

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Attitude is everything

Language attitudes and language choice in the
formal communications of social movements

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Abstract

Language choice in multilingual societies may be determined by the presence of a diglossic situation (Ferguson 1959, Fishman 1967), or by the language attitudes shared by the population, which configure language norms more flexible than diglossia, but shared across the speech community (Cargile et al. 1994). Attitudes are a key factor in the perception of a language's ethnolinguistic vitality, which in turn is a good predictor of language maintenance. This study looks into the language choices of social movements in the Barcelona metropolitan area, and the language attitudes behind them, taking into account that these grassroots movements sit between the public and private domains. The methodology used were semistructured interviews to a total of 12 activists, representing 9 cells of PAH (Mortgage Victims' Forum), 15M and Marees Ciutadanes (Citizens' Tides). The findings show that Catalan is overrepresented in formal outward communications if compared to its presence in ingroup communication. The reasons for this are mostly related to Catalan's status as the language of official institutions, and to cultural and historical reasons.

Resum

La tria lingüística en societats multilingües pot venir marcada per la presència d'una situació de diglòssia (Ferguson 1959, Fishman 1967), o per les actituds lingüístiques compartides per la població, que configuren normes lingüístiques més flexibles que la diglòssia, però compartides per la comunitat lingüística (Cargile et al., 1994). Les actituds són un factor clau en la percepció de la vitalitat etnolingüística d'una llengua, la qual al seu torn és un bon predictor de manteniment de la llengua. Aquest estudi examina les tries lingüístiques dels moviments socials a l'àrea metropolitana de Barcelona, i les actituds lingüístiques que les motiven, tenint en compte que aquests moviments ciutadans es troben a cavall entre els àmbits públic i privat. La metodologia utilitzada van ser entrevistes semiestructurades a un total de 12 activistes, en representació de 9 cel·les de la PAH (Plataforma d'Afectats per la Hipoteca), el 15M i les Marees Ciutadanes. Els resultats mostren que el català està sobrerrepresentat en les comunicacions externes formals si es compara amb la presència que té en la comunicació intragrupal. Les raons estan principalment relacionades amb l'estatus del català com a llengua de les institucions oficials, i amb qüestions culturals i històriques.

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**“La veritat és que no li hem donat...
no li donem tantes voltes, nosaltres.”**

– Daniel

1. Introduction

Modern-day Catalonia has traditionally been labelled in sociolinguistic literature as a case of diglossia (Strubell 1981, Tudela 1986, Woolard 1989, Rendon 2003, among many other). Indeed, this is a thoroughly researched topic in Catalan sociolinguistics, although the main focus has been on language policy, with education taking a large slice of the cake.

Arguably, the language policy implemented in Catalonia since the end of Franco's dictatorship has had an impact on the use of Catalan, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This is particularly noticeable in the public sphere, in domains such as government bodies or education, whereas private use of the language is obviously less affected by regulatory changes. These dynamics can be understood from the theoretical framework provided by diglossia, where public and private uses are traditionally distinguished. Within this framework, norms of language use are shaped by speakers' attitudes, and in turn give hints to the vitality of the language.

The present study aims at shedding light to language uses in a specific setting, which is that of the recently arisen social movements. It can be argued that these movements sit between the public and private domains, since they are but an aggregation of individualities, without the institutionalised character of political parties.

Considering all of the above, this piece of research seeks to establish whether the language choice strategies used in new social movements resemble those of the public sphere or those of the private domain, and to delve into the motivations of speakers. The research tackles exclusively the Barcelona metropolitan area, since the sociolinguistics of this region differ from those in other parts of Catalonia.

2. Research question and hypotheses

Is the language that new social movements use in their formal, outward communications the majority language of their members and / or the habitual language in their meetings? If not, why not?

In this work I will research whether language choice strategies in new social movements follow the logic of private domains, or that of public ones. In Catalonia, applying the rules of the private domain would result in each speaker using their first language. Since the research took place in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, an area where Catalan is not the first language for a majority of the population, most members of the movements would be expected to use Spanish.

The first hypothesis is that the language attitudes and ideologies of participants, strongly influenced by the higher prestige of Catalan, have permeated group behaviour and resulted in Catalan being overrepresented in the formal communication of these movements if compared to its presence in societal bilingualism.

With regard to the reason behind this, the second hypothesis is that this is due to the fact that Catalan is the normal language of communication in Catalan politics (that is, among parties and by institutions such as Parliament and public administration).

3. Key concepts

The far-reaching influence of the concept of diglossia in sociolinguistics literature makes it a good starting point for the analysis of language choice, particularly when the idea of public and private domains enters the equation, as is the case here. Yet, diglossia may not suffice to understand the phenomenon at hand. In settings where the distribution of codes by domains is not as rigid as that of canonical diglossia, language attitudes have proven very helpful to explain language behaviour and therefore the specific configuration of language norms. Moreover, if one of the codes is a minority language, bringing in the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality may also be useful to understand those underlying attitudes. This section is devoted to reviewing these three key concepts: diglossia, language attitudes and ethnolinguistic vitality, while the next section looks at how these have been applied to the Catalan scenario in previous works of research.

