



Linguistic Consciousness among Adolescents in Catalonia: A Case Study from the Barcelona Urban Area in Longitudinal Perspective

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■ 1 Introduction

Although youth language is far from being a topic limited to the school domain, it is inevitably intertwined with education issues because of the large part that schooling plays in the daily lives of young people.¹ Language policy in Catalan education has changed remarkably in the last twenty-some years and might be expected to bear a relation to new developments in youth language in Catalonia. As Vila i Moreno wrote,

una transformació d'aquesta magnitud –canvi de llengua vehicular en vint anys en un sistema educatiu en ple funcionament– no té cap precedent enlloc del món, i menys encara en règims democràtics i en comunitats nacionals no independents. (Vila i Moreno, 2004: 161)

While the change in educational linguistic policy itself is dramatically clear, it is less obvious what all the effects of the change have been. Although Catalan is well-established in the school system, this is set within a larger

1 Fieldwork for this article was carried out in 2006–2007 while I was a visiting researcher affiliated with the Department of Catalan Philology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. I thank the Agència de Gestió d'Ajuts Universitaris i de Recerca de la Generalitat de Catalunya for its support and Professor Joan Argenter for his kind sponsorship. I am also grateful to the Wenner-Gren Foundation and to the University of California, San Diego, for support of this field research. None of these agencies is responsible for the views expressed here. Many colleagues in Barcelona assisted me in many ways in this work, and I thank them. I am most indebted to the students, teachers and staff of the Ramon Llull School for their generous cooperation; all names of the school and students used here are pseudonyms. Vanessa Bretxa assisted with the statistical analysis, and Maria Rosa Garrido, Katia Yago and Cristina Aliagas assisted with transcription of the interviews.

framework in which Castilian holds officially sanctioned sole power at the level of the Spanish state, and *de facto* asymmetrical power in the commercial marketplace of popular culture. Moreover, when we ask about effects of policy changes, there are many dimensions of youth language to be considered, among them second language acquisition and mastery, language choice, sociolinguistic variability and change, metalanguage and linguistic consciousness.² This last area of investigation, linguistic consciousness and accompanying metalanguage, is the focus of this article.

Given the establishment of Catalan in schooling, what is the social meaning of the language for young people now in Catalonia? This question is particularly important to ask for those who come to Catalan primarily and in many cases almost exclusively through school. How does such everyday institutional use affect the way that Catalan is heard by teenagers, and the images that they hold of the language? What social meanings do young people now attribute to the use of Catalan, or lack thereof, by their peers? How might its identification with education affect young people's identification with the Catalan language?

These questions are approached here through a case study of one class of third-year students in secondary school (*ESO: Educació Secundària Obligatoria*), based on fieldwork in 2006–2007. These students attended the same public high school in a satellite city of the Barcelona urban area where I had done a similar case study in 1987 (Woolard, 1992, 1997, 2003). The goal of the re-study was to identify changes in linguistic ideologies and practices in the intervening twenty years.

■ 2 The school

The school where this research was carried out in both 1987 and 2006–07 is a public institute of secondary education (IES) in a mid-size city of the Barcelona area (in the *comarca* Vallès Occidental). Until the last quarter of the 20th century, textile and other industries had attracted large numbers of immigrants from the south of Spain to work in this city's factories. The urban center has a distinct personality despite its geographical closeness to Barcelona and has always retained a strongly identified Catalan core.

2 The weightiest question is whether there are positive or negative educational effects, and around the Spanish state, controversies have arisen over this question in recent years. It is too large and complex a question to be addressed here.

Around this are ranged the city's large working class *barris*, now populated increasingly by new immigrants from Eastern Europe and Latin America.

