). Results replicated Bastardas' earlier findings regarding favoring convergence to Spanish but with some crucial nuances. Although some Spanish-background speakers would rarely speak Catalan, their knowledge of the language and freedom of linguistic choice that knowledge brought was highly valued. Interestingly, in linguistically mixed couples there was general agreement that Catalan was useful, and convergence in these settings was more favorable to Catalan. Boix concludes that for his participants, language choice no longer entailed betrayal.

Subsequent research shows that knowledge of Catalan derived from school often did not translate into peer communication among either Spanish-background youths or mixed groups (Vila i Moreno 1996, Pujolar 2000, Galindo i Solé 2008). Certainly, to this day there is a substantial subset of residents of Catalonia who avoid speaking Catalan, but few—all recent international immigrants—who do not speak Spanish. Yet this research also reveals that ethnolinguistic motivations are rarely sufficient to explain lack of productive bilingualism. Among Pujolar's (2001) participants, for example, ideological factors such as perceived authenticity, class-identity and gender—with Catalan seen as less masculine—supported Spanish monolingualism. Frekko (2009a, 2013) shows that ideological association of Catalan with higher SES and Spanish with lower Socioeconomic status (SES) (i.e. socioeconomic status) reified a far more complex social reality, but class was supplanting purely ethnolinguistic associations.

Similarly, Woolard's (2009) ethnography of working-class Spanish-background adolescents associates reluctance to use Catalan with perceptions of class-based marginalization. Once in the university, her participants said they would be far more open to Catalan. In fact, in later work with some of the same participants she found more favorable attitudes to and use of Catalan even for those who during high school had shown the most resistance (Woolard 2011).

Pujolar and González (2013:2) call these changes *mudes* (sing. *muda*), a Catalan term roughly translatable as life-shifts. A *muda* is defined as "the specific biographical junctures where individuals enact significant changes in their linguistic repertoire." They find that *mudes* are actually quite frequent and correspond typically to inflection points in life such as graduations, entering the labor market or having children. They note that *mudes* undermine the clear ethnolinguistic categories—Catalan-speaking and Spanish-speaking—assumed in the original formulation of and arguments around Normalization. In an influential article, Woolard (2008) describes these kinds of shifts as Catalan moving from an authority based on authentic identity to a more anonymous authority characteristic of less threatened languages.

Our research (Newman, Trenchs-Parera, and Ng 2008, Trenchs-Parera and Newman 2009), along with Woolard (2008) and Frekko (2009a, 2009b) corroborate such findings. More than one language versus the other, bilingualism has become highly valued. A central finding locates this value in cosmopolitan stances among young people in Barcelona in contrast to the traditional ideology of one-language-one people-one-nation lingering in Spanish media. This finding also diverges from the view of cosmopolitanism as an essentially elite phenomenon.

Nevertheless, these tendencies, though undeniably positive, have been irregular and incomplete; Catalan society is not moving lockstep to a loss of ethnolinguistic divisions, a point acknowledged by all authors cited above. Vila i Moreno, Vial, and Galindo (2005), among others, report continued ambivalence among sectors of the Spanish-background population towards Catalan. We also note cases of outright rejection of the "other" language (Trenchs and Newman 2009, Newman 2011) by adolescents highly invested in one of the opposing national identities. A far more frequent response, however, is support for teaching in Catalan and bilingualism without adopting Catalan as an essential part of their identity (Newman, Trenchs-Parera, and Ng 2008, Trenchs-Parera and Newman 2009). Also, even the most absolute ethnolinguistic identities appear on further investigation to be tangled up in complex intersectionalities involving class and gender, and/or individual ideological stances.

3. Conclusion

Normalization was conceived in modernist terms as a way of reinventing Catalan along the lines of traditional European nation–state languages. As such, the policy assumed a standard language ideology and aimed at rectifying the "abnormal" imposition of Spanish on an imagined national Catalan community. At the same time, the policy implicitly assumed the existence of a binary ethnolinguistic division derived from the massive immigration of Spanish speakers. These were to be welcomed into the Catalan national project and encouraged, but not coerced, into Catalan language loyalty. A "loyal opposition" disputed the efficacy of these aims along even purer modernist lines with the explicit assumption of a monolingual norm. It argued for linguistic assimilation of immigrants and political rupture, i.e., a one state, one language solution. By contrast, the opposition to the policy as too strong emphasized individual linguistic rights but was and is tendentious in its portrayal of the policy.

As it turned out, the Normalization project has given rise to a reality unanticipated by the early debates. The languages do not seem to form single entities indexing potential national identities. Instead, linguistic repertoires are often tied to ideological positions such as cosmopolitanism. Intersectionalities involving other macrosocial categories such as gender and class have taken on a prominent role in Catalans' linguistic preferences. In our upcoming article, we will explore how this unanticipated complexification, new large-scale diverse immigration and globalization led to a new debate and to a new language policy. Normality is still the goal but it has been reconceived as Catalan as linguistic common ground in a multilingual and multicultural reality.

Short Biographies

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Notes

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[1] Catalonia has 7,512,982 inhabitants (IDESCAT 2014), a bit more than Denmark or Finland.

[2] For more information on the definition of "normalització", see Aracil (1982, [1965] and [1977]).

[3] An anonymous reviewer of this article, however, points out that in 1976 a Spanish Royal Decree 3118/1976 recognized the IEC and gave it the linguistic authority for the Catalan language in Catalonia. The 1991 Generalitat law specified that the authority should legally cover public administration, education and public mass media.

[4] See full discussion in Kailuweit (2002:171), who credits the journalist Joan Barril i Cuixart.

[5] Authors' translation.

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