3.1. Diglossia

The term diglossia was initially used by Ferguson (1959) to describe a situation where two varieties of one language are used within a speech community. What defines diglossic situations is the functional specialisation of the said varieties, which are employed in a distinctively distributed manner whereby one, the low or L variety, is used in the private sphere, with the high or H variety being the language of formal and public interactions. From this ensues that only one variety is appropriate in any given situation (Romaine 1995), depending on the functional domain.

Gumperz (1961) would later suggest that the concept be applied to settings where two different languages (and not just two different varieties of the same language) coexist.

Along the same lines, Fishman (1967) posited that the key feature of diglossic situations is social function rather than the linguistic relatedness required in Ferguson's definition of the phenomenon. This view was shared by Pauwels (1986), who distinguished between interlingual diglossia and intralingual diglossia.

Stability was another key feature of Ferguson's definition of diglossia, a situation that "typically persists at least several centuries" (Ferguson 1959: 332). Some authors countered Ferguson's view that stability is crucial to diglossia (Pauwels 1986, Mackey 1986), and many considered it an open and dynamic process. Vallverdú (1980) regarded diglossia as a specific phase in bilingual processes, all of which in his opinion tend towards monolingualism. One view that is shared by a number of authors is the undeniability of the provisional nature of diglossic situations, which would inevitably see the configuration of functional domains modified over time as society changes (Schiffman 1997, García Marcos 1999, Hudson 2002).

Neither Ferguson nor Fishman characterised diglossia as a conflict situation, but rather as scenarios where the "attitudes, behaviours and values associated to each language are culturally legitimised" (Sanz 1991: 49, my translation). According to Miller & Miller, "an important hallmark of a typically diglossic situation is the question of language prestige" (1996: 117), since this is what separates the high and low varieties. The following section delves into this idea by focusing on different concepts that are related to or somehow affect language prestige.

For the purpose of this study, it is also important to refer to Hudson's (2002) argument that diglossia must be differentiated from societal bilingualism, since these two phenomena have distinct features in terms of the potential relationship between the nature of the

complementary functional distribution of linguistic varieties as well as in the way language shift potentially operates in each case. In diglossic situations, according to this author, “linguistic realization as opposed to language acquisition (...) is a function solely of social context, and not of social identity of the speaker” (*ibid*: 3).

3.2. Language attitudes and behaviours

Attitude can be defined as “a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event” (Ajzen 1988: 4). Language attitudes have been extensively studied, in what Cargile and Giles (1997) interpreted as recognition that “language is a powerful social force that does more than convey intended referential information” (p. 195). They have also been frequently studied as an indicator of the vitality of a language and therefore in processes of language shift or language substitution.

Attitudes related to language are not restricted to multilingual situations, since hearer’s attitudes are affected not just by the code but also by other variables such as accent, voice quality or lexical diversity, among other (Cargile et al. 1994). However, there are aspects of language attitudes that are indeed specific to these kinds of situations, namely the dimensions of social status and in-group solidarity (*ibid*). Status can be defined as allegiance to the most highly valued social object, while solidarity marks allegiance to one’s group’s social values, regardless of their social position (Strubell 1981).

Hymes (1971) placed language attitudes at the core of communicative competence and posited that such attitudes influence people’s reactions to other language users. This in turn involves that our language choices will also be influenced by the anticipation of this type of

reaction (Garret 2010). Language attitudes, thus, both shape and are shaped by language choice, and in this sense are closely related to norms of language use, which prescribe what choices are appropriate in a given situation as a function of factors such as formality, participants or domain.

Norms of language use, being norms, are socially imposed rather than bargained and agreed upon on a per-conversation basis, as Vila i Moreno (2005) noted, and these norms in fact “translate the power balances existing in the community into linguistic practice” (*ibid* p. 85). Looking into the motivations behind language behaviours, Cargile et al. (1994) ruled out intrinsic linguistic or aesthetic reasons and pointed out that they reflect “the levels of status, prestige, or appropriateness that they are conventionally associated with in particular speech communities” (p. 227)

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

This vision acknowledges the fact that language use is indeed influenced by a number of factors, including speakers' attitudes and institutional context. These, and other variables, have also been factored in another relevant concept for this research, that of ethnolinguistic vitality.

3.3. Ethnolinguistic vitality

Ethnolinguistic vitality was first defined by Giles et al. (1997) as what “makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations” (p. 308), and it depends on demographic factors, institutional support and status. The latter refers to the prestige of the group in sociohistorical, social, economic and linguistic terms. Demographical factors include things such as the size of the group, its geographical concentration, or migration patterns. Institutional support captures the amount of control a speech group exerts over society's informal and formal institutions such as the home, the media or education (Landry & Allard 1994, Hamers & Blanc 1989).

This concept aims at linking the social psychological processes of group behaviour to sociocultural settings (Hamers & Blanc 1989). In this sense, the higher the degree of a group's ethnolinguistic vitality, the more likely it is that its language and culture will be preserved. Landry and Allard (1994), after applying the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality in a study of seven Canadian provinces, concluded that it shows a strong relationship with the frequency of language use not only in status-oriented domains but across all domains, public and private.

The initial three-fold concept described earlier (made up of the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions) measures objective ethnolinguistic vitality. However, most studies

have approached this concept by measuring subjective ethnolinguistic vitality –that is, taking people’s perceptions and representations of vitality as mediators of linguistic behaviour– rather than studying the sociostructural variables that make up objective ethnolinguistic vitality (*ibid*). Perceived ethnolinguistic vitality is often credited as a better predictor of language behaviour (Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal 1981, Hamers & Blanc 2000) and therefore providing insights into people’s attitudes to language (Garrett 2010).

