**Literature review**

In order to contextualize the study of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands, it is necessary to briefly present the legal framework surrounding both languages and their status there. Accordingly, three main documents constitute the legal framework concerning the two official languages of the Balearic Islands. The first one is the *Spanish Constitution* (1978). This document impacted the configuration of the linguistic reality of the Balearic Islands in three different ways. First, it recognized, for the first time in forty years, not only the existence of languages other than Spanish in the nation, but also their officiality in the territories where they were spoken (Art. 3.2). Likewise, it was also declared that these languages constituted a cultural heritage to be respected and protected, which granted legal protection for the Catalan language after forty years of repression, as stated in (Article 3.3)[[1]](#footnote-1). Finally, the Constitution gave the Autonomous Communities the jurisdiction in the teaching of their co-official languages (Art. 148.1.17). This was of particular relevance, since it gave the Government of the Balearic Islands the capacity to implement the teaching of Catalan, impacting not only the linguistic panorama of the islands, but also the status that this language had up to that point. Consequently, education became one of the most important tools in ending the situation of diglossia and linguistic substitution in the archipelago.

The second document is *Statute of Autonomy of the Balearic Islands* (1983), which led to the establishment of a system of self-government in the region. One of the most important aspects of this document in terms of language was the recognition of Catalan as the archipelago’s own language and its status as co-official with Spanish (Art. 4.1). Importantly, it also declared that every citizen had the right to use the language and prohibited discrimination on linguistic grounds (Art. 4.2). However, of special relevance was the Article 4.3, which committed the Government committed to taking all the necessary steps to reach equality between both languages in all domains, but especially to ensure that every citizen in the Balearic Islands had knowledge of both languages. This implied a complete renovation of the educational system and, to do so, the Government granted itself exclusive jurisdiction for the teaching of Catalan. In addition to the teaching of Catalan, the Government undertook the task of fostering the normalization of the language, that is, promoting the use of the language in all contexts (public administration, education, and the media). The idea was to encourage the Balearic society to become accustomed to using Catalan after forty years of being forbidden under Franco’s regime.

The third document, the *Linguistic Normalization of the Balearic Islands Act* (1986), was passed in response to this last goal stated in the previous paragraph. The main objectives of this regulation were (1) to make effective the progressive and normal use of the Catalan language in the official and administrative domain, (2) to ensure the knowledge and progressive use of Catalan as the main language of education, (3) to promote the use of the Catalan language in all means of social communication, and (4) to create social awareness of the importance of the knowledge and use of the Catalan language by all citizens (Art. 1.2). Accordingly, Catalan was made the preferred language of both local and autonomic institutions, official documents started to be available in both Catalan and Spanish, and citizens were granted the right to choose the language of their preference in both administrative and legal proceedings. Catalan was also made the main language and medium of instruction in all levels of education, a required training in Catalan among teachers and other professionals in the education domain was established, and the ultimate goal was to promote bilingual education in Catalan and Spanish was assumed. Additionally, Catalan was established as the usual language of the radio, television, and other media owned by the Administration the production and exhibition of movies, plays and other cultural manifestations in Catalan was encouraged.

The *Linguistic Normalization Act* led to a series of minor decrees and regulations that aimed at expanding certain aspects of the law. The most important ones were the *Decret de Mínims* (92/1997), by which Catalan was established as the primary language of education (except for higher education) and at least 50% of the subjects had to be taught in this language; the Decree 100/1990, by which the usual language of the Administration had to be Catalan; and the Decree 25/2001 which established the obligation to accredit knowledge of Catalan in order to work in the civil service (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017). Particularly relevant to this study, however, is the *Linguistic Normalization Regulation of the City Council of Palma* (1987) This regulation states that Catalan is Palma’s own language and both Catalan and Spanish are the official languages of the City Council. It also states that citizens have the right to communicate with the City Council in any of the two languages and no one can be discriminated against on linguistic grounds. In addition, it states that all communications from the City Council should be in Catalan by default, as well as any documents or certificates issued, and that the City Council is committed to promoting linguistic awareness and the use of Catalan.

Forty years after the approval of this legal framework, it is clear that many of the objectives proposed at the time have been achieved. For example, the general knowledge of Catalan among the Balearic population has increased considerably (Vanrell & Melià, 2017) and the presence of the language in society has become much more noticeable and evident. However, the establishment of this legal framework and the consequent implementation of certain language policies has been accompanied by a process of polarization in the Balearic society in terms of language attitudes, particularly in Palma, the capital city (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017; Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019; Castell et al., 2023; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014; Tudela Isanta, 2021). This is not surprising given the close relationship between language policy and language attitudes. In fact, there is a common assumption that much policy and planning can or should be intended to change language attitudes (O’Rourke & Hogan‐Brun, 2012).

