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The Linguistic Ideology of Eighteenth-Century Europe— A Precursor of Today, for Catalan and Other Languages

Abstract

This presentation analyses the linguistic conformity—or the acceptance—whether symbolic or not, of the political linguistic rules that European languages such as French and Spanish, on the one hand, and Catalan on the other hand, have seen since the 18th century. Some of the prejudices that bodies of power have had towards Catalan, as well as their resulting consequences, will be covered, as will language policies that have survived to today and which are present in the mass media.

Sommaire

Cette présentation [‘L’idéologie linguistique de l’europe du XVIIIe siècle – prodrome de l’aujourd’hui, pour le cataland et d’autres langues’] analyse la conformité linguistique – ou l’acceptation – symbolique ou non des règles linguistiques politiques que les langues européennes, telles que le français et l’espagnol, d’une part, et le catalan, d’autre part, appliquent depuis le XVIIIe siècle. Certains des préjugés que les organes du pouvoir ont eus envers le catalan, ainsi que leurs conséquences, seront abordés, de même que les politiques linguistiques qui ont survécu jusqu’à présent et qui sont présentes dans les medias.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Präsentation [‘Die Sprachideologie im Europa des 18. Jahrhunderts – eine Vorbote des Heute, für Katalanisch und andere Sprachen’] analysiert die sprachliche Konformität – oder die Akzeptanz – der politischen Sprachregeln, die europäische Sprachen wie Französisch und Spanisch einerseits und Katalanisch andererseits seit dem 18. Jahrhundert kennen. Einige der Vorurteile, die Machtorgane gegenüber Katalanisch hatten, sowie die sich daraus ergebenden Konsequenzen werden ebenso behandelt wie die Sprachpolitik, die bis heute überlebt hat und in den Massenmedien präsent ist.

Europe and Language: Past and Present

In Europe, there are more languages than just those that are recognized as official by the European Union. The European Council, when creating the regulations for the teaching and assessment of second languages—the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR)—translated the document into 40 different languages, including territorial European languages as well as minority languages that are present around the continent.

However, the European Union, as an institution, uses only 23 (https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en). The criteria that they use are not based on numbers: Maltese has half of a million speakers and is used by the EU, while Catalan is the 9th most spoken European language and it not used by the EU.

Taula 3. El català i les llengües oficials de la UE

| LLENGUA | TOTAL POBLACIÓ | LLENGUA | TOTAL POBLACIÓ | LLENGUA | TOTAL POBLACIÓ |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|----------------|
| Alemany | 91.163.420 | Català | 13.529.127 | Danès | 5.427.459 |
| Francès | 67.778.671 | Grec | 11.891.619 | Eslovac | 5.389.180 |
| Anglès | 64.602.119 | Portuguès | 10.569.592 | Finès | 5.255.580 |
| Italià | 58.751.711 | Txec | 10.251.079 | Lituà | 3.403.284 |
| Espanyol | 43.758.250 | Hongarès | 10.076.581 | Letó | 2.294.590 |
| Polonès | 38.157.055 | Suec | 9.338.523 | Eslovè | 2.003.358 |
| Neerlandès | 23.431.210 | Búlgar | 7.718.750 | Estonià | 1.344.684 |
| Romanès | 21.565.199 | Gaèlic irlandès | 5.933.419 | Maltès | 404.346 |

Image 1¹

Nor are the criteria based on history, given the political linguistic role of Catalan in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Because of its use in government —*Cancelleria Reial*— and in creating texts, Catalan, as a language, spread considerably from the 13th to the 16th centuries, a time when the lands of the Crown of Aragon stretched the Mediterranean to reach Sicily, Sardinia, Naples, and even Athens. Among the notable literary works of the period, those created by Ramon Llull, a contemporary of Dante, certainly stand out (GENCAT s.a.: 8-9).

Nowadays, European citizens have at least some awareness of the languages recognized by the EU. And while they may not know all of them, they at least know which ones are used by which countries. One of the problems that Catalan-speaking universities face, whether in Valencia, Palma, or Barcelona (image 5), is that Erasmus students generally do not know that classes are taught in Catalan: it is used in 74.5% of all lectures given in Catalan universities (Plataforma, retrieved 1 March 2019).

