Introduction to Human Language

Class Language Survey - Morphology in Catalan

Name: **Devashish Kamble**
Language name: **Catalan**
Spoken in: **Spain, Andorra, France, Italy**
Approximate number of speakers: **9.2 million**
Informant name: **Antoni Llinàs**

Question 1
Does this language have a gender distinction? How many genders are there? Are they also distinct in the plural?

⇒ Yes, Catalan has two grammatical genders: feminine and masculine.
e.g boy (*noi*) - girl (*noia*)
The genders are also distinct in plural forms. Hence the above example changes to:
boys (*nois*) - girls (*noies*)

Question 2
How are plurals formed in this language? List all the forms. Can you find phonetic factors behind the choice of plural forms? Are some forms used only with certain genders?

⇒ In general, the plural are formed by affixing an s to the singular.
e.g man (*home*) - men (*homes*)
For words ending in an unstressed **a**, it is changed to an **e** and then adding **s**.
e.g idea (*idea*) - ideas (*idees*)
The above case leads to a few changes in orthography as follows:

- ç → c e.g breed (*raça*) - breeds (*races*)

- c → qu e.g cow (*vaca*) - cows (*vaques*)

- j → g e.g orange (*taronja*) - oranges (*taronges*)

- g → gu e.g shop (*botiga*) - shops (*botigues*)

- g → gü e.g language (*llengua*) - languages (*llengües*)

- qu → qü e.g oblique (*obliqua*) - obliques (*obliqües*)

For words ending in stressed vowels, it is affixed by **-ns**
e.g hand (*mà*) - hands (*mans*)
For masculine words ending in **s, ç, x** with the accent on last syllable, it is affixed by **-os**
e.g gas (*gas*) - gases (*gasos*)

arm (*braç*) - arms (*braços*)
office (*despatx*) - offices (*despatxos*)
For masculine words ending in **sc, st, xt** with the accent on last syllable, it is affixed by **os** or **s**
e.g forest (*bosc*) - forests (*boscos* or *boscs*)
taste (*gust*) - tastes (*gustos* or *gusts*)
text (*text*) - texts (*textos* or *texts*)

Question 3
Are there inflectional prefixes in this language? Are there circumfixes?

⇒ There are no inflectional prefixes in Catalan.
On the other hand, circumfixes do exist and act as verbalizers.
e.g to get sick (***em**malalt**ir***)

Question 4
Are there N-N compounds? If so, where is the head, left or right? Give examples.

⇒ There are N-N compounds in Catalan. They can be written as one word (motorway - *autopista*),
as separate words (sweeper car; *cotxe escombra*) or with hyphens (south-east; *sud-oest*).
In most cases, the head is on the left.
e.g *gos llop* - (*dog wolf*) wolf dog
targeta postal - (*card postal*) postcard
But there are exceptions in which the head is on the right.
e.g *cine-club* - (*cimema club*) cinema club

Question 5
Can you find a word with 2 inflectional affixes one after the other? (e.g gender+number, tense+person)

⇒ *verd* (green) + ***-es*** (feminine+plural) = *verdes*
parl (speak) + ***-a*** (present+2nd person) = *parla*

Question 6
Can you find an example of a derivational suffix which turns an adjective into a noun?

⇒ *blanc* (white) + ***-or*** = *blancor* (whiteness)

Question 7
Can you find an example of a derivational suffix which turns a noun into a verb?

⇒ *fum* (smoke) + ***-ejar*** = *fumejar* (to smoke)

Question 8
How do truncations work in this language? How do you form nicknames, and in general how do
you shorten proper names? Are there particular points at which a noun can be cut? (Hint: look
at stress position, number of syllables). Can the final syllable of the truncated form be open?
• English examples: Elìsabeth - Lìz / Lizzy ; Tom - Tommy ; Patrìcia - Pat / Trìcia, ...
• Italian examples: Francèsca - Frànc-i / Césca; Giusèppe - Pèppe - Pepp-ìno; Giuseppe - Giuseppetto - Geppetto.

Are there any particular affixes which are added to truncated forms (to make the noun sound cute, to express closeness, etc.). If they exist, and if the language has gender, do these affixes change the gender?

⇒ In Catalan, the truncation process consists of taking the part of the base that contains the stress i.e stress cannot move from its place. This is probably due to the fact that the unstressed vocalic system of Catalan is more reduced than the stressed one. Also there are instances where the final syllable of truncated form is open.
e.g *Joaquim - Quim, Agustina - Tina*
In some cases, the stress shifts to the beginning of the word and takes its first two syllables as these are probably influenced by the Spanish tradition.
e.g *Magdalena - Magda, Eduardo - Edu*

At times, affixes like *-ino, -et (masc)* and *-ita, -eta (fem)* (little) are added to make the name sound cuter.
e.g *Antoni - Tonino/Tonet*
Josepa - Pepeta/Pepita

Question 9
If this language uses cases, how many distinct cases does it have? (e.g. for English it is 2: he/him). Do you see them on all types of words, or only some? (e.g. pronouns, determiners, nouns, adjectives)

⇒ There are no cases in Catalan nouns.

Question 10
Are adverbs different from adjectives? Explain briefly how you tested this.

⇒ Yes, adverbs are different from adjectives in Catalan. The difference between these two words depends on the role it plays in the sentence and what it is describing, i.e adjectives will describe nouns or pronouns (people, places, or things) and adverbs will describe verbs (actions or states of being) or other adverbs or adjectives. In most cases, adverbs are formed by adding suffix *-ment*, which is english equivalent of (-ly), to the adjective's feminine singular form.
e.g *és un mal cantant* (He is a bad singer).
Here, *mal* acts an adjective describing the person who is singing.
canta malament (He sings badly).
Here, *malament* acts as an adverb describing the singing ability.

Question 11
Are there complex compounds in the language? Try water meter cover adjustment screw (i.e. the screw that adjusts the cover of a meter that measures water). Would they use prepositions or particles, or just nouns?

⇒ There are no complex compounds in Catalan.

Question 12
Do you note anything strange or special in the morphology of this language? Which aspects strike you as similar to your own language (if any)

⇒ There is a special case of the neuter article. The form of the singular masculine article (*el* or *l'*, the latter followed by a vowel) can also modify elements other than nouns, such as a relative sentence, certain adjectives, and certain adverbs in superlative constructions. e.g *no és cert el que dius* (it's not true what you're saying)
l'important és que tots dos diem el mateix (the important thing is that we both say the same thing)
vine al més aviat possible (come as soon as possible)

Similar to Catalan, there are two genders (masculine and feminine) in Hindi as well. At the same time, nouns which are not inflected for cases in Catalan, have three cases (nominative, oblique, and vocative) in Hindi.