It should be noted that diglossia and ethnolinguistic vitality are not mutually exclusive as conceptual tools to analyse multilingual situations. Bourhis (1979) proposed a link between the two, suggesting that the language choice strategies of speakers in a diglossic situation are related to the vitality of their language group as well as the formality of the communicative situation. On a similar note, Cargiles et al. (1994) stated that “ethnolinguistic vitality reflects the range and importance of functions served by a given language variety and the social pressures toward shifts in language use” (p. 226). These views are reminding of what a number of authors say in relation to the changing configuration of diglossic situations (see section 3.1).

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

4. Previous research on the sociolinguistics of Catalan

Catalan has received much attention from the sociolinguistics literature. This is partly due to the peculiar nature of bilingualism in the country, what Miley (2008) labels ethno-linguistic heterogeneity – the fact that not just Catalonia is bilingual, but also its residents are bilingual themselves. Indeed, fewer than 5% of Barcelona’s inhabitants describe themselves as monolingual (Vila i Moreno 2005).

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

With regard to language use in the public domain, Boix-Fuster and Sanz (2008) noted that both Spanish and Catalan are employed in government institutions (the former is favoured in central Spanish government administrations; the latter is extensively used in local and autonomous, i.e. Catalan-level, bodies). The same authors highlighted the widespread use of Catalan in education, even though “social bilingualism is still clearly asymmetrical in favor of Spanish” (Boix Fuster & Sanz 2008: 89). On a similar note, Vila i Moreno (2005) recognised the impact of the widespread learning of Catalan upon language ideologies and use, but cautioned that it has not seeped through to the domain of interpersonal use.

This is in accordance with Miley’s (2008) analysis of a 2001 CIS survey whereby the use of the two languages across domains showed systematic differences – whereas Spanish is

spoken in more households, Catalan is more extensively used in relations with the public administration. Bilingual linguistic habits, on the other hand, “appear to occur most often among friends” (*ibid*: 12). This author concluded that Catalan society is diglossic, albeit with “shifting patterns of diglossia” that have formed as a consequence of the “Generalitat’s efforts to ‘normalize’ the Catalan language” (*ibid*: 9).

However, Sanz (1991) argued that, while diglossia was a characteristic of Barcelona society in the 1960s, today “the linguistic situation in Barcelona cannot be considered as diglossic” (p. 55) given that language switch goes both ways: Catalan speakers may switch to Spanish in a given conversation, and vice versa. Along the same lines, Vallverdú (1983) cited the lack of a clear-cut distribution to argue that the linguistic behaviour of Catalans cannot be considered diglossia.

Indeed, it is not easy to label the Catalan sociolinguistic situation as one of diglossia, and one of the reasons for that is arguably related to the prestige of the language. Whereas in a diglossic situation the high variety is normally also the most prestigious one, the reverse is true in Catalonia (Miller & Miller 1996). Although these authors concurred that the rigid distribution of typical diglossic situations is not present in Catalonia, they believed that “undoubtedly diglossic functions and diglossic attitudes still remain in certain contexts” (*ibid*: 118).

Vila i Moreno (1996) summed up that norms of language use in Catalonia “have traditionally prescribed different language choice patterns as a function of both speaker and addressee’s first language” (p. 85), as opposed to the patterns based on degree of formality that are typical of diglossic communities. Yet, even if Catalan and Spanish do not show a complementary distribution in terms of functions, different settings arguably trigger

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

In this sense, the link between language use and social class structure in Catalonia has also been worthy of academic attention. A number of authors report that language ideology tends to identify Catalan with the middle class, while the working class is related to Spanish (Boix-Fuster & Sanz 2008, Frekko 2009). Arguably, this influences the prestige associated with each language. In turn, the prestige of Catalan has also been cited as the key factor to explain its maintenance (Sanz 1991).

Another factor that has been suggested in the building of the prestige of Catalan is Franco's dictatorship, and more specifically the unity that was created amongst opposition groups, who developed a "form of civic nationalism (...) which adopted the Catalan flag as a common, democratic symbol" (Vila i Moreno 2005: 53).

Be that as it may, Woolard (1989) found that participants in her study assigned greater status value to Catalan, something that had been maintained or even become more accentuated over the twenty years that passed until a further study (Woolard 2009). With regard to solidarity, Woolard's first research in 1989 showed that participants assigned a greater solidarity value to their own native language, whereas this difference was not identified in the 2009 study.

Guiu's (2013) study of the perceived prestige of Catalan and Spanish in different towns of Catalonia found that even in towns whose population was mostly Spanish-speaking, over 80% of the sample chose Catalan as the most prestigious language. In a piece of work that bears similarities with the context of the present study, Frekko (2009) argued that the use of

Catalan in a protest campaign carried out in the Raval neighbourhood was part of a strategy on the part of the neighbours aimed at depicting themselves as “respectable people who deserved to participate in a Barcelonan public” (p. 228).