Image 2²

¹ From *El català, llengua d'Europa*, p. 23.

² *El català, llengua d'Europa*, p. 7.

The ignorance that Europeans have about this language is not by chance; rather, it is the fruit of language policies that have roots stretching back to the 18th century.

Despite the fact that Catalans have been able to express their situation and their status throughout history, there is a media silence regarding the Catalan language that is still very present. “I’m Catalan”, declared Pau Casals in the United Nations headquarters in New York on October 23, 1971, upon receiving the Peace Medal from U Thant, then Secretary-General of the organization³.

Though 41% of Spanish citizens live in territories with more than one official language (Image 8)—29% of them being Catalan speakers—the fact that there is a duty to speak Spanish and only a right to bilingualism via Article 3 of the country’s constitution, leads Spain to be seen as a monolingual country abroad and keeps the rest of Europeans from getting information about Catalan culture and language, in a way that is institutionalized. This, then, is also the reason for Erasmus students’ ignorance when they come to Catalan universities.

The 18th Century and Nation-States

The period known as the Enlightenment, which took place during the 18th century, saw in Paris and Madrid a need to impose the same language upon all citizens of the state. Regarding France, Jean-Louis Calvet declared that the other languages of the country, Breton, Occitan, and Catalan—in Northern Catalonia—existed, in the eyes of the government, exclusively as symbols of the superiority of the French language (1974: 30). The *patois* ideology arose with regard to language in order to do away—using symbolic and legal violence—with all languages that were not the official state language. In his study, Michel Tricot highlights that according to the famous survey by Abbé Grégoire at the end of the 18th century, French was spoken exclusively by only three million inhabitants, while six million French citizens spoke no French and 16 million were bilingual (1982: 41). Among the six million non-French-speaking citizens, their mother tongue was the local language. The universalization of the French language, and of Catalan in the states where it existed, was the fruit of legislation that focused on imposing French.

As for Madrid, the Bourbons prohibited the use of languages other than Spanish in public administrations and schools in the lands of the Crown of Aragon (mainly the Kingdom of Aragon, the Principality of Catalonia, the Kingdom of Valencia, and the Balearic Islands), and this prohibition was recommended for the church, too⁴ (Ferrer i Gironès 1985).

Prohibiting the use of any language other than Spanish, via Royal Decree of June 23, 1763, signed by Charles III of Spain in Aranjuez; the persecution of schools that used any language other than Spanish; and Spain’s interference in linguistic matters in all aspects of life was carried out over the three following centuries (Calafat 2017: 158-174). The minutes of a meeting of the Palma City Council on June 24, 1801 discuss Charles IV’s prohibition of performing theatrical arts in Catalan: in no theater in Spain may pieces be performed, sung, or danced in a language other than Spanish, and they must be interpreted by actors and actresses native or naturalized to these kingdoms, as directed by Madrid in the Royal Order of December 28, 1799.

In the 18th century, vernacular languages acquired their own terminologies and utilities that challenged the use of Latin (Caso 1988: 263). Concerning teaching, European methods at the time, like those employed by the Port-Royal school, promoted the idea that children should learn in their

³ Award ceremony of the UN Peace Medal to Pau Casals, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMWZEjERlwQ&feature=youtu.be>, [video file 25-10-2011]. *Fundació Pau Casals*.

⁴ Nueva Planta decrees: 1707, Valencia; 1714 Catalonia; and 1715, Palma and Eivissa (Ferrer i gironès 1985: 10-31)

mother tongue. Though Catalan, due primarily to cultural pressure and the importance of the Spanish language in Europe since the Renaissance as well as ensuing political motives, was unable to benefit from favorable language policies, it was kept up throughout modern and contemporary European history thanks to important pedagogical output and the presence of a well-established education network that allowed the language to survive in the face of pressure from the Spanish state. According to Eustaquio Sánchez (2012: 463), the Latin grammar described in 1768 by Gregori Mayans was not well received in Catalan-speaking territories as it was written in Spanish. Mayans also made note of the desire of the populations of Mallorca and Catalonia to continue using their Catalan language.

