

Adapting the MLAT-ES into Catalan: when young learners' age is not just any other variable

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What is foreign language aptitude?

“an individual's initial state of readiness and capacity for learning a foreign language, and probable facility in doing so given the presence of motivation and opportunity” (Carroll, 1981, p. 86)

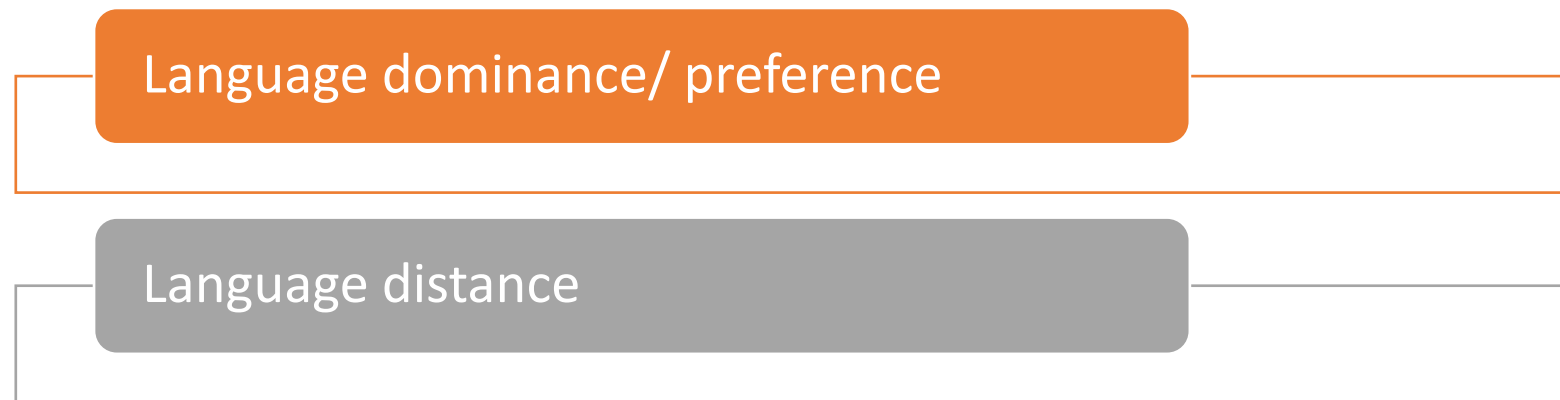
How is aptitude traditionally measured?

MLAT (Carroll & Sapon, 1959) > MLAT-E (Carroll & Sapon, 1959) > MLAT-ES (Stansfield et al., 2004, 2005)
> MLAT-EC (Suárez 2010).

Language-neutral aptitude tests?

- LLAMA (Meara, 2005) → less valid in agglutinative (Mikawa & De Jong, 2021) and in logographic contexts (Rogers et al., 2017)

Bilingual contexts?





Bilingual contexts and...
young learners?

Research questions

1. What type of challenges were faced when adapting the MLAT-EC from the MLAT-ES?

2. Were the effects of these challenges the same across ages?

Participants

Participants' Age and Grade

Grade	All subjects			MLAT-EC group		
	N	Age	SD	N	Age	SD
3	123	8.8	.52	57	8.8	.66
4	137	9.8	.43	62	9.7	.36
5	118	10.8	.33	61	10.8	.34
6	120	11.8	.3	60	11.9	.33
7	131	12.9	.45	64	12.8	.44

Language preference → overruled (Suárez & Stansfield, 2023)

Catalan	Spanish	No preference
147	87	70

N= 304 as just one pool

Instrument: MLAT-EC (Suárez, 2010)

Part	MLAT-ES/EC (grades 3 to 7)	Construct
1	Palabras ocultas / Paraules ocultes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- vocabulary- sound-symbol association
2	Palabras que se corresponden / Paraules que es corresponen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- grammatical sensitivity
3	Palabras que riman / Paraules que rimen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- hear and make distinctions between speech sounds
4	Aprendamos números / Aprenguem números	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- rote memory- aural comprehension

RQ1

Challenges Part 1

15. bakka

A és dolça

B part de la cara

C fa llet

D amb arrugues

<g> → /g/ and /ʒ/

<s> → /s/ and /z/

<l> → letter el <l>, capital ai <I>or number <1>?



RQ1

Challenges Part 2

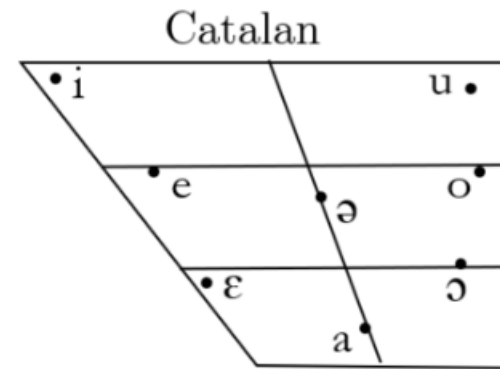
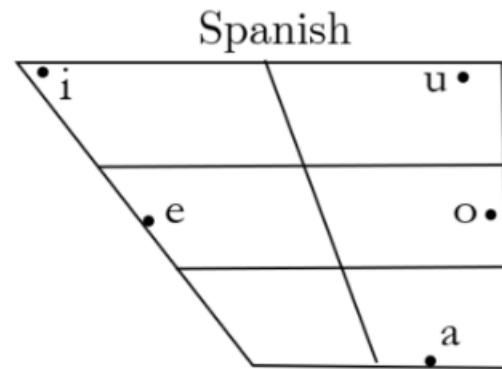
6. Em **vaig tallar** el DIT amb un ganivet.