The solid prestige of Catalan, therefore, seems to be clearly established in the literature. Notwithstanding this, it is also worth noting, as Miley (2008) did, that in terms of “the evolution of linguistic identities and linguistic practices (...) the Castilian-speaking portion of Catalonia’s general population constitutes a relatively consolidated community, in the sense that (...) it is not showing any signs of linguistic substitution” (p. 12). Yet it seems to hold Catalan in a better view than Spanish in terms of ethnolinguistic vitality: Viladot and Esteban (2011), for example, reported that members of what they called the Spanish group (Spanish identity and Spanish first language) and the mixed group (Catalan identity and Spanish first language) overestimated the vitality of the Catalan-speaking group, while the perceived vitality of the Catalan group (Catalan identity and Catalan first language) was in accordance to objective measures of vitality.

5. The sociolinguistics of Catalonia

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

The first two of these were made up mostly of workers from other Spanish regions, effectively changing a quasi-monolingual Catalan-speaking region into a de facto bilingual society. The effect of the earlier waves was particularly intensified in the city of Barcelona and its surrounding area, which is the focus of the present study. In 1975 over 40% of the population of these regions had been born outside Catalonia (Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics 2007). As Miley (2008) noted, “by the time of the transition, Castilian-speaking immigrants from the rest of Spain had come to constitute clear majorities in most of the municipalities in the industrial belt surrounding Barcelona, and significant minorities throughout most of Catalonia” (p. 2).

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

With the onset of democracy and the devolution of powers, the Catalan parliament passed the Law of Linguistic Normalisation in 1983. This piece of legislation had a cross-cutting approach that targeted the areas of public administration, media, education, commerce and

industry, cultural and social sectors (Miller & Miller 1996). Arguably, the areas where it has been most noticeable and successful are public administration, education and the media (Sinner & Wieland, 2008).

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

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

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

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

results for the metropolitan area of Barcelona show lower rates for Catalan and higher rates for Spanish in all three categories (tables 3 and 4).

Table 1. Knowledge of Catalan among the population. Catalonia.

Competency	Catalan	Spanish
Can understand	94,3%	99,8%
Can speak	80,4%	99,7%
Can read	82,4%	97,4%
Can write	60,4%	95,9%

Source: EULP 2013

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

	Catalan	Cat & Spa	Spanish	Other or n/a
First language	31,0%	2,4%	55,1%	11,5%
Language of identification	36,4%	7,0%	47,6%	9,0%
Habitual language	36,3%	6,8%	50,6%	6,3%

Source: EULP 2013

Table 3. Knowledge of Catalan among the population. Barcelona metropolitan area.

Competency	Catalan	Spanish
Can understand	93,7%	99,8%
Can speak	77,6%	99,8%
Can read	80,6%	98,1%
Can write	57,1%	96,8%

Source: EULP 2013

Table 4. First language, language of identification and habitual language. Barcelona metropolitan area.

	Catalan	Cat & Spa	Spanish	Other or n/a
First language	23,3%	2,5%	64,3%	7,4%
Language of identification	28,7%	7,7%	56,1%	6,6%
Habitual language	27,8%	7,2%	60,0%	4,9%

Source: EULP 2013

These figures are particularly relevant when we consider that there is a strong link between the first language and the language of interpersonal use (Vila i Moreno 2003). Indeed, they are in line with the results of a recently published study by Fabà and Torrijos (2014) on languages present in street conversations in Barcelona, 58,3% of which were in Spanish. The study also tapped into the differences according to districts and age groups. With regards to differences by districts, 47.9% of the conversations in Gràcia were in Catalan and 44.4% in Spanish, while Nou Barris is at the other end of the continuum with 12.0% of interactions in Catalan and 82.1% in Spanish. In terms of age groups, Spanish prevails among the over-50s (over 60% of conversations in this language), and those under 15 are the ones who use Catalan the most (42.4%).

In any case, the majority of the population in Catalonia, but also in the Barcelona metropolitan area knows and normally uses both languages, and, as Vila i Moreno (2005) put it, “the society is far from being polarised on this issue” (p. 53).

6. New social movements

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

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

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

both for internal communication and for outward dissemination (Peña-López, Congosto & Aragón 2014, Martín Rojo 2014). In fact, the latter was a salient characteristic of 15M, which considered communication “a key element in its emergence and conformation” (Martín Rojo 2014: 585).

These movements were initially not linked to political parties, and very often opposed institutionalised political ideology. Although this has changed with the creation of parties and alliances such as *Podemos* or *Guanyem Barcelona*, it continues to be the case that the movements themselves are grassroots in nature, and flat in their structure. They often have an extreme open-door policy, with meetings being held in squares that anyone is welcome to join. In-group communication is commonly done via distribution lists, and working documents are created using collaborative tools such as Google Docs or TitanPad.

Arguably, these features facilitate the entry of activists into the movements, and also set them apart from institutionalised groups such as political parties.

7. Methodology

7.1. Sample

This study was geographically constricted to the Barcelona metropolitan area. As explained in section 5, this is relevant considering the different make up of this area in sociolinguistic terms when compared to the rest of Catalonia.

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

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

In order to understand the restriction on political parties, it must be borne in mind that the public discourse in Catalonia is overwhelmingly done in Catalan (Frekko 2009), to the extent that a recently founded party, *Ciutadans*, stirred up the political arena when it began using both Catalan and Spanish in speeches (“*Ciutadans da la sorpresa*”). Although this had some impact in the language practices at the Catalan parliament, only 8% of deputies used

Spanish in their addresses (“Once diputados catalanes”). Also remarkably, in a rather anecdotal episode, a regional councillor felt it was necessary to apologise after using Spanish when addressing the chamber (“El conseller de Salut”). It could therefore be argued that specific norms of language use exist among political parties. Applying this restriction, *Podemos* would be ruled out of the sample, for example.

