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***An Unbalanced Trilingualism: Linguistic Ideologies at the University of Barcelona***

**Carles De Rosselló and Emili Boix-Fuster**

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# AN UNBALANCED TRILINGUALISM: LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA<sup>1</sup>

CARLES DE ROSSELLÓ AND EMILI BOIX-FUSTER

## ABSTRACT

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Due to the heterogeneous origin of university students and the diverse language use guidelines in their departments, as well as the peculiar language contact that takes place in the territory of Catalonia, the University of Barcelona is one of the most linguistically complex universities of the occidental world. Catalan, Spanish and English are seen as enriching elements although dissenting voices do arise concerning the use of each of these languages. For this reason, we carried out a qualitative study, asking thirty-two students of the University of Barcelona (UB), the first Catalan University, how they perceive and face the challenges of their sociolinguistic environment. Briefly, in this article we study—in the first place—how students view the fact that English is becoming a language of instruction; and secondly, we analyse the main arguments that local students use to justify their linguistic ideology regarding Erasmus students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to the heterogeneous origin of university students and the diverse language use guidelines in their departments, as well as the peculiar language contact that takes place in the territory of Catalonia, the University of Barcelona is one of the most linguistically complex universities of the occidental world (Boix-Fuster 2000). The current legal framework allows the indiscriminate use of both Spanish and Catalan in teaching, while English is increasingly being used. Catalan, Spanish and English are seen as enriching elements. Even so, dissenting voices do arise concerning the use of each of these languages. For this

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reason, we carried out a qualitative study (Boix-Fuster and Rosselló 2003), asking thirty-two students of the University of Barcelona (UB), the first Catalan University, how they perceive and face the challenges of their sociolinguistic environment.

In this article we are going to study, in the first place, how people view the fact that English is becoming a language of instruction. As we will see, everyone accepts the fact that, in general, the English level of Catalan students is low or very low, thus making student mobility or communication in English more difficult when the class is given in English. Although the diagnosis of this issue leaves no doubt, the solution for an improvement in the linguistic competence in a third language is not clear at all. If one of the measures is to make it in a teaching language for some subjects, this option has more detractors than defenders. Its detractors base their arguments on three points: first, the teaching of English in the pre-university stage is deficient, so the university cannot demand its use. Second, if English is not used, one forgets it, therefore, it is a bad investment. And thirdly, there are ideological motivations. On the other hand, those in favor of the introduction of English base their view on three grounds: knowledge of English is very much valued in the work market; English is the language of scientific literature; and English is the language of communication between people from different countries.

Second, we will analyze the main arguments that local students use to justify their linguistic ideology regarding Erasmus students.<sup>2</sup> We will observe that those in favor of Catalan as a teaching language have not yet formed a solid argument to answer *the question*: why can't the class be given in Spanish if it is the language that all the people attending the class can understand? Lacking a convincing counterargument, the majority of these students need to distance themselves from options which are considered to be extremist. One of the main problems that these students have to avoid is that of being considered intolerant. For the moment, the best antidote is not defining their own position, that is, not complaining when someone asks for a change of language. Those who are in favor of a change of language when there are foreign students do not need to justify their linguistic tolerance: they gain credibility in this area from the moment they propose Spanish as the *lingua franca* for both native and foreign students. Moreover, considering the sociolinguistic makeup of Catalonia, by what linguistic criteria can this option be turned down?

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<sup>2</sup> To simplify the terminology, we will use the term *Erasmus* to refer to the students who do not understand Catalan and come through any programme of student mobility.

## METHODOLOGY

### Selection of the participants

According to Iglesias (2002), the most valid qualitative tool for collecting data about ideologies are the discussion groups. We also chose this method. The student population of the UB amounts to about 60,000 people. In order to obtain the most representative sample possible, some conditions were established for accepting participants in the discussion groups:

- Exclude the students linked to political or linguistic organizations.
- Exclude students born out of Catalonia, or people that have not been living for long in Catalonia.
- Exclude first-year students, or those who have been studying for less than a year in the UB.
- Exclude participants who already know each other.