Accordingly, many studies have examined this relationship in many different social contexts, in order to determine how policy affects language attitudes (Marley, 2004) and vice versa (Errihani, 2008; Mukhuba, 2005). With regard to the former, Bertolotti & Coll (2020) studied the language attitudes toward Portuguese in Uruguay during the Luo-Brazilian military occupation in the 19th century through the analysis of legislative documents, documents found in judicial or government archives, pieces published in the press, and literary writings. The analysis revealed two types of attitudes: negative and neutral. Negative attitudes were found in Montevideo, as a result of the language policy promoted by the government in its effort to build a nation-state that, they thought, was threatened by the presence of Portuguese. Neutral attitudes, on the other hand, were present at the border area, far from the capital city. Likewise, language attitudes can also exert an influence on language policy. For example, Kester (2020) studied the patterns of language use, language attitudes, and identity in Curaçao among people of different age groups and with different parental birth places and found that Papiamentu, aside from its widespread use, is considered an essential part of Curaçao’s identity and the attitudes toward it are predominantly positive. As a result, the authors contend that these findings could significantly contribute to language policy and planning initiatives in the Dutch Caribbean. The frequent use of Papiamentu, its importance in education and the job market, coupled with its role as a marker of local identity, strongly advocate for an expanded role of the language within the education system. Both studies, therefore, highlight the close relationship between language policy and language attitudes.

This relationship has also been explored in regions where Catalan and Spanish coexist and it has been approached from many different perspectives, such as education (Díaz-Torrent et al., 2017; Huguet, 2001; Huguet & Biscarri Gassió, 1995; Huguet & Suïls, 1997; Janés et al., 2008; Lapresta Rey et al., 2010), immigration and ethnic origin (Estors Sastre, 2014; Iglésias, 2010; Querol & Huguet, 2010), age (Joan i Marí, 2010; Ubalde, 2013), and family (Huguet, 2005), among others. In general terms, all these studies agree that the language policy implemented in Catalan-Spanish bilingual regions has had a positive impact on the attitudes toward both languages and, in particular, toward Catalan. This trend can especially be seen in the case of the school-age immigrant population, who perceive Catalan as the key to social and professional integration (Estors Sastre, 2014; Lapresta Rey et al., 2010). The vast majority of these studies, however, have been carried out in Catalonia, with only a few exceptions in other Catalan and Spanish-speaking regions. In the case of the Balearic Islands, a number of findings related to language attitudes can be reported.

First, place of residence has been found to play a role in the formation of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in Mallorca. Accordingly, the attitudes of those who live in areas with lower social contact with Catalan, such as Palma, tend to be less positive toward this language and more positive toward Spanish, as opposed to the attitudes of those who live outside of Palma, where the presence of Catalan is greater and, therefore, the attitudes toward this language tend to be more positive (Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019). Mother tongue has also been found to be a factor related to the formation of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands. Those who have Catalan as their first language (L1) show more positive attitudes toward this language, whereas those who have Spanish as their L1 show more positive attitudes toward this other language (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017). With regard to education, some studies (Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019) have found that those who have Catalan as their L1 prefer it as the medium of instruction, those who have it as their L2 are indifferent, and those who have it as their L3 are either indifferent or against it. Similarly, it has also been found that those whose initial language is Catalan and are learning towards careers in the private sector are in favor of bilingual and even trilingual education. Contrary, those whose L1 is Spanish and are leaning towards careers in the private sector tend to be in favor of reducing the presence of Catalan in education. Interestingly, those whose initial language is Spanish but are leaning towards careers in the public sector see Catalan as a tool for social integration and employment (Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014). Other studies, however, have found that even those who have Spanish as their L1 agree that having Catalan as the main medium of instruction is positive, since it allows every student to learn both languages and promote bilingualism in society (Tudela Isanta, 2021).

Age has also been found to be a significant predictor in the formation of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands. Accordingly, young people (including students) show more positive attitudes toward Catalan than toward Spanish, and older people (including the retired) tend to show more positive attitudes toward Spanish than toward Catalan (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017). Likewise, young people tend to consider Catalan as the authentic language of the archipelago, while Spanish is considered a language used for communication without a specific value (Castell et al., 2023). In fact, many studies have found a general consensus around the idea that Catalan is the authentic language of the Balearic Islands, in Gal and Woolard’s terms (2001), and an essential component of its identity, whereas Spanish tends to be perceived as a mere language of communication (Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014; Tudela Isanta, 2021). Related to identity, Ibáñez Ferreté (2014) found the existence of two identity groups in Mallorca: the “Mallorcans” and the “non-Mallorcans”. The former include people born in Mallorca to Mallorcan parents, who speak Catalan, and identify with the island’s culture and traditions. The latter, on the other hand, are people from or born to people from mainland Spain, who speak Spanish, and whose culture has been imported from outside of the island. Moreover, the “Mallorcans” tend to be perceived as nationalists, because of their willingness to defend the island’s own language and culture, while the “non-Mallorcans” tend to show a more passive or indifferent attitude toward Catalan culture and language.