The restriction regarding pro-independence movements was put in place considering the close link between those, on the one hand, and language and identity, on the other. It was considered that a pro-independence movement uses language not just as a means of communication but also as an end in itself, as a policy object, and thus these movements need to be studied separately. Because of this, movements such as the *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (ANC, Catalan National Assembly) or *Procés Constituent* (Constituent Process) were not taken into account, even if they were among the most frequently cited in the general press.

The participants of the study were contacted both through personal connections and by cold calling (via email). Whenever the habitual language of the contact person was known, the researcher used it when approaching them for the first time. Participants were initially informed of the general topic of the research (“languages and social movements”). Interestingly enough, many interviewees would then rephrase it as “*language* and social movements”, as if implying that only Catalan (and not Spanish) was the object of the study. The researcher made sure to use the plural “languages” every time, to indicate that the two languages that make up the bilingual reality of Catalonia would be considered equally for the purposes of the study.

7.2. Method

A total of six interviews were conducted for this study (see details in Table 5). Although respondents were initially approached on an individual basis, whenever they suggested to ask another activist to join, the researcher agreed. For this reason, four of the interviews were done on a one-to-one basis, while two were group interviews. This was motivated by the ‘cueing phenomenon’ identified by Morgan and Krueger (1993), whereby participants in a group interview help each other divulge information. Therefore, the total number of participants in the study is 12 people.

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

Table 5. Sample

Inter- viewees*	Type	Movement	Geographical scope
Eduard	Individual	15M Stop Pujades	Barcelona (Sarrià-Sant Gervasi) Barcelona Metropolitan Area
José	Individual	PAH	Esplugues de Llobregat
Sara	Individual	Marea groga (Education)	El Prat de Llobregat
Miquel Laura Daniel Alba Toni Marta	Group	15M 15M	Barcelona (Sants) Barcelona (Les Corts)
Neus	Individual	15M	Barcelona
Roberto Pedro	Group	Marea blanca (Health) Marea blanca (Health)	El Prat de Llobregat Catalonia

* *All names of the interviewees used here are pseudonyms.*

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

8. Results and findings

As indicated in section 2, the hypothesis for the present research was that the language behaviour of new social movements favours Catalan for outward written communication, whereas informal, in-group communication is more mixed, dependent mostly on the habitual language of participants. The first part of this section covers the findings in this regard. It was also hypothesised that what lies behind this is the status of Catalan as the main institutional language – this will be tackled in the second part of this section.

8.1. Languages used

With regards to the languages used for outward, formal communication, the hypothesis was found to be correct. Indeed, 7 out of the 9 movements for which information was gathered reported to do their outward communication either totally or mostly in Catalan (see Table 6).

Table 6. Language of in-group and outward communication

Movement	Geographical scope	In-group communication	Outward written communication
15M	Sarrià-Sant Gervasi (Barcelona)	Catalan	Catalan
Marea blanca	Catalonia	Catalan	Catalan
Marea groga	El Prat de Llobregat	Both	Catalan
15M	Sants (Barcelona)	Both	Catalan
Stop Pujades	Barcelona Metropolitan Area	Both	Catalan
15M	Barcelona	Both	Mostly Catalan
15M	Les Corts (Barcelona)	Both	Both
Marea blanca	El Prat de Llobregat	Mostly Spanish	Both
PAH	Esplugues de Llobregat	Spanish	Catalan

More importantly, when the usual language of in-group communication is compared to the language of outward formal communication, it is clear that Catalan gains ground as the level of formality increases. Only two movements claimed to use only Catalan as their usual in-group language, while another group (admittedly the most extreme example) said that its internal communication was in Spanish but its outward written messages were always in Catalan.

8.1.1. *Communication strategy*

*“No, no, no hi ha una estratègia comunicativa,,
– Eduard*

In general, the respondents’ movements did not have a communication strategy, as Eduard stated very clearly: *“No, no, no hi ha una estratègia comunicativa, en general jo no l’he viscut”* (No, no, there isn’t a communication strategy, in general I have not seen one”). Neus did report having some protocols or style guides, which included things such as how a social media account ought to be used. Very often, the groups have guidelines on what type of language to favour (inclusive, gender-neutral language) or avoid, although again, given the nature of these movements, the specifics are not set in stone but rather are flexible and often revisited. And sometimes they are more presupposed than anything, as Toni admitted (*“Diguem que tot això ve una mica heretat [...], això ja estava assumit allà al nucli central [Plaça de Catalunya]”*; “Let’s say that all this is sort of inherited [...], this had been taken on at the central core [Plaça de Catalunya]”).

8.1.2. *Guidelines on language use*

*“No ens ho hem qüestionat mai, no ho sé!,,
– Sara*

Even if some guidelines are in place, however, they very rarely include the issue of which languages to use when. All interviewees were enquired about this, but only one of the

researched cells reported having such guidelines, although these seemed to be suggestions rather than anything else, from the way Neus explained them:

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

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

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

Interestingly, when asked if the issue of what language should be used had come up at all, many respondents mostly referred to the issue of Catalan independence. That is, rather than quoting examples of discussions around language, the question made them think of occasions when a pro-independence group was adamant that their perspective be included in the groups' political stance. At the group interview, when asked about whether a debate or

some sort of informal conversation around language had taken place, Daniel answered in the following way:

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

[...]