The first of these restrictive factors is tied in with the starting hypothesis of this investigation: students will show an indifferent attitude towards the use of Catalan or Spanish in the University. In other words, it is important to study the linguistic point of view of those students for whom the linguistic issue is not a central point of their social or political action, precisely because they constitute the majority group.<sup>3</sup> The second and third points are closely linked. Participation in the discussion groups had to be restricted to those people with some knowledge of the sociolinguistic situations of the area as well as of the UB. That is why certain geographical limits were established (born or resident in Catalonia) and time limits set (years of residence, in the case of those who were not born in the region of Catalonia).<sup>4</sup> Finally, Callejo (2001) suggests avoiding the selection of people that know each other, because the objective is to enrich the debate with different points of view. That is, the more the members of the group know each other the more probabilities there will be that they will have similar ideas, which goes against the aim of this study.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In our sample, only VHT belong to this type of organisations.

<sup>4</sup> In our sample, all the informants are born in Catalonia, except FGX (born in Ibiza but resident in Barcelona for 4 years) and ARJ (born in Extremadura but resident in Barcelona since he was 6). The only informant who does not comply with the described requisites is RDF, born in Palma and resident in Barcelona for 7 months (see below in the Annex, the chart of participating discussion groups).

<sup>5</sup> The compliance of this last point is a bit doubtful in the group of Division II

In addition to these factors, three social variables were taken into account for the candidate selection: sex, age and first language. The group selected consisted of 18 women (56,2%) and 14 men (43,7%); the majority (90,6%) between 18 and 25 years of age; and 13 (40,6%) had Catalan as their first language, 15 (46,8%) had Spanish and 4 (12,5%) were family bilinguals. These percentages approximate the student profile of the UB when this study was made. In the UB, female students accounted for 56,4% of the student population, the males 43,5%. More than 80% were between 18 and 25 years of age. Regarding linguistic groups, percentages were taken from data supplied by Pons (1999):

TABLE I  
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF THE UB ACCORDING TO THE  
LANGUAGE THEY HAD LEARNED TO SPEAK AT HOME.  
COURSE 1996-1997

Catalan	36,7%
Spanish	48,3%
Both	13,7%
Other	1,3%

Once we had established the restrictions and the variables, participant selection was carried out paralleling the University structure. For this reason five discussion groups were created, each one corresponding to one of the five divisions of the UB; these divisions currently do not exist.

### Method of participant selection

The search for the participants involved a large number of people. It was important to avoid the participants coming from the same personal network, as that could cause an ideological bias. A total of 20 persons collaborated in the task of finding participants who fulfilled the aforementioned requirements. The search for participants was carried out through two different avenues: the grant holders of the linguistic normalization network of the UB, and the professors and students known by the investigators, through the technique known as the *snow ball*. Once the investigators were informed of the existence of possible

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because VHT and DIC, on the one hand, and PTC, JTS and ART, on the other, have had friendship bonds for a long time.

candidates, they were contacted by phone. In this phone call the specific subject of the meeting was not revealed, it was only said that they were going to talk about issues concerning the University.

### Discussion groups

The discussion groups were held during the month of May and the first fifteen days of June, 2002. The meeting place was the room of the *Centre Universitari de Sociolingüística i Comunicació (CUSC)* of the Scientific Park of Barcelona (PCB) and the professors' room of one of the campus of the UB. The group moderator and participants were seated around a round table. The conversation was recorded using a small machine (AIWA TP-VS530), although its presence was noticeable because it was in the middle of the table. Outside the circle, a collaborator wrote down the key words of each intervention. This greatly facilitated the posterior transcription task. The length of these sessions was between 70 and 90 minutes, and the same preestablished question guide was used for all groups.

### Transcriptions

The five recordings were transcribed by four graduates—or students in their last year—of Catalan Philology with previous experience in transcriptions. A standardized transcription method was used. Word repetition and hesitations have been eliminated in order to facilitate the reading of the fragments which appear further on in this study.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Two-sided view of English

One of the issues provoking the most discussion was the possibility of introducing a third language—namely, English—as the instruction language for some subjects.<sup>6</sup> None of the participants denied the importance of acquiring a greater knowledge of English; nevertheless, the general opinion is that there is a majority of people against the idea

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<sup>6</sup> This option is in effect from February 2003, when the Law of universities of Catalonia (*Llei d'universitats de Catalunya*) was passed. Article 6.6. states that 'The Government and the universities, in their respective field of jurisdiction, must establish programmes to promote the learning of third languages that can include using them in academic activities of the university as well as offering subjects specific to each degree.'

of English being used as a teaching language. However, this majority bases their position on reasons of linguistic competence and not on ideological ones. In other words, the majority of the students that do not want English as a language for teaching say this because they do not see themselves as capable of following a class in this language. The undeniable extension of English knowledge has not been paralleled by the acquisition of a sufficient competence in this language, resulting in a feeling of uneasiness on the part of the students.