With regard to using their language, the resistance, insistence, and vindication of Catalan institutions, as well as the voice of the people, have been etched into the last 300 years of social history of the Catalan language.

In the 20th century, with Francisco Franco's coup and rise to power, Catalan was once again subjected to a dark period—a veritable linguistic genocide. The use of the language was prohibited in all public and private settings; its use was prohibited even on the telephone. Using the motto “If you're Spanish, speak Spanish” (*Si eres español, habla español*), the choice about which language to use became linked to loyalty to the Spanish state, and thus speaking any other language meant to go against the government.

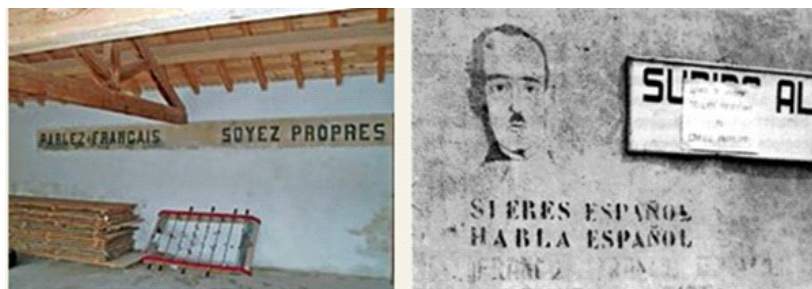


Image 3⁵

In France, after the Second World War, schools once again reinforced the universalization of the state language: the *politesse* speaks French. Mottos on school entrances in Northern Catalonia, where there was still a sizable Catalan-speaking population, read “speak French, be proper” (*parlez français, soyez propres*).

Despite this, writers, who had mostly been exiled, continued to produce internationally recognized literature in Catalan: Salvador Espriu, Mercè Rodoreda, Pere Calders, Joan Fuster, Vicent Andrés Estellés, and Llorenç Villalonga, to name a few. The works of Rodoreda, for example, have been translated into 40 different languages.

⁵ From https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1AVNE_enES660ES660&q=soyez+propres+parlez+fran%C3%A7ais&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiHqu2DnaHkAhVSDOwKHdvwBsgQsAR6BAgJEA&biw=1920&bih=969; https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1AVNE_enES660ES660&q=si+eres+espa%C3%B1ol+habla+espa%C3%B1ol&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjEq6OlnaHkAhXNxqQKHe6kAJgQsAR6BAgCEAE&biw=1920&bih=969