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

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

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

[...]

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

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

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

8.1.3. *Language is not important*

"Aquí no es un problema de lengua, es un problema de actividad y de... y de lucha, ¿no?,"
– José

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

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

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

“Aquí no es un problema de lengua, es un problema de actividad y de... y de lucha, ¿no?” (José)

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

“No és una cosa que ens preocupi massa” (Daniel)

“It’s not something we worry too much about.”

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

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

Roberto and Pedro, who belonged to the group with the smallest presence of Catalan in the sample (see Table 6), were also the only other ones to say that you had to consider your target and ensure *“que nadie se sienta, digamos, desplazado por el tema del idioma”* (“so that no one feels, say, displaced by the language issue”), in Roberto’s words. Alba also reflected that it was probably easier for the message to reach the target audience if it was in

their language. Hers was, however, an observation that arose from the interview, as she admitted:

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

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

8.1.4. Language of in-group communication

*“Jo et puc contestar en castellà tranquil·lament, eh?,”
– Miquel*

As has been pointed out earlier, there is a mismatch in language behaviour between internal and outward communication in that the latter tends to lean more towards Catalan, whatever the former is like. In fact, in-group communication is most likely to include both languages. In general, respondents strongly emphasised the non-problematic nature of bilingualism in their groups².

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

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

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

Daniel: No trobem, no ho trobem problema això.

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

² Although the questions were worded in a way that considered any language option as legitimate and that openly acknowledged societal bilingualism, most participants were adamant to make it clear that language is not a problem. Arguably, this is a preventive defence mechanism that many Catalans have developed to counter a certain niche political discourse according to which there is a discrimination against the Spanish language in Catalonia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Everyone speaks in the language they feel most comfortable in. There isn't... with this there isn't..."

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

8.2. Reasons for using a language

Since none of the groups reported having discussed the reasons for their language behaviour in formal, outward communication, participants were asked to give their opinion as to why they had naturally ended up doing it in a particular manner. Tables 7 and 8 detail the

different reasons that were alluded to, and the number of participants who mentioned each of them.

Table 7. Reasons for use of Catalan in outward communication and people citing them

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

Table 8. Reasons for use of Spanish in outward communication and people citing them

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

The fact that 7 out of the 9 organisations claim to use Catalan or mostly Catalan for their outward communications (see Table 6) explains that this language gathered a larger number of reasons. Interestingly, out of the four reasons argued for the use of Spanish (see Table 8 above), three are related to lack of proficiency, which in effect is a lack of choice. The following section analyses them in more detail.

8.2.1. Factors specific to Spanish

“La juventud no se mueve,,
– Roberto

The factor “Age” was mentioned by Roberto, whose organisation is based in a town with a very high percentage of Spanish speakers. As a result of the language-in-education policy (see section 5), younger age groups are generally proficient in both languages, whereas people over 50 years of age from a Spanish-speaking background may not have learnt Catalan. This effect will be more noticeable in areas such as the city of El Prat de Llobregat, where immigration has traditionally had a strong impact³. According to Roberto, “*la juventud no se mueve*” (“young people don’t get involved”).

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

8.2.2. Individual choice

“Llavors clar, no sé, em sap greu no escriure en català,,
– Marta

It is worth noting that the factor we have labelled “Down to the individual” shows up in both tables. This label groups all interventions where a respondent stated that the reason for

³ Fabà and Torrijos (2014) identified that Spanish is more widely present in older age groups. More specifically, according to Idescat’s 2001 Census, knowledge of Catalan among the age groups over 50 in El Prat de Llobregat is on average 18% lower than in Catalonia as a whole, whereas it is comparable or even slightly higher for the population between 20 and 50 years of age. Source: <http://www.idescat.cat/>

using a specific language was because whoever was typing up the posts would simply use the language of their choice.

In the group interview with the 15M assembly of Sants and Les Corts, we were lucky enough to have the main community manager for each area taking part⁴. Marta, who usually manages the social media accounts of 15M Les Corts, stated that she felt more comfortable writing in Spanish, as it is her mother tongue, but made an effort to also use Catalan because she knows that that is the language of a lot of people in her *barri* (“*a Les Corts hi ha molta gent... hi ha un sentiment molt independentista. Llavors clar, no sé, em sap greu [...] no escriure en català*”; “in Les Corts there’s a lot of people... there’s a strong pro-independence feeling. So of course, I don’t know, I feel bad to not write in Catalan”). Toni, the community manager for 15M Sants, is also a Spanish speaker in terms of his first language, but said he wrote all posts in Catalan. Daniel concurred: “*ell [Toni] de cara enfora en català, ara, de cara a nosaltres...*” (“him [Toni], in Catalan outwards, but towards us...”), and confirmed once more the disparity in language behaviour in these two domains.

Yet, as Figure 1 shows, individual choice only accounts for just over 11% of the reasons given by the respondent. If we analyse the reasons mentioned for using Catalan, they can be grouped in four categories that have been labelled “Individual” (11.6%), “Audience” (9.3%), “Cultural” (18.6%), “Default” (27.9%) and “Institutional (32.6%). The following subsections analyse these categories in some detail.