We will now review some of the most representative opinions. First, we will see the arguments of the participants who are against the introduction of English as a teaching language for linguistic reasons. Second, we will see those who are also against this option for ideological reasons. Finally, we will study the arguments of those in favor of the use of English as a teaching language.

#### *Against this option for linguistic reasons*

The majority of students were in this category. Most of them are aware that when they start at the university, their level of English must improve. The two main reasons that are given are, first, to have access to international scientific texts and, second, to get beyond the "sign language phase" and to be able to converse in English:

RSP: If you go anywhere in Europe and they talk to you they answer I mean they talk to you and they know how to have a conversation in English and here, well... in my case at least, if a foreigner comes and... I mean I can make myself understood but through sign language, you know?

Lately political leaders are recognizing the necessity of changing the dynamics of teaching third languages. For example, during the conference *The European Paths of Catalonia: The University*, which was held 9 January 2002, the then university councilman stated that:

It is a fact that concerning the knowledge of third languages we are behind the rest of Europe. We all know this and everyone, at least all those sectors opened to the exterior, which are many, admit that this is an important handicap for our being at the head of Europe. Finding a solution to this situation is a vital strategic option for our country.

The aims of the political class do not coincide with the thinking of the majority of the participants in this study. The wide agreement that English should be a *lingua franca* of communication is rejected if it is to be used as a language of instruction. As we have mentioned before, the lack of competence at this time is an insurmountable obstacle:

EDS: I personally do not use textbooks in other languages because it takes me more time to look the words up in the dictionary than to understand the text. I understand that it is very necessary that in a university English should have a greater importance, but I am very thankful that it still has not been introduced.

NFL: I do not think that English should be compulsory for university studies (...) To impose it on people that are studying a degree well... well a degree is already complicated, and making things more difficult by obligating them to take subjects they do not like, well...

Despite their reluctant attitude towards English, there are students who complain about losing their level of English when they are in the university because they do not have the opportunity to practice it. For others like WAS, English is a bad investment because when you do not use it, you forget it:

LAI: Yes, the problem is that until COU [last year of the secondary education in Spain] you have English and you carry on doing English, then you leave, finish COU and you completely forget your English if you don't do a course, if you stop doing English and in a year... I have forgotten everything, I mean I would know how to say something but I have lost a lot of it, of course if you get to the university and you have some help, well it is not so difficult for you, you go on, you continue and you will probably remember something in the end. But of course, if you suddenly stop doing it and you want to do something, you have to do a course.

WAS: English is a bad investment in general, because you study it, you learn it, you use it and after if you don't use it for a year, you forget it.

### *Against it for ideological reasons*

Along with linguistic motivations, the ideological reasons should not be forgotten although in our sample this group only amounted to three participants. According to GFA, the students should enter the university with a good level of Catalan, Spanish and English. However, the teaching language of the subjects in the university should be Catalan:

GFA: (...) the class should be given in the language of the country. But whoever enters the university should have a good level of Spanish, English and Catalan.

WAS sees the use of English in the scientific field as an imposition which, at the same time, causes a feeling of inferiority for the other languages. Moreover, he complains about the reluctance of English-speaking people to learn other languages:



WAS: I don't know, I think it is a semi imperialistic attitude of the English that boom-boom-boom, they publish in English and the English people will never know Spanish, or French or anything, they're the kings, and the Physics journals, at least, the American journals are impossible... And well, we shouldn't have an inferiority complex about anything, neither should the French, nor the British, nor the Spanish, nor the Italians and we should promote what is ours a lot more. So, it is necessary to learn English the same as it is necessary to learn French or Portuguese, but not like we are living here and if you don't know English it seems you're a freak...