The case study school, which I will refer to pseudonymously as IES Ramon Llull, is generally considered one of the better public high schools in this city, and it draws its students from working-class to middle-class backgrounds from a number of different neighborhoods. The majority are from Castilianspeaking homes, but the school has ample representation of first language (L1) Catalanspeakers and a longstanding reputation for a Catalan orientation.³ Some of the students (more in 1987 than in 2007) had deliberately chosen to attend Ramon Llull on the basis of its reputation as Catalan-oriented. Many of the schools they might otherwise have attended in 2007 were known for conflictive student bodies and high rates of educational failure, and several students reported that they had come to Ramon Llull to escape tough students, gangs, and poor education in their neighborhood schools. Teachers and former students from those other schools reported them to be places where the Catalanspeaking minority spoke as little Catalan as possible on campus in order to escape notice.

I chose Ramon Llull for my study in 1987 not because it in any way typified high schools in the Barcelona area, but rather precisely because of its somewhat atypically mixed student population. This created an unusually good opportunity to observe students of Catalanspeaking and Castilianspeaking backgrounds interacting regularly, and to see what language choices are made when a real option is available in peer social relations. By 2007, Ramon Llull had been affected but not overwhelmed by the new immigration, particularly from Eastern Europe and Latin America, but also from the Maghreb and Asia. There is now a much wider mix of ethnic backgrounds than in 1987, but immigrants make up only about 10% of the school population (matching the average in Catalonia) and are not the primary focus of this study.

3 Throughout this article, the terms “Castilianspeaker/ing” and “Catalanspeaker/ing” will be used to identify social categories and are not intended to suggest monolingualism. A “Castilianspeaker” is from a home where Castilian is the primary language spoken, and is likely to be Castilian-dominant in language habits. There is no implication that a “Castilianspeaker” will be monolingual and not speak Catalan. Most of the “Castilianspeakers” in this study do speak Catalan, many of them very fluently. All “Catalanspeakers” in this study also speak Castilian, although some of them claim not to be very comfortable in that language. When I wish to stress the native language of an individual, I will use the terms “first language” or “L1” Castilian- or Catalanspeaker.

Linguistically, whereas in 1987 students had a mix of classes taught in Catalan and Castilian, now nearly monolingual Catalan-medium instruction is fully implanted throughout the school system and widely accepted by students without much comment. A number of teachers with noticeably non-native accents conduct classes in Catalan, although students asserted that some of these can be triggered to switch to Castilian quite easily. The educational system itself has undergone extensive reform since my 1987 research. Like other secondary schools, Ramon Llull has changed from an elective *batxillerat* (roughly equivalent to high-school diploma) institution (IBUP) to an institute of secondary education (IES) comprising both compulsory secondary education (ESO) and the later elective sequence of *batxillerat*. Correspondingly, the school body now encompasses a wider age range, since obligatory secondary education begins two years earlier than the old BUP curriculum. However, the school is still very recognizable, as are the kinds of students who attend it. The physical plant is almost unchanged – to the faculty’s dismay – and a number of the teachers from 1987 continue on the staff.

Where the differences between students in the two research years are most visible is at the margins – linguistic, academic, social, and spatial. Linguistically, students now who are not oriented to Catalan may seem even more determinedly disengaged from classroom activities. Academically, now that the period of obligatory school attendance has been extended to age sixteen, considerably more marginal students find themselves forced to remain in school than twenty years ago. Moreover, the academically marginal are now much more marginal, as teachers often commented.⁴ Disengaged students are more visibly and bodily disengaged from classroom activities than their counterparts were in 1987, now resembling the “seat-warmer” familiar in U.S. classrooms but not often seen in this school twenty years before. One or two of these students slump in the back of the classroom staring into space or with their heads down on desktops barren of books, papers or pencils; teachers generally ignore them as long as they are quiet. Spatially, there is now an alternative classroom, *aula oberta* (open classroom), for students who don’t do well in traditional classes. The most disengaged and disruptive go there for most of their classwork (including most of the slumping students just described). New foreign immigrants

4 There have been significant recent reports of severe educational failure in Catalonia, especially for immigrants. These important concerns will not be addressed directly in this article.

attend the *aula d'acollida* (reception class) for introduction to Catalan-medium instruction on a pullout basis for months or in some cases more than a year. In the case study class, the least successful immigrant students had moved on from *aula d'acollida* to *aula oberta* rather than to a mainstream class.