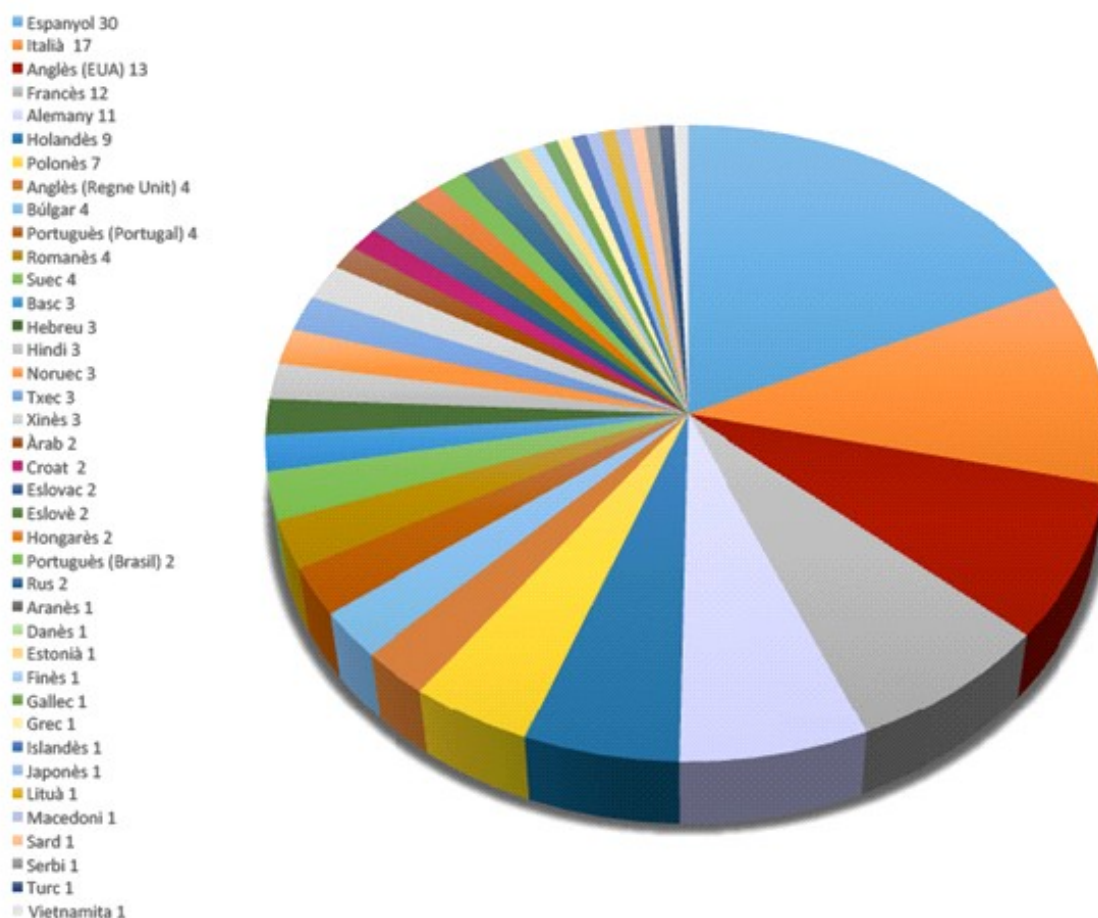


Image 4⁶

When the dictatorship fell in Spain, the Catalan language remained fully intact and ready to be used in all of the settings where any modern language might be employed. This was due to the consistent work of Catalan intellectuals and the Catalan people, who had continued to cultivate their language despite the legal obstacles intended to do away with it (<https://www.termcat.cat/ca>).

Currently, terminology planning and language use policies at Catalan-speaking academic and governmental institutions place Catalan in a good position among the middle European languages. The images show data regarding the use of Catalan on the Internet among the population.

⁶ From <http://www.mercerodoreda.cat/traduccions/1>.



Històric dels Resums de Situació del Baròmetre de l'ús del català a Internet

Percentatges mensuals d'ús del català a Internet.
(clicant al percentatge de cada mes, en veureu el seu resum de situació)

| Mes/ Any | gener | febrer | març | abril | maig | juny | juliol | agost | setbre | octbre | novbre | desbre |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2019 | 65,50% | 65,52% | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2018 | 65,29% | 65,32% | 65,33% | 65,33% | 65,33% | 65,38% | 65,37% | 65,40% | 65,41% | 65,44% | 65,44% | 65,50% |
| 2017 | 65,03% | 65,02% | 65,11% | 65,18% | 65,18% | 65,21% | 65,22% | 65,22% | 65,25% | 65,27% | 65,27% | 65,29% |

Image 5⁷

Language Policies and Language Ideologies

The language ideologies that came out of the Enlightenment and which were based on the stratification of languages—as evidenced in the *Encyclopédie* suggestion that “angels speak French, mortals only Walloon” (Tuson 1988: 73)—were founded on laws that legitimized recognizing the unique legality of one of the languages of the citizens of a state and condemning the rest to be persecuted and ostracized.

In the 18th century, officials in the Bourbon regime, who used the tide of war to replace Catalan representatives, sent reports to Madrid suggesting measures that could be implemented to achieve language uniformity, as was ordered by the law. They clearly outline the vision that existed to stratify languages and their speakers. In 1789, Ruiz de la Torre, one of these officials, expressed that the customs in Mallorca were “gothic and African” (Calafat 1999: 32-66).

From the 18th century to today, the Catalan language has been fiercely persecuted by government regimes, and its speakers were at times forced into illiteracy, as there were long periods throughout history in which Catalan could not be officially taught. However, in times that were more tolerant towards this Romance language, populations and academic and autonomous-level institutions—especially Catalan-speaking universities—kept the language and the Catalan culture alive and present in Europe.