Finally, another predictor found to be significant in the formation of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands is political orientation. Accordingly, studies have found that people who identify as progressive show more positive attitudes toward Catalan and to the presence of the language in all domains. Contrary, those who identify as conservative show more positive attitudes toward Spanish and to the presence of the language in all domain (Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014). Likewise, preference for one language or the other as a function of political orientation has come to be associated with two specific urban tribes (Castell et al., 2023). Specifically, people who tend to display favorable attitudes towards Spanish are called *cayetanos*. This high-class social group is characterized for their snob style and linkage to right or extreme right political ideologies. They are also known for their marked *Spanishism*, a political movement that seeks to reaffirm Spain’s national identity, including the language. On the other hand, people who tend to display favorable attitudes toward Catalan are called *indepes*. This term is used to refer to individuals linked to left or extreme left ideologies who almost exclusively use Catalan, who are in favor of the independence of the Catalan-speaking regions from Spain, and who defend *Catalanism*, a political movement oriented to the exaltation of the Catalan language and culture. Consequently, there seems to be a lack of ideological unity within the Mallorcan society in terms of language attitudes (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017).

Altogether, it is evident that the linguistic situation in the Balearic Islands in terms of language attitudes is complex. The society seems to be divided into two main sectors: those who show more favorable attitudes toward Catalan, and those who show more favorable attitudes toward Spanish. In recent years, this polarization in the Balearic society in terms of language attitudes has intensified parallel to the implementation of a series of language policies by prior and current local governments catering to the ideologies of their respective political parties. For instance, the conservative government of the Popular Party implemented, from 2013 to 2015, a series of measures affecting the linguistic normalization of Catalan. One of these measures was the *Tractament Integrat de Llengües* or TIL ‘Comprehensive Treatment of Languages’, which mandated that schools teach a third of their curriculum in Spanish, another third in Catalan, and another third in English. The Government stated that its aim was to promote linguistic immersion in English, although many saw it as an attack on Catalan (Gentili, 2013; Manresa, 2015; Olaizola, 2013). In 2018, the progressive government of the Socialist Party of the Balearic Islands (PSIB-PSOE) and More for Mallorca (Més per Mallorca) passed the Decree 8/2018 which mandated healthcare personnel to be proficient in Catalan in order to work in the public healthcare system of the Balearic Islands. While the Government’s aim was to promote the normalization of Catalan, many people, including an important sector of the healthcare personnel, saw it as an imposition that prevented them from practicing because they were not proficient in the language (Amorós, 2017; Colmenero, 2018; Colom, 2023; Galvín, 2017). Consequently, the association between language attitudes and political orientation seems to have strengthen over the past decade, to the point of turning the linguistic situation in the Balearic Islands into a constant political debate (Crespí, 2023; Garau, 2023; Mateos, 2023; Pellicer, 2023; Sánchez, 2023).

Therefore, the present study delves deeper into this phenomenon by focusing on the specific case of Palma, the capital of the Balearic Islands. This city is particularly interesting for several reasons. First, the city concentrates just under 40% of the archipelago’s population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2024), making it the largest city. Second, it is the most diverse city in the Balearic Islands, concentrating a third of the foreign residents of the Balearic Islands (IBESTAT, 2022). According to Blas–Arroyo, this situation makes the Palma “a melting pot of people from different geographic, economic and cultural origins” (2007, p. 80), making a significant impact on the linguistic situation of the city. Finally, previous studies have shown that the language attitudes of people who live in areas with lower social contact with Catalan, such as Palma, tend to be less positive toward this language and more positive toward Spanish (Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019). Additionally, none of the studies exploring language attitudes in the context of the Balearic Islands have focused exclusively on the specific case of Palma. Accordingly, my research questions and hypotheses are as follows:

1. Is political orientation a significant predictor of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in Palma de Mallorca?
2. What is the relationship between different political orientations and language attitudes of the population of Palma de Mallorca toward Catalan and Spanish?

With regard to research question one, and based on previous literature (Castell et al., 2023; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014) and the current political debate regarding the linguistic situation in the Balearic Islands (Crespí, 2023; Garau, 2023; Mateos, 2023; Pellicer, 2023; Sánchez, 2023), I hypothesize that political orientation will be a significant predictor of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in Palma. With regard to research question two, and also based on previous literature (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017; Castell et al., 2023; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014) and past reactions of the population of the Balearic Islands to certain language policies by prior governments (Amorós, 2017; Colmenero, 2018; Colom, 2023; Galvín, 2017; Gentili, 2013; Manresa, 2015; Olaizola, 2013), I hypothesize that people who identify as progressive will have more positive attitudes toward Catalan than toward Spanish, and that people who identify as conservative will have more positive attitudes toward Spanish than toward Catalan.