El meu germà s'oblidà les claus a casa.



RQ1

Challenges Part 3



RQ1

Challenges Part 3

Spanish Alphabet									
Letter	A	B	C^l	D	E	F	G	H	I
Name	<i>a</i>	<i>be, be larga</i>	<i>ce</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>efe</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>hache</i>	<i>i</i>
IPA	/a/	/b/	/k/, /θ/	/d/	/e/	/f/	/g/, /x/	silent	/i/
Letter	J	K	L	M	N	Ñ	O	P	Q
Name	<i>jota</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>ele</i>	<i>eme</i>	<i>ene</i>	<i>eñe</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>cu</i>
IPA	/x/	/k/	/l/	/m/	/n/	/ɲ/	/o/	/p/	/k/
Letter	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Name	<i>erre</i>	<i>ese</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ve, uve, vecorta</i>	<i>uvedoble vedoble doblave doble u</i>	<i>equis</i>	<i>igriega ye</i>	<i>zeta</i>
IPA	/r/, /r̄/	/s/	/t/	/u/	/b/	/gw/, /b/	/ks/, /x/		

Catalan alphabet

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h
a	be	ce	ce trencada	de	e	efa	ge	hac
I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p	Q q
i	jota	ke	ela	ema	ena	o	pe	cu
R r	S s	T t	U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z
erre	esse	te	u	ve baixa	ve doble	ics, xeix	i grega	zeta

Catalan pronunciation

Vowels, diphthongs & triphthongs

a	e	è	é	i	o	ò	ó	u
[á; a]	[é; e; è]	[ê]	[é]	[i, i]	[ó; ó; u]	[ó]	[ó]	[u, u]
ai	au	ei	eu	oi	ou	ieu	uai	
[ai]	[au]	[ei]	[eu]	[oi]	[ou]	[ieu]	[uai]	

Consonants

b	c	ch	ç	d	f	g	gu	gü	h
[b ~ β]	[s, k]	[k]	[ç]	[d ~ ð]	[f]	[g ~ ɣ]	[g, gw]	[gw]	∅
j	k	l	ll	l·l	m	n	ny	p	q
[ɟ ~ ʝ]	[k]	[l]	[ʎ]	[l(·)]	[m]	[n]	[ɲ]	[p]	[k]
r	s	ss	t	v	w	x	y	z	
[r ~ r̄]	[s ~ z]	[s]	[t]	[b ~ β]	[w]	[ç, ks]	[j]	[z]	

RQ1

Challenges Part 4

MLAT-ES and MLAT-EC Part 4 Number-Word Correspondences

	MLAT-ES numbers	Spanish correspondence	Catalan correspondence
1	co	uno	u
2	vein	dos	dos
3	ras	tres	tres
10	silca	diez	deu
11	silca co	once	onze
12	silca vein	doce	dotze
13	silca ras	trece	tretze
20	vinca	veinte	vint
21	vinca co	veintiuno	vint-i-u
22	vinca vein	veintidós	vint-i-dos
23	vinca ras	veintitrés	vint-i-tres
30	rasca	treinta	trenta
31	rasca co	treinta y uno	trenta-u
32	rasca vein	treinta y dos	trenta-dos
33	rasca ras	treinta y tres	trenta-tres

MLAT-ES = MLAT-EC

- All items were inspected for content validity, difficulty, and reliability rendering similar results for both tests although the MLAT-EC has one item less than the MLAT-ES. (see Suárez, 2010, Suárez & Stansfield, 2023).

RQ2 Results: cognitive development

Parts 1, 2 & 3 significantly longer (and more unanswered items) for grades 3 and 4

Percentages of Unfinished Parts in the MLAT-EC Across Grades

Grade		3	4	5	6	7	All grades
N		57	62	61	60	64	304
Part 1	Unfinished	46	21	16	18	11	112
	Percentage	37%	15%	2%	15%	6%	14%
Part 2	Unfinished	22	10	6	14	11	63
	Percentage	38.6%	16%	10%	23%	17%	20.7%
Part 3	Unfinished	39	13	16	15	12	95
	Percentage	6.8%	21%	26.2%	25%	18.8%	31.3%

Spelling confusion and lack of certain vocabulary (mathematical terms, f. ex.) played also a part on these parts, especially Parts 1, and 3.

RQ2 Results: Cognitive development

- Metalinguistic awareness from grade 5 in Part 2 → explicit teaching of grammatical terms.
- Part 4 presented the same challenges and types of confusion in the MLAT-ES than in the MLAT-EC across grades.

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Conclusions

- Catalan and Spanish are close Romance languages but not translatable word per word
- Same response patterns observed across grades:
 - Vocabulary (parts 1 & 3)
 - Literacy (parts 1 to 3)
 - Cognitive development (all test)

But

- Cultural challenges solved in the MLAT-EC
- Unaffected by language preference
- Valid language aptitude test in a minoritarian language

Thank you!

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