The school has four classes of about thirty to thirty-five students for each grade level. Only one of these, the *reforç* (remedial) class, is academically tracked, with students assigned to it on the basis of their performance the previous year. All other students are deliberately redistributed across the other classes from year to year, so each class includes mixed performance levels and a mix of students from Catalanspeaking, Castilianspeaking, and immigrant backgrounds. As in 1987, each class of students remains together throughout most of the day, generally taking all but one elective together; as in the past, the class is divided in half for laboratory sessions.

■ 3 The Case Study Class

The case study class was selected from the 3rd year of ESO, to be most similar in age (fourteen years old, on average) to the first year BUP group studied in 1987. A dimension of comparability in stage of life, i.e., transition to secondary school, was sacrificed in order to preserve comparable age. Through most of the observation period there were thirty-three students in the case study class, sixteen girls and seventeen boys (there was some flux in and out across the months).

As my ethnographic observations progressed, teachers commented that this was a particularly well-behaved group with a number of good students, a chance occurrence given the lack of academic tracking in the school.⁵ A few students themselves commented that there was less aggressive behavior and conflict in this class compared to the last they had been in. While in appearance there was the normal quotient of physically and socially precocious girls, the boys in this group generally appeared to be relatively late bloomers into physical adolescence, which may account for the perceived difference in the tenor of the classroom. The hyper-masculine styles and aggressive physicality often seen among working class youth in the Barce-

5 It is apparent that the class was not even covertly tracked given the assignment to this group of three *aula oberta* boys who were very unsuccessful students, including one who was very disruptive, as well as at least one student who was repeating from the previous year, and another who was transferred in mid-year from the remedial class.

lona area (Pujolar, 2001) were relatively absent in this group. This is not to say that these were quiet or subdued students. Boisterous behavior was still the norm, and the noise level in the classroom was often deafening, but the rowdiness had a relatively childlike quality.

The group was quite balanced between blue-collar working class and white-collar middle class families. Of the twenty-four students I was able to interview, the fathers of nine were skilled laborers, including occupations such as bus and truck drivers, factory worker, mechanic, concierge. Seven fathers were white collar workers or professionals, two were in management, and four were shop owners or artisans. In contrast to 1987, almost all mothers worked outside the home, and the majority of these were in clerical jobs, although some were housecleaners, waitresses, and small business owners. There were more divorced parents than in 1987.

Sixteen students in the class were first-language (L1) speakers of Castilian, twelve were L1 speakers of Catalan, two reported that they were bilingual from the earliest age, and two had foreign first languages. First language was not fully ascertained for one fluently bilingual but Castilian-dominant student, who indicated that he used both languages at home.

Students' accounts of family history in interviews showed a clear trend toward Catalan across the generations. Four of the eleven students interviewed who reported that Catalan was their first language were children of linguistically mixed marriages and said that one of their parents used only Castilian in the home. In contrast, no student with a Catalanspeaking parent reported Castilian as their first or habitual language.⁶ Further, two interviewees who reported Castilian as their first language and whose parents were Castilian speakers reported their habitual language choice to be both languages. That is, any language change between parent and child or between home and habitual language was toward Catalan. Moreover, a substantial proportion of those from monolingual Catalanspeaking homes had grandparents from Andalusia, Aragon, Extremadura or La Mancha. Most students who were descended from one or more immigrants were not very aware of the family immigration history or language practices and in fact seemed quite distanced from their immigrant roots. Ten percent of the class were themselves foreign-born, mostly Latin American, but Eastern European and other backgrounds were represented as well.

6 One student who reported both Castilian and Catalan as his first language also reported that both his mother and father were Catalanspeakers. However, the parents were separated and there was considerable influence from Castilianspeaking family members.

The linguistic mix of Catalan and Castilian first language speakers in this classroom is quite notable for public schools in the Barcelona area, where *de facto* class-based residential linguistic segregation is still significant and reflected in school catchment areas. Although the Ramon Llull group is not representative, it gives us a good opportunity to see what happens to language use among young people when they are actually in close and well-balanced contact with peers from the other language background.