⁴ Sants and Les Corts are two neighbouring *barris* or boroughs of the city of Barcelona, each of which had a 15M cell at the start of the movement. When momentum began to wear down, the two cells decided to merge, although they maintain distinct online profiles.

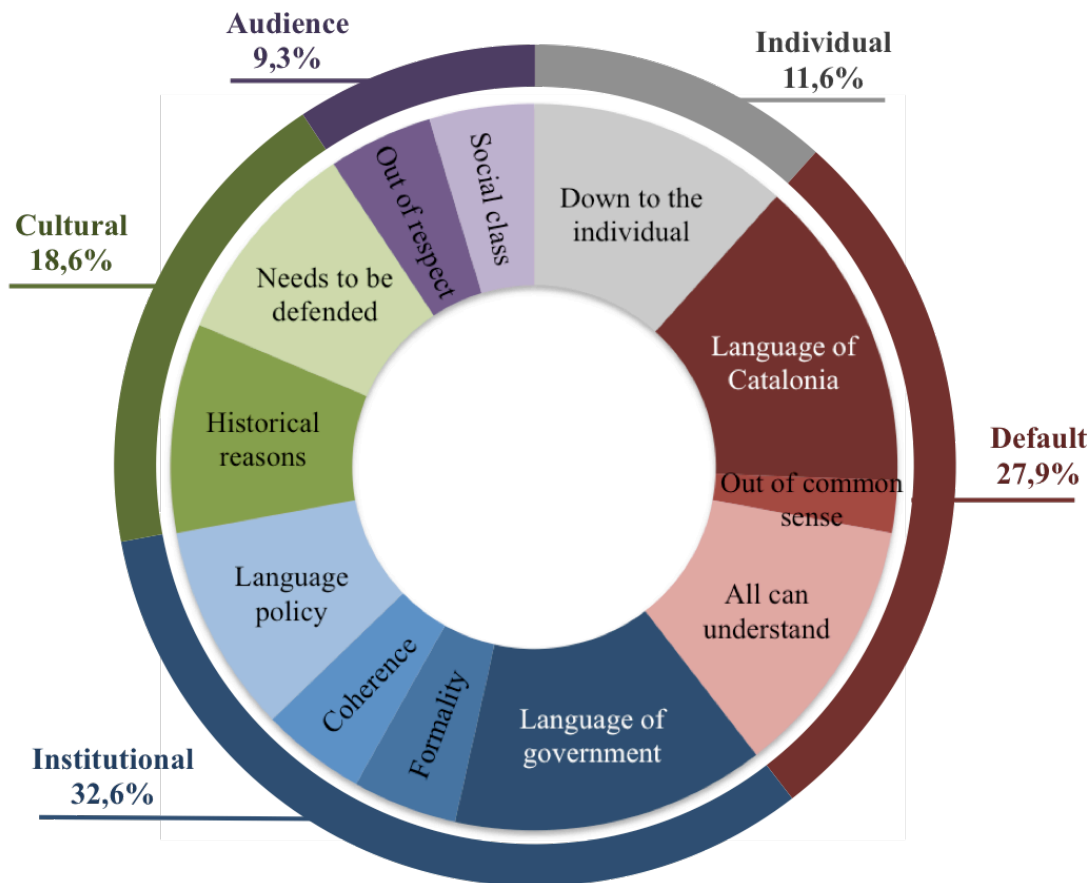


Figure 1. Distribution of reasons for using Catalan, by categories.

8.2.3. Thinking of the audience

“Retòrica bàsica: a qui em dirigeixo?,”
– Neus

The factors “Respect” and “Social class” could be included in a category called “Audience”, since both take into account the target of the message and adjust language behaviour in accordance. Marta’s statement in the previous subsection, for example, also touches on this. No such reasons, however, have been used to include more Spanish in the communications of these movements, despite the fact that this is the majority language in the Barcelona metropolitan area (first language of 64% of the population here, habitual language of 60% and, more importantly, language of identification of 56%, see section 5).

8.2.4. Catalan by default

*“Mira, aquí a Catalunya, el català l’entén tothom,,
– Daniel*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I llavors quan vas repartint i veus algú que no hi entén, dic: ‘és en català, eh?, però així practiques...’” (Eduard)

“And then when you’re handing out [flyers] and you see someone who doesn’t understand, I say ‘it’s in Catalan, huh?, but this way you can practice...’”

Clearly, the bottom line seems to be that there needs to be a reason to use Spanish, whereas none is required for Catalan. And after all, everyone can understand Catalan:

“Mira, aquí a Catalunya, el català l’entén tothom, una altra cosa és que la gent s’expressi o no s’expressi bé en català, però entendre’l...” (Daniel)

Look, here in Catalonia, everyone understands Catalan, another thing is whether or not people can express themselves well in Catalan, but to understand it...”

This perception of Catalan occupying the default position among the languages of Catalonia clearly deserved further exploration. When asked to reflect on what the reasons for this might be, most participants provided arguments that touch on the effects of language policy and the level of formality. These have been grouped under the category “Institutional” and account for over 30% of the answers, as Figure 1 shows.