From this last comment, ARJ considers the use of English in the class as a step towards the English cultural invasion which is taking place in the area of youth leisure. This student does not deny the fact that a good level of English is necessary, but in any case, this should be a personal option and not a collective obligation:

ARJ: I think that classes, well if they are given in Catalan or in Spanish, well, it's OK, but if you talk to me in English... It is what he says: cultural invasion. I'm sorry, that's my opinion, you know? Now, what does that mean? That you shouldn't have a good level of English? No, you should, but...man!

WAS: (...) I am the first to say that well, I mean, learning English is necessary, like other languages but you have to be careful... it's a bit perverse because they put it in your head and you think that if you don't know English you won't be able to do anything, you won't be able to work, you won't be able to go abroad, I think that... well, at least, from what I know things don't happen this way. And we have to fight so that things don't end up being that way, I mean, you have to know all the languages you can but... [English] isn't a superior language even though many more people speak it.

In this last paragraph, WAS talks about knowing "all the languages you can" in the discussion of the teaching of English. Certainly, we are going in a direction where the confusion between *third languages* and *English* is very marked (to take a case in point, in this section we are treating both terms as synonyms). Like it or not, English is by far the most used foreign language within the European population (41% according to the Eurobarometre 2001). Far behind English comes French (mastered by 19% of the European population), German (10%), Spanish (7%) and Italian (3%). The diffusion of the English language has made it Europe's *lingua franca*, and currently it seems to be an unstoppable process. In the light of these facts, WAS gives an idea that he uses to back up his ideological opposition towards this language:

WAS: I think it is intolerable to have to speak English with an Italian or with a Frenchman if we are all... Romantic... well, Romanic.

### *In favor of the introduction of English*

In this context of clear opposition, few are the students that openly express their desire to have English included as a teaching language. Those who are in favor give work, academic and mobility reasons. It is interesting to contrast the first of the three following fragments with the former arguments of WAS to observe the two opinions, which are completely opposite:

VHT: For me, at least it should be an elective course, I mean, with credits given within the department's plan of studies. The associations are fighting for this, that is, for it to be included in the study plan because, I mean, I think nobody is against it, on the contrary: everyone is in favor! Everything that is culture is welcome and we are talking about a fundamental work language, I mean (...) knowing English and computers opens a lot of doors, from there you can go wherever you want.

RDF: I think that it is a good thing because you can have it in a subject that is related with your degree and then, you can work on texts that are related to your degree, little by little. And as you go on, you are doing your degree and you are doing English.

### **The Erasmus students or the mother of (virtually all) the linguistic conflicts**

According to our participants, the most common solution in the classes with allophone individuals is to make Spanish the language of the subject. This decision does not usually cause controversy within the students, at least on the surface. Neither do these students show their disagreement to the teacher who chooses to carry on with the class in Catalan. A contrary opinion in one sense or another could be seen as an act of intolerance, as a positioning against bilingualism, currently an unpopular attitude among the students at the UB. Through the discussion groups we collected a good sample of the arguments heard in the halls of the university which justify the point of view of one side or the other. As we will now see, few are the persons who do not have an opinion concerning this issue, and a debate soon arises between those who ask for respect towards Erasmus students and the students who are in favor of the teachers not switching from Catalan to Spanish.

As we have done in the previous section, the following quotes are typical examples of the main arguments. We have classified them in four categories: respect for the linguistic rights both for the foreign student and the native; the opinions that are generated from the teacher switching (or not) the instruction language; language as part of

a territory; and language not as an enriching element but as an obstacle to student mobility and creativity.

### *Respect for linguistic rights*

RDF: But although it is also one, it is not only a political problem anymore, it's a problem of-, well of course, if you don't care... and you are helping someone else, why should you complicate your life, right?