⁷ From <https://www.wiccac.cat/>.

2015

Aquests materials, elaborats per la Direcció General de Política Lingüística del Departament Direcció General per a la Immigració del Departament de Benestar Social i Família, proporcionen contacte amb la llengua catalana, alhora que permeten entendre i practicar frases quotidianes de comunicacions amb la societat d'acollida. Els materials estan dividits en tres apartats:

- Informació bàsica sobre Catalunya i la llengua catalana i les principals diferències entre el català i l'anglès.
- L'apartat "Català, llengua d'acollida" conté deu lliçons de català inicial que tracten de temes de vida quotidiana. Cada lliçó comprèn diàlegs breus i un vocabulari relacionat amb el tema.
- L'apartat "Comencem a parlar" conté també diàlegs relacionats amb la vida quotidiana, però aprofundiment.

Image 6⁸

In October, 2018, in Barcelona, the 9th Workshop on the Use of Catalan in Law hosted a discussion between university experts and distinguished jurists on language use in Belgium and how it compared to the restrictions on Catalan within the justice system as, among other examples, state prosecutors can be from anywhere in the country and they can allege to suffer from a lack of proper defense should they not understand Catalan (<https://www.cicac.cat/2018/10/19-doctubre-ix-jornada-sobre-lus-del-catala-a-la-justicia/>). Thus, the use of Catalan is restricted in the lands where it is spoken. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to speak Catalan in state government agencies outside of the autonomous communities where the language is spoken, given that the Spanish constitution defines Spanish as the only state language (Strubell 2008: 203-232).

The removal of Catalan from the justice system began with the aforementioned Nueva Planta decrees, though use of the language in legal settings was not prohibited until one century later in Article 25 of the so-called *Ley del Notariado* (Notary Public Law) of May 28, 1862, which stipulates that all public instruments must be written in Spanish (Escribano 2014: 345-371). This law made notaries public sector employees, established the Spanish system for entering into civil service, and brought to Catalonia notaries who did not know how to communicate in Catalan but who were authorities imposing the language of the state.

Current restrictions on the use of Catalan in Spain have their foundations in 18th-century policies from Madrid and Paris that turned government workers and state officials into important tools for pushing forward the universalization of their respective state languages.

⁸ From https://llengua.gencat.cat/ca/serveis/informacio_i_difusio/publicacions_en_linia/aprenem_catala_des_de_col/angles_aprenem_cat_general/

Conclusions

Nowadays, though facing restrictions, Catalan can be considered to be a modern language.