**Methodology**

*Participants*

A total of 127 responses to the questionnaire were collected. Of these, 28 responses were incomplete and were therefore discarded. Data are drawn from a total of 99 participants (67 females) aged between 18 and 71 years old (mean = 37) from Palma de Mallorca who were recruited during a ten-day period during the Fall 2023 semester. In order to be eligible to take part in the study, participants had to meet the following three requirements: to be over 18 years of age, to live or have lived in Palma for at least five years, and to be proficient in both Catalan and Spanish. Figure 1 shows the distribution of proficiency levels in both languages.

**Table 1.** Number of participants by gender and average age

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Count | Avg. Age | Std. Deviation |
| Male | 32 | 34.7 | 12.1 |
| Female | 67 | 38 | 14.6 |
| Total | 99 | 36.9 | 13.9 |

Figure 1. Distribution of proficiency levels in Catalan and Spanish

A graph of different colored rectangular shapes

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Since this study focuses on the relationship between political orientation and language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in Palma, participants were also asked to indicate their political orientation in the questionnaire. Participants had seven options to choose from: far-left, left, center-left, center, center-right, right, and far-right. Interestingly, no participant selected far-right and, therefore, only the first six political orientations will be considered for this study. Figure 2 shows the distribution of political orientation among participants.

Figure 2. Distribution of political orientation among participants

A graph with red and blue squares

Description automatically generated

*Materials*

Data were collected using an online survey that was hosted on Qualtrics and consisted of three parts. In the first part, a demographic questionnaire, collected information regarding participant gender, age, country of birth, autonomous community of birth, ethnic origin, neighborhood of residence in Palma, level of education, employment situation, household income, national identity, and political orientation.

The second portion of the survey, a language use questionnaire, was designed to collect information regarding participants’ self-reported knowledge and usage of Catalan and Spanish. Specifically, this section included questions about native language or languages, proficiency in Catalan and Spanish (understanding, reading, speaking, and writing), languages studied other than Catalan and Spanish, use of Catalan and Spanish with different social groups (parents, children, siblings, grandparents, friends, neighbors, partners, relatives, professors, classmates, coworkers, and immigrants), and use of Catalan and Spanish in different contexts (administration, school, workplace, financial institutions, local commerce, department stores, social networks, etc.).

The third part collected data on the language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in two parts. The first section consisted of series incomplete of statements such as ‘the official language of the Balearic Islands should be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_’ or ‘the medium of instruction in public education should be\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’ followed by three possible answers: Catalan, Spanish, or both. The second section included a series of statements regarding Catalan and Spanish such as ‘I like it when people use Spanish, ‘Catalan is worth learning’, ‘Catalan is part of the identity of the Balearic Islands’, followed by a 100-point draggable sliding scale to indicate level of agreement or disagreement with the content of the statement. For the purpose of this study, only the answers to this last question will be analyzed.

*Procedure*

Participants self-identified for this study. Recruitment materials in Catalan and Spanish with information about the study, the requirements to participate and a link to the consent form and the survey were posted on different social networks and online communication channels, such as WhatsApp and Instagram. Participants who were interested and wanted to participate clicked on the link and read the consent form. Those who agreed with the terms clicked on the ‘I agree’ button and began the survey. Participants completed the survey on their own electronic devices and at their own pace without being observed. On average, the survey took approximately 15 minutes to be completed. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the survey at any time without being penalized as well as their right to request the elimination of their data after survey completion. All participants who completed the survey received 10 EUR of monetary compensation for their time.

*Data analysis*

When all of the participants’ responses were collected, data were downloaded from Qualtrics and stored in the author’s personal laptop as a .csv file. After that, this .csv was opened in R (R Core Team) in order to first, tidy the data, and second, to perform both a descriptive and a statistical analysis. The descriptive analysis consisted in creating a series of plots and tables to summarize and describe the features of the dataset and to identify some potential trends and relationships. This analysis allowed us to see the number of males and females who completed the survey, their ages, and the number of participants in each political orientation. After that, for each of the 60 evaluative statements, I created a series of hierarchically nested linear regression models using the lme4 package (Bates et al. 2015) in R (R Core Team, 2023), in order assess the relationship between language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish among the population of Palma (dependent variable) and political orientation (independent variable). To determine the best fit model for each statement, I used the anova() function (Fox & Wiseberg, 2018).

What elese?

1. Despite the importance of these articles, it should be noted that the specific names of the co-official languages (Catalan, Basque, and Galician) are not mentioned (Joan i Marí, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)