This fragment concentrates in a few words some of the main ideas that the students who are with the Erasmus student put forth. This position is based on three premises: *a)* any student born and educated in Catalonia should not care if he/she receives classes in Spanish or Catalan; *b)* by teaching the class in Spanish, "you are helping someone else," ie: an Erasmus classmate, who does not know the Catalan language; and *c)* giving the class in Catalan or being against a change of language generates unnecessary tension: "Why should you complicate your life" if Spanish can fix the situation? What this student asks for is the prevalence of the linguistic rights of the foreign students over the native ones, alluding implicitly to the linguistic tolerance of the Catalan students. This same argument, with some clarifications, is the one that TRS puts forward:

TRS: When they come here they come with the idea of Spanish. I imagine they don't expect Catalan to be something compulsory. And, well, to impose it on them... I feel badly. You want to be taught in Catalan right? because it's your language. But of course, you also have to bear the others in mind.

This testimony summarizes quite well the paradox in which some students find themselves. That is, on the one hand "you like being taught in Catalan" but on the other, "you have to bear the others in mind," so the problem is centered in a satisfactory resolution of these two factors when they appear simultaneously. Along the same line, CLA thinks that there are foreign students who have problems because of the language issue. And this makes people see Catalan as something negative:

CLA: Yes because if they came here and they didn't have so many problems and have such a bad time -I'm not saying that everybody has a bad time- but I think it would also be nice if they saw that here we do have another language but that we have enough respect towards them to say: 'look, you don't have to do this, you know? You don't have to read this book' because if not, this poor person will begin disliking Catalan and the teacher and everyone who speaks Catalan, you know?

Alluding to linguistic rights has few followers among the participants in favour of the use of Catalan in any situation. Only GFA uses this argument to define her own point of view:

GFA: The moment you propose changing the language for an Erasmus student, then... if you don't change it's a lack of respect towards the Erasmus student, but if the teacher changes it, then it's a lack of respect towards the rest of the students of the class. Then, who do you want to be disrespectful to?

As GFA puts it, choosing any language means not respecting the linguistic rights of one of the two collectives, the Erasmus students or the native students. And if the dilemma is choosing between one group and another, then GFA chooses to favor the most numerous group.

### *Language switching in the classroom?*

The variability of situations that we will now see shows that many teachers do not know (or do not follow) the recommendations for a linguistic policy made by the UB. Which should be the teaching language when there are students that are not competent in Catalan? The fifth disposition of the regulation of linguistic use in the UB states that "Those studies that have a degree of Catalan use in teaching of 70% or more can define teaching blocs linguistically." Therefore, if the use of the language in a study is under 70%, Catalan should be the teaching language. Nevertheless, from the experience of the participants, we observe that in reality it is "each man for himself," in which the teacher chooses to use Catalan or Spanish depending on their own ideological convictions.

EDS: Many times they [the Erasmus students] ask the teacher if he/she could please give the classes in Spanish. Then... it depends on the teacher. There have been cases in which the teachers have rebelled and have said "no," they were in Catalonia and that they had always taught in Catalan and that they were not willing to make this kind of effort. Others have no problem.

It is interesting to observe how EDS builds an argument in which maintaining Catalan implies a justified ideological positioning from different angles: "they have rebelled" and said "no" because "they were in Catalonia" and "they were not willing to make this kind of effort." On the other hand, the teacher that chooses to change to Spanish has "no problem." In other words, it seems that this decision making just depends on an issue of the linguistic rights of the individual. Secondly, we would like to emphasize that the people in favor of the Erasmus students are characterized by using certain

specific lexical resources which are used to generate a protective bubble around the foreign students. Expressions like “they ask the teacher if he/she could please” (EDS), “poor person” (see the last comment by CLA) or “I’ve seen people crying” (RDF, later) they show a double image of the foreign student. In the case of CLA or RDF, the Erasmus student is a victim of the linguistic situation, and this can mean a decline in his or her academic performance. In the case of EDS, she presents the Erasmus student as someone who knows the linguistic conditions of the class, but these are not favorable to him or her. Asking to change the language of the classroom then, is more a favor than an imposition. In this context, it is expected from the teacher a gesture of good will in response to a petition which is also adequate. It is with this argument that many people—teachers or students—opposed to a switch in language stay offside. How can someone deny another the right to understand the lessons and not be perceived at the same time as an intolerant person?

As there are no predefined premises as to how one should act, some students (RDF) see it as a lack of respect that teachers do not adapt themselves to the necessities of the Erasmus students. On the other hand, other students (CLA) think that it is an act of intolerance to continue insisting on the linguistic rights issue if the Erasmus students have asked for a change of language:

RDF: In class, there was a case I lived in which the teacher said: ‘is there anyone who has a problem with having the class in Catalan? Are there any Erasmus students?’ And they have said: “Yes.” Well, ... the class will be in Catalan and the Erasmus can do what he wants.