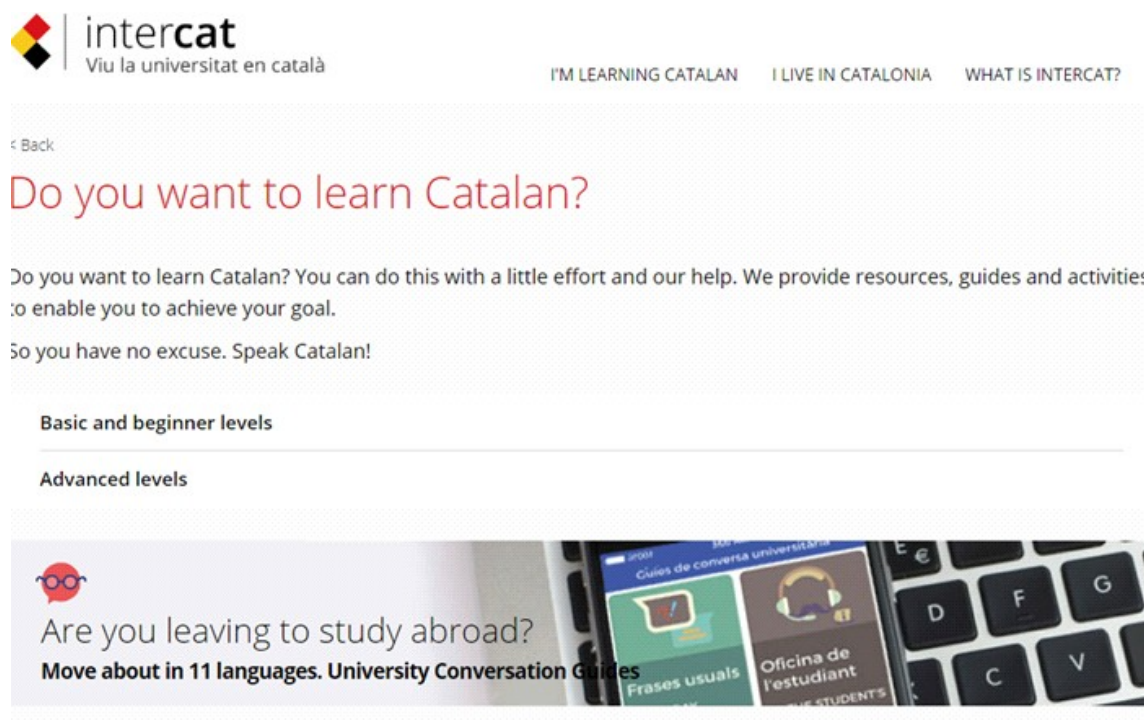


Image 7⁹

Academic and terminological output, support from institutions at the autonomous community level, and the desire of the people to cultivate it, enable the language to hold its place as one of the most spoken languages in Europe, despite the presence restrictive and secessionist ideologies befitting of more prohibitive eras. Additionally, the language is studied at more than 150 universities around the world, and there are more new speakers every year.

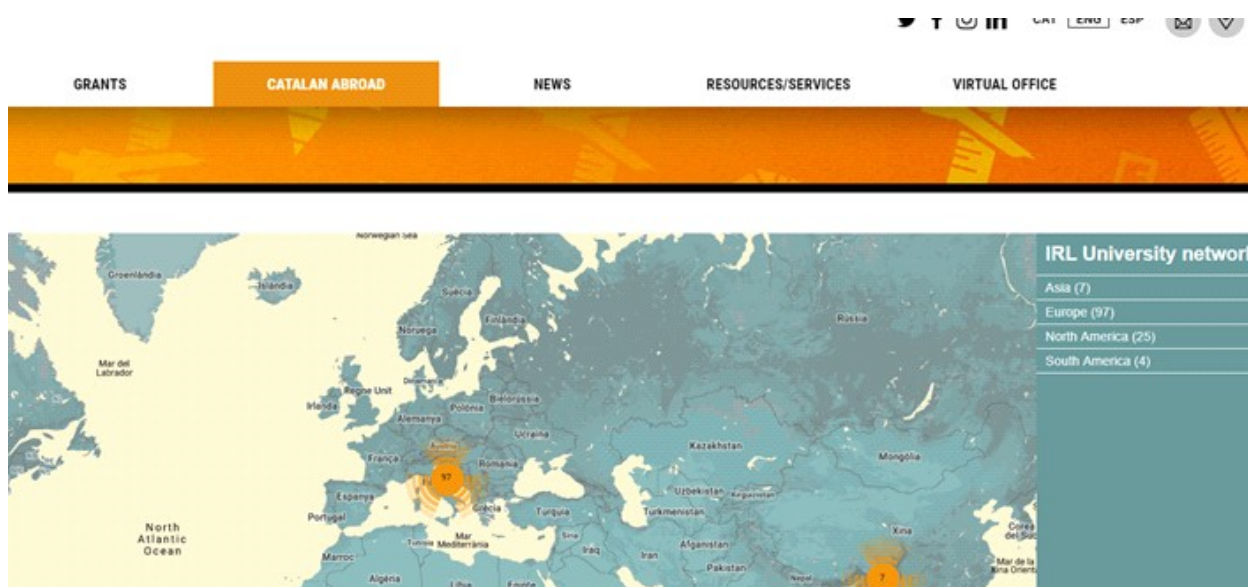


Image 8¹⁰

⁹ From <http://www.intercat.cat/en/eines-aprendre-catala.jsp>.

¹⁰ From https://www.llull.cat/english/aprendre_catala/mapa_llengua.cfm.

It is clear, however, that the vestiges of policies that were put in place in the 18th century have remained and have kept Catalan from becoming one of the normalized European languages.

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