8.2.5. Catalan is the institutional language

“Jo diria més que del Club Súper 3,”
– Toni

According to six respondents, one reason is the fact that Catalan is the language of government and the public administration in Catalonia. This is also what the hypothesis for this research posited. Roberto, for example, was very clear about this point: *“Lo oficial, aquí, es el catalán. [...], ya es una forma, no sé, se ve... lo oficial se ve más en catalán”* (“The official thing here is Catalan, it’s already a way, I don’t know, you see... you see the official things more in Catalan”). Sara too acknowledged this fact: *“a nivell d’institucions sí que és veritat que com t’ho fan en català, suposo que ja fas una mica de dir, pam!, ho haig de fer en català”* (“in terms of institutions, it’s true that since they do it in Catalan, you sort of say, alright, I must do it in Catalan”).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Toni: Jo diria més que del Club Súper 3.⁵

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ *Club Súper 3* is a television block programme that includes a number of cartoons and other children’s shows. Produced and broadcast by Catalonia’s public television, this Catalan-language show has been highly successful since it was launched in 1991.

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

“When you are in an AMPA⁶ you are in your realm, it’s like more... more personal, right? But obviously, when we set up the commission, you say, well, we’re here representing fathers, mothers, students, teachers, and we are also defending state schools as such, public education. So then you raise your standards.”

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

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

One interesting side to this is the fact that the organisations considered in this study are defined by their anti-establishment nature, so the researcher asked them whether adopting the institutional approach to language, even if not as a conscious decision, could somehow

⁶ AMPA stands for *Associació de Mares i Pares d’Alumnes* (School Parents’ Association).

compromise their rebellious flare. All answers in this respect were very straightforward – the establishment is one thing, the people another, and the language belongs to the people:

“El 15M el que ha pretès és comunicar-se amb la gent, no ser contestari amb la gent.” (Neus)

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

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

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

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

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

8.2.6. Language is culture

*“¡Yo creo que es un derecho! Estamos aquí...
Yo nací en Andalucía, eh.,,
– Pedro*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. Discussion and final remarks

Considering the data presented in section 5 with regard to language use in the Barcelona metropolitan area, where Spanish outweighs Catalan, it could be expected for social movements in this region to communicate outwards either in both languages or chiefly in Spanish. Yet the findings of the present research indicate that this is not the case.

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

This behaviour could be analysed from the perspective of diglossia, in that what happens at the informal level is different from what occurs in formal domains. However, as has been argued in section 3.1, Catalonia can hardly be considered a diglossic society. This can be observed in this study too – the language behaviours in the two domains (in-group and outwards) can clearly be distinguished, but they are far from monolithic. Rather, what happens is simply that one of the domains, namely that of outward, formal communications, leans more towards Catalan than the other one does, but one would be hard pressed to say that there is a language behaviour that is inappropriate in either domain.

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

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

In other words, this lack of debate makes more notable the fact that most of those individual decisions happen to flow in the same direction. This is a clear indicator that a shared perception or attitude towards language exists in society. Shared perceptions, as noted by Vila i Moreno (2005), configure linguistic norms. In the case at hand, it can be argued that the norm taking shape prescribes that Catalan is not just appropriate but also natural and sufficient for formal communications in a setting of political activism.

Section 4 reports how previous works have concluded that Catalan enjoys a high prestige status, and the language behaviour identified in this research is clearly in accordance with this and also with previous findings regarding Catalan's good ethnolinguistic vitality. Moreover, this prestige seems to act in such a way that makes Catalan the default language, hence requiring no justification as to its use. It seems that, as Pujolar & González argued, "Catalan is becoming increasingly 'anonymous' or ethnically unmarked" (2013: 140). This would explain the converging behaviours in different groups despite the absolute lack of debate around this issue. The default value of Catalan stands out as another key finding of this study.

This research has also tapped into the factors that inform attitudes towards Catalan in the context of grassroots movements. The two main factors identified through the respondents' contributions are related to historical reasons and to the effects of the language policy implemented since the advent of democracy and the devolution of powers. It was noted in section 5 that public administration, the media and education were the areas where language policy has been the most successful, and this can also be concluded from the findings presented here. Not only were all three factors mentioned by interviewees, but it can hardly be disputed that they have had a fundamental influence on the linguistic reality of Catalonia. This confirmation constitutes the last notable contribution of the present work.

Staying within the scope of the present research, it is clear that the language immersion policy has led to a situation where most citizens can actually choose which language to use. As exemplified by Roberto and Pedro's organisation, where most members belong to the older age groups, lack of proficiency inevitably impacts on language behaviour by effectively limiting choice.

With regards to the mass media, they have reinforced proficiency by providing a formal model of language (Strubell 2001) and helped normalise the language. It is hard to write a political opinion post on a blog if you have never read a newspaper editorial in the language. Interestingly enough, two of the participants in the group interview (Laura and Toni) exchanged their views on which of these two (education and media) were more fundamental to explain the status of Catalan today.

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

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

Finally, it's worth noting the relevance of Corbeil's (1980) distinction between individualised and institutionalised communications (see section 3.2), which lies in the author's view that modifying patterns of language use at the institutional level will eventually transfer to individualised communications. This may prove a fruitful and interesting area for further research. If new social movements can indeed be considered to sit between the formal and informal domains, and considering the rather sound position of Catalan in Catalonia in terms of its ethnolinguistic vitality, we might be witnessing the first stages of this process.

10. References

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*"En todos los años que llevo nadie me ha
venido a decir: 'hostia, ¿qué pone ahí?'"*
– José