CLA: Well, if they [Erasmus students] ask and they say yes, I think we should respect them, I think so (...) it wouldn’t be too nice for someone to say “no, no, we are in Spain” and we are in Catalonia and Catalan is spoken, and “the professor’s class will be given in Catalan,” I find that very —, I find it rather nasty.

### *Language as part of a territory*

This is one of the main arguments most used by people against the idea of changing languages, even though there are foreign students in class. The three following comments establish a direct link between language and territory:

TRS: When you go to study to a foreign country, for example, you go to England, you are supposed to know English, right? I mean when they come here... they should know... at least Spanish, right? Catalan no because it’s not so known but I think they should adapt themselves. We shouldn’t adapt ourselves to their need.

NFL: She refers to Catalan, because of course, if you go on Erasmus to a country... you're the one who has to adapt yourself- you can't say: look, I'm going to Italy, listen, I don't understand Italian, teach the class in Spanish. This has no logic. Maybe with Catalan I do understand it better, but...

XET: If an Erasmus comes here, he has to be aware that here there may be classes in Catalan. If I went, I don't know... to London or to Bilbao to do something, I would never ask for a class to be given in Spanish. If it's taught in Euskera, well bad luck. But I think that I should be prepared for something like this to happen. Now, if there are Erasmus students and they ask for the class to be taught in Spanish, I would never say no.

Observe how the three fragments have similar structures: they begin saying that language is linked to territory; following this statement, they feel that the Erasmus need to adapt themselves to where they are. Another coincidence is that no participant has an ideologically extreme position. The beginning of each intervention seems to go towards a defense of Catalan as a teaching language, and at the end, the three of them apply conciliatory strategies. For example, TRS and NFL accept the fact that *maybe* one cannot apply this criterion of territoriality to Catalan because of its number of speakers. On the other hand, XET is, of the three, the one that is most clearly against language change. Nevertheless, she immediately takes a central position ("if there are Erasmus students and they ask for the class to be taught in Spanish, I would never say no") which saves her from being perceived as extremist or intolerant.

### *Language as a limitation*

The examples that we have included in this section have one point in common: all of them agree that the language which creates an obstacle is Catalan. Some students state that there are a majority of foreign students who decide to study in universities outside of Catalonia. This idea is the one we are going to see now, where WAS and RDF explain why the Erasmus students finally decide to go to study to Madrid:

WAS: Now there are few Erasmus students, if in the future the idea is that there should be many more Erasmus students, well, it's already happening now that a lot of people leave, I think that there are many more people in Madrid, in the Complutense, than here and it is partly due to the language issue because there is still a fear of coming here to study because of Catalan...

RDF: It's very normal. I've seen people, crying on the stairs saying: "I didn't know that this would be like this." I knew that here it was spoken, well I've come this year from Mallorca (...) and there, Catalan isn't spoken so much.

But I've seen people crying and saying: "In Mallorca... nobody had ever told me that Catalan was spoken in Mallorca. And now, what am I doing here? I've been studying Spanish for a year there [in my country]. That... has already meant a lot of work and now... I get here and I don't understand a thing" (...) I don't know, I think that it is normal if more people go to Madrid, it's logical.

However, the numbers reveal a different reality. In the 2001-2002 academic year, Barcelona was the city that took in the most foreign students in Spain.<sup>7</sup>

The nightmare that Catalan language supposes, which makes people cry as we have just read, can increase considerably if a level of knowledge of this language is required. In CLA's opinion foreign students should be asked to come here with a certain level of Spanish but not of Catalan. If this were enforced there would be an exodus of foreign students to universities in other parts of Spain:

CLA: They are also obliged to have an acceptable level of Spanish. We are talking about Spanish yes, but to do this with Catalan as well would be too much. Imagine that you go to a foreign country and they tell you: "no, no, you need this level of Catalan and this level of Spanish," then you'd say: "no, I prefer to go to another place in Spain..."