After initial observations and a lively class discussion of language in December 2006, I visited the class regularly two to four days a week from January to June 2007. Just as in 1987, data were gathered through observation and recording of formal and informal classroom interactions throughout the day, including whispered conversations at students' desks or worktables. A matched-guise test of language attitudes was administered early in the fieldwork. Full interviews of 45–90 minutes each were carried out with fifteen of the girls and nine of the boys. Thus, this article draws on several different kinds of data on the students' linguistic consciousness: indirect expressions of language attitudes in the matched guise test, explicit comments in interviews and class discussion, and observed as well as reported use of the languages.

■ 4 Implicit Language Attitudes: Status and Solidarity

As a first gauge of these students' views of the Catalan and Castilian languages, I carried out a matched guise test of language attitudes as a classroom activity. The matched guise test is a well-known quasi-experimental measure that asks listeners to evaluate the personal qualities of recorded speakers (Lambert, 1972; Woolard, 1989; Woolard and Gahng, 1990). The test presents each speaker twice, once in each language. Listeners are not told about and are usually completely unaware of these repetitions, and their attention is directed to personal traits rather than to images of the languages. By holding context, text and speaker constant and varying only the language used, the test allows us to approximate the effect of language choice on the impression a speaker makes, and to capture language attitudes that might not be openly expressed in public discussion. The same recording of speakers, all females, and the same inventory of personal traits were used with this group as with larger samples of students in several schools in the Barcelona urban area in 1980 and 1987.

■ 4.1 Status

The 2007 Ramon Llull group gave the speakers significantly higher ratings on the qualities I label “Status” when they spoke Catalan than when they spoke in Castilian. The higher Status perceptions for Catalan are true regardless of the linguistic background of the speaker or the listener. This replicates the finding in both the 1980 and 1987 versions of this same matched guise test, when significantly higher Status ratings for Catalan than for Castilian were also found. “Status” is the label I have given to a summary variable generated from the original set of fourteen personal traits by the statistical technique of principal component analysis. This variable reflects what we could also call prestige (in a social psychological sense), and it is based primarily in ratings on the traits ‘intelligent’ (*intel·ligent*), ‘cultured’ (*persona culta*), ‘hardworking’ (*persona treballadora*), and to a lesser extent in those of ‘self-confident’ (*té confiança en ella mateixa*) and ‘worthy of confidence’ (*digna de confiança*).

Year	Catalan	Castilian	Difference
1980	.0415	−.0415	.0830*
1987	.0951	−.0941	.1892*
2007	.1659	−.1576	.3226**

* significant at .05 ** significant at .01

Table 1. Mean Status Scores by Language Spoken and Year.

Technically it is not statistically appropriate to compare directly the strength of the effect across the different years in this repeated-measure experimental design, given the different samples of listeners. Loosely speaking, however, the relatively higher status value of Catalan appears not only undiminished but even strengthened across the years (see Table 1).⁷ This would seem to be a logical outcome of the predominant use of Catalan in schooling, and the latest result is thus relatively unsurprising. However, it is a useful confirmation of the continuing high status value of Catalan given the persistent doubts many Catalan advocates have about the prestige of the language. Such doubts are fueled by both the overwhelming

7 Scores are standardized, ranging around zero. Small differences in patterning across the years owe to the growth of the “other language” category of respondents, who were omitted from the ANOVA but not the principal component analysis, and to a differing method of substituting for missing data in the 2007 analysis.

dominance of Castilian in the state apparatus, mass media and commercial culture, and by recent overt efforts to characterize Catalan as a “local” language of limited value (see Woolard 2008a, 2008b).

■ 4.2 Solidarity

A second component of the personality traits measured by the matched guise test is one that I have labeled “Solidarity.” This component summarizes principally the personal traits ‘likeable’ (*simpàtica*), ‘amusing’ (*divertida*), ‘has a sense of humor’ (*té sentit de l’humor*), ‘open’ (*oberta*), ‘attractive’ (*atractiva*), and ‘generous’ (*generosa*). This might better be considered a measure of “likeability,” but in keeping with the literature on linguistic status and solidarity and my own practice since 1980, I label it Solidarity for consistency.

In the earlier instances of this matched guise test, there were complex patterns of statistically significant effects for the Solidarity factor. The 1980 results showed that listeners rewarded linguistically identifiable co-members of their ethnolinguistic group for using their own language, and penalized them with significantly lower solidarity ratings when they used the out-group language. Yet listeners were relatively indifferent to the use of one language or another when the speaker was not a co-member of their linguistic group. Listeners appeared to be policing the ethnolinguistic boundary between the groups with differential solidarity rewards. In 1987, listeners still favored their own language, but Catalan listeners had come to extend the reward of increased Solidarity not just to native speakers but to all of the speakers when they used Catalan. That is, the ethnolinguistic boundary appeared to be breaking down. Similarly, Castilianspeaking listeners in 1987 did not penalize their co-members for using Catalan, the way their counterparts had in 1980.

In the experiment with the new case study group in 2007, there was no statistical difference between Catalan and Castilian guises in the Solidarity ratings.⁸ The general likeability of a speaker was not affected by the language she used; in contrast to earlier years, ratings neither rose nor fell with a speaker’s use of Catalan or Castilian. The loss of significance of language choice for Solidarity over the decades of Catalan autonomy and educational policy is as important a finding as is the maintenance of high Status for Catalan.

8 A trend was detectable in the data that could conceivably rise to significance in a larger sample, for speakers to receive higher status scores when using their own first language, regardless of the language of the rater.

The lack of a language effect on Solidarity does not mean that these young people do not hold strong aural stereotypes, quite probably linguistic, that affect how a speaker is judged. As in earlier years, there were significant differences in Solidarity ratings between some of the speakers themselves, regardless of the language they used.⁹ As in the past, the Andalusian-origin speaker received dramatically lower Solidarity scores than all the others in both language guises, while the more standard Castilianspeaker received the highest scores of all. These same speakers showed a similar pattern on the Status scores as well, with the Andalusian-origin speaker garnering dramatically lower scores in both languages than the other speakers, and the standard Castilianspeaker getting the highest scores across her two language guises. We cannot be sure that it is speech style rather than some other aspect of the speakers' voice quality that creates these dramatic patterns. However, it is a plausible hypothesis to entertain, and one that underlines the complex, dual social positioning of Castilianspeakers of varying backgrounds in relation to Catalanspeakers.

■ 4.3 Summary of Language Attitudes Test

To summarize the overall experimental results for the case study group in 2007: Although there is evidence of continued stigmatization of a person who sounds like she is from the south of Spain, there is no evidence of either penalties or rewards in Solidarity for anyone for choosing to speak either Catalan or Castilian. The social solidarity value of the language distinction among young people, and the corresponding stress on the ethno-linguistic boundary between Catalans and Castilians, have disappeared since 1980. In contrast, there is a continued significant reward in Status associated with using Catalan rather than Castilian, and there are suggestions that this kind of prestige has increased for Catalan since autonomy.

Although the smaller sample of this study compared to 1980 and 1987 reduces the possibility of detecting subtle patterns in the data, it does allow a fuller exploration of the corresponding everyday meaning and nuances of

9 The general Solidarity finding is in keeping with the overall results of another recent matched guise experiment with a larger sample, which was designed as an approximate replication of Woolard (1989) and Woolard and Gahng (1990) (cf. Newman, Trenchs-Parera and Ng, 2008). However, the results of the two experiments on Status are very different, with Newman *et al.* finding no significant language effect on that factor. The population sampled differed importantly from the series of Woolard studies in certain dimensions, a fact that may account for some of the difference in results.

the experimental findings through interviews and observational work. Classroom discussion, observation and individual interviews with the same students who participated in this matched guise test not only confirmed the experimental findings but also allow us to expand on them. Whereas the traits evaluated in the experiment are proposed by the researcher (based on traits significant in discourse when I first formulated the test for Barcelona in 1980), informal discussion and interviewing can elicit these students' own terms for talking about people and languages.

■ 5 Explicit language attitudes: Elegance and coarseness

In an animated class discussion and in individual interviews, the great majority of students in this class showed remarkable uniformity in the contrasting images they held of the Catalan and Castilian languages, regardless of their own linguistic background or practice. Their descriptions of the languages confirm and make vivid the results of the matched guise test. Victoria, child of a linguistically mixed marriage and a bilingual home, sets out the status or prestige difference succinctly: "*M'agrada més parlar el català perquè el veig més elegant?*" ("I like to speak Catalan more because I see it as more elegant").

Asked whether they agreed with this assertion, 17 of the 26 students present for the discussion raised their hands in agreement that Catalan is more "elegant" than Castilian, many very enthusiastically. Although some demurred and felt the two languages were equally elegant, not one took the position that Castilian was more elegant than Catalan.

In private individual interviews over the next few months, the theme of the "elegance" of Catalan was affirmed and developed repeatedly, with 14 of 24 students endorsing this explicit term again, among them a number of Castilian-dominant speakers and even some who were extremely reluctant to use Catalan. While a few students didn't find one language more elegant than the other, only one said in private discussion that Castilian was more elegant than Catalan. He nonetheless found that Catalan sounded "*més cult*" (more cultured), suggesting that his understanding of the term "elegant" differed from that of his classmates, who evaluated these qualities in parallel. In interviews, students also volunteered that Catalan sounded more "*fi*" or "*finet*" (refined, 12 mentions), more "*cult/culto*" (cultured, 6 mentions), and more "*intel·ligent/intel·ligent*" (intelligent) or "*savi*" (wise, 4 mentions). L1 Castilianspeakers were just as likely as L1 Catalanspeakers to endorse this vision of Catalan as elegant, cultivated and refined compared

to Castilian. Further developments of this theme included descriptions of Catalan as “*menys vulgar*” (less vulgar), “*més polit*” (more polished), “*més ben parlat*” (more well-spoken), “*més bonic*” (prettier), “*més maco*” (more beautiful, agreeable), and simply “*mucho mejor*” (much better) or “*millor!*” (better!) as a number of students called out when I asked them to sum up their impressions in class. “*Me siento mejor en catalán que en castellano*” said one L1 Castilianspeaker in interview – in Castilian, his own choice (“I feel better in Catalan than in Castilian”). “*El veig com una llengua – no sé, millor?*” (“I see it as a, I don’t know, a better language”) said another.

Given such a uniform status- and prestige-oriented view of Catalan, how do these student think of Castilian? “*No suena elegante, suena, ¡Suena castellano!*” (“It doesn’t sound elegant, it sounds, it sounds Castilian!”) one boy summed up. Castilian lacks elegance, explained Katia, a Castilianspeaking immigrant, because “*ningú el parla sofisticadament*” (“no one speaks it in a sophisticated way”). How does it sound then? “*Cabrejat*” (annoyed), called out one child of a bilingual home, because “*el castellà l'utilitzem més quan estem cabrejats*” (“we use Castilian more when we’re annoyed”). Many classmates spoke at once to confirm that they associated Castilian with anger, insults, and “*palabrotas*” (swear words) both outside and within their own households. In interview, another boy from a bilingual home reported that “*a casa meva utilitzem el castellà quan estem enfadats*” (“at my house we use Castilian more when we’re mad”), so in contrast he hears Catalan as “*més dolç*” (sweeter). Another Catalanspeaker acknowledged that she had always understood that “*el castellà era més per fotre la bronca*” (“Castilian is more for making a row”), as happens in her home. A Catalanspeaking girl similarly asserted that when “*estic molt, molt molt enfadada*” (“I’m really, really really mad”) “*ho dic en castellà, perquè el castellà sona més fort; o sigui és involuntari, em surt en castellà*” (“I say it in Castilian, because Castilian sounds stronger; I mean, it’s involuntary, it just comes out in Castilian”). Another Catalan-speaking girl asserted that people in general, when they are “*enfadats*” (angry) and “*vol insultar, normalment ho dinen en castellà*” (“they want to insult, normally they say it in Castilian”). Castilian was characterized as an appropriate and frequent resource for arguing and insulting because it makes insults sound “*més potents, que es fan sentir més,*” (“more powerful, they’re felt more”) as one student put it. In contrast, Catalan would soften insults or angry words, making them sound “*més finetes, com més fluïxes*” (“more delicate, like weaker”), according to another. Another student also volunteered that “*les paraulotes en castellà sonen com més fortes,*” (“swear words in Castilian sound stronger”) while Catalan “*pareix com més fluïxa que el castellà, suavitza*

més les paraules que diu” (“seems like weaker than Castilian, it softens more the words you say”).

Beyond Castilian’s connotation of anger and insult, the most common terms for Castilian offered in interviews as well as in class discussion were “*bast/basto*” (“coarse”, 6 mentions in interviews) and “*vulgar*” (3 mentions); “*deixat*” (careless) was the dominant term used in class discussion. “*Més barroera*” (“cruder”), “*brusco*” (brusque), “*més d’estar per casa*” (“more for hanging around the house”), “*de garrulo*” (“like a good-for-nothing”), “*de tirar*” (throw-away), and “*més joder tio*” (“more ‘fuck, man’”) were some of the more original expressions of this same theme of coarseness.

One very Catalan-oriented student, Arnau, attempted to generalize the shared sentiment of class discussion with the assertion that “*la gent que parla castellà, és gent que no té gaire cultura, diguem*” (“people who speak Castilian are people who don’t have much culture, let’s say”), a claim that brought a round of applause as well as a general clamor and some loud opposition from the class. Backpedaling from his flat assertion, Arnau elaborated that what he really meant to say was that all speakers are careless with Castilian, and “*s’expressa pitjor, fa servir coses que no s’han de fer*” (“express themselves worse, use expressions that they shouldn’t use”), particularly in pronunciation. (“*He acabao,*” for “*he acabado*”, with the common elision of the intervocalic [ð], was the example he gave of poor speech). Catalan, in contrast, “*es parla tal i com és*” (“is spoken just the way it is”). This is a striking bit of language ideology, asserting that there is one way that a language really “is”. It is especially interesting given the emphasis here and elsewhere in discussion on the correct pronunciation of letters orthographically represented, since Catalan does not have the close correspondence between orthography and phonology that Castilian is famously held to have. Perhaps it is precisely this mythic idea of a prescriptive correspondence of one sound to one grapheme in Castilian, by which Catalan is not constrained, that subjects oral Castilian variants to greater disapprobation.

Arnau’s view of Castilian as badly spoken by everyone was rejected by one vocal opponent who characterized the phonetic elision Arnau had cited not as bad, but simply as rapid speech. Arnau’s view was nonetheless widely shared in the class. Castilian “*sona més mal parlat*” (“sounds more poorly-spoken”) as one person summed it up. It is especially noteworthy how uniform this vision of Castilian as carelessly spoken was, because many of the students also recognized that they had an exemplary model in their Castilian language teacher. Several lauded him in interviews for his “elegant” Castilian style and his “*veu de prestigi*” (voice of prestige). When

students conjured images of the language itself, ideological erasure (Gal and Irvine, 2000) made that speaker invisible; recall Katia's assertion that "no one speaks it in a sophisticated way".

A shared tenet of language ideology that was expressed repeatedly may underlie this view of Castilian: the belief that speakers wear out their languages through use. A number of the students endorsed the idea that words get worn down, especially phonetically, from so much use for everyday purposes. "*El castellà... ho parlem tots. És molt usat, no? Està molt vist, molt parlat*" ("Castilian, we all speak it. It's very used, no? It's seen a lot, spoken a lot"). Because of this frequent use, Castilian is a language