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have collected linguistic representations of a sample of students of the University of Barcelona, who had either Spanish or Catalan as a first language or were bilingual. The linguistic ideologies of the sample of students we studied enable us to make the following conclusions and suggestions.

In the first place, there is a conflict between the demands of the recuperation process of the Catalan language, which on the one hand, means requiring that it be used more in the different areas of university life which still needs to be recovered from Spanish, and, on the other hand, the progressive extension of English, correlative to the increasing process of globalization and mobility. Therefore, there is a game a three-way play between these three languages, each one of them being used in a different way in each of the divisions of the University. There are divisions and departments where Catalan is clearly the dominant teaching language (Mathematics, Geology, Education, etc.) whereas in

<sup>7</sup> Several newspapers, like *ABC* or *El País* published this piece of news in the edition of 6<sup>th</sup> June of 2002. The headline of the first one was: 'Barcelona attracts 46% of the foreign students in Spain'; and the second one was: 'Barcelona is the Spanish city with more foreign students'.

others, Spanish is the dominant language (Law, Economics, Philosophy, Odontology, etc.). To this diverse scenario we must add the linguistic consequences of student mobility, which tends to favor the language which is better known and with more diffusion, which is Spanish. In the cases where the language to be used is negotiable, the majority of students are perfectly willing to go in favor of Spanish, which is the better known language.

In the light of this, the majority of the students we studied admit that Spanish is the dominant *lingua franca*. Since Spanish is the language known both by the native students and also by a good part of the newcomers, the easiest option and with the least psychosocial costs is to adapt to the demands of using Spanish. Only a minority refuses this language change and wants the predominance of Catalan as a territorial language of the country. Underlying this is a situation of what we could call false security. The Catalan speakers do not perceive that the current background of linguistic uses of the University of Barcelona constitutes a threat for the use and continuity of the Catalan language. We suppose that they already feel that language is consolidated enough (certainly Catalan is the majority language of all official signs, but at the same time, it is absent in bibliography or in a great part of teaching) so they think they do not have to move a finger to promote it further. The students of the discussion groups do not realize the collective conclusions (of the sum) of their individual uses. The scarce use of Catalan in some departments of the university (mainly Law and Economics) already means or facilitates a scarce use out of the classroom (probably both situations are interrelated). All the activities related with administrative, economic and business activities (notary offices, courts, driving schools, administrative agencies, consultancy companies, etc.) are full of Spanish habits. The same could occur if the use of Catalan went back in other fields. Secondary education, which is a preparation for higher education, as well as the professional activities after the University, is a fertile ground for Spanish, which is seen as the most valuable and indispensable language. This university hispanization would not only mean an increase in its use inside and outside of the universities, it would also mean a loss of the quality of language, which no student has pointed out. The models of specialized Catalan in each field of knowledge (terminology in Medicine, Physics, Mathematics, Geology, Philosophy, etc.: the adaptation of international specialized terminology, especially English) are created and elaborated in upper-level teaching and education; from there it is spread out to other social fields. None of the students interviewed has realized these consequences of their individual behavior: no-one has a sufficient theoretical background.



Another recurring issue in the discussion groups was the presence of English, which is gradually being introduced through globalization. In this field, the majority of students are against the use of English as a teaching language, mainly because of the simple fact that they do not know it enough. The teaching of English in the school system is therefore clearly a failure. The population has not become multilingual, despite the good words and intentions of those responsible for education at all levels.

We do not perceive among the students a well-reasoned argument against the exaggerated use of this language, in the sense that this language occupies fields that do not correspond to it, fields that should be reserved for the territorial language, if we want to assure its continuity. The *lingua franca*, starting with the main one, English, has a tendency to take up new fields, which should be counteracted by a clear awareness that it is necessary to reserve exclusive areas to the territorial or own language. If it is not done this way, this language will stop being useful and necessary. We do not observe in the interviewed students either an awareness of this necessary hierarchy of uses that must be set between the *lingua franca* and the local language. The outlook in Catalonia is even more complex because not only does English play the role of *lingua franca*: Spanish plays the role of local language as well as *lingua franca*.

Finally, we should add that the students are not very aware of the efforts of catalanization of their University, which has played an important role, through the Vicerectorate of Linguistic Policy, in the social promotion of the language. People do not know about the courses and initiatives that are at disposal of the newcomers to learn Catalan.

Therefore, we can observe a complex sociolinguistic functioning of the University. The mobility and globalization favor the use of Spanish, while English is not so used because of the insufficient knowledge that people have. If the knowledge of English increased, differentiated guidelines of linguistic use could be designed in the different levels of teaching. Thus in the undergraduate studies Catalan should be the pre-eminent language so as to assure a specialized use of the language in all fields (a *culture of the language*, an expression of the School of Prague). This pre-eminence has been quantified approximately around 70% of the courses should be in the Catalan language. On the other hand, concerning the graduate degrees (Masters and PhDs), the regulation would be kept to the minimum, so English and Spanish would probably be more used because of the competitive pressure to have foreign students, European and American (mostly Latin-American).

To sum up, we perceive in the University of Barcelona a slow yet uneven evolution towards trilingualism. This tendency should grow if

we want the UB to be a competitive and efficient organization. This trilingualism should be regulated in such a way as to assure some exclusive use of the Catalan language, as the native language of the country and the university, so that it permits and even encourages the use of other languages in certain courses and levels. This polyglotization of the university is a precursor of the polyglotiation that is going to take place within Catalan society. The university is one step ahead of the sociolinguistic scenario that will take place within Catalan society, and Catalan society can learn from it: it can anticipate problems and challenges in order to be able to resolve them better. The students interviewed are not very aware of the process of sociolinguistic change in which they are taking an important part — probably because they do not feel that they are the main characters but only passive subjects.

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## ANNEX CHART OF PARTICIPATING DISCUSSION GROUPS

	Name	Sex	County	Age	Department	Year	First language
Division I							
	NFL	M	Barcelonès	20	English Language and Literature	3rd	Catalan
	FGX	F	Eivissa	22	English Language and Literature	4th	Bilingual
	TRS	M	Barcelonès	24	English Language and Literature	5th	Catalan
	GFA	F	Gironès	24	Geography and History	5th	Catalan
	EDS	F	Barcelonès	22	Fine Arts	3rd	Spanish
	PFC	M	Urgell	22	Catalan Language and Literature	4th	Catalan
	SCS	F	Gironès	20	Catalan Language and Literature	3rd	Spanish
	BTM	M	Barcelonès	22	Catalan Language and Literature	2nd	Spanish
Division II							
	VHT	M	Barcelonès	22	Economics	4th	Bilingual
	DIC	F	Barcelonès	24	Economics	4th	Spanish
	PTC	M	Maresme	23	Statistics	3rd	Spanish
	JTS	M	Barcelonès	23	Statistics	3rd	Catalan
	ART	M	Maresme	24	Statistics	2nd	Spanish
	CAP	F	Barcelonès	25	Sociology	4th	Bilingual
	TUR	M	Barcelonès	26	Law	5th	Spanish
Division III							
	ARJ	M	Barcelonès	29	Physics	4th	Spanish
	BEN	F	Selva	22	Biology	4th	Catalan
	MIZ	M	Garrotxa	21	Biology	4th	Catalan
	XET	F	Segrià	22	Mathematics	3rd	Catalan
	UTY	F	Barcelonès	24	Physics	4th	Spanish
	WAS	M	Barcelonès	24	Physics	4th	Catalan
	RDF	F	Palma	21	Biology	3rd	Spanish
Division IV							
	RSP	F	Barcelonès	20	Psychology	2nd	Catalan
	LAI	F	Barcelonès	22	Psychology	2nd	Catalan
	CLA	F	Barcelonès	23	Dentistry	5th	Spanish
	BTS	F	Barcelonès	22	Dentistry	5th	Spanish

	Name	Sex	County	Age	Department	Year	First language
Division V	JAT	M	Barcelonès	19	Teacher Education	2nd	Spanish
	MAC	F	Baix Llobregat	21	Teacher Education	2nd	Spanish
	CUA	F	Vallès Oriental	20	Teacher Education	2nd	Spanish
	SRA	F	Barcelonès	34	Teacher Education	3rd	Bilingual
	NCC	F	Urgell	22	Teacher Education	3rd	Catalan
	NIE	M	Maresme	20	Teacher Education	3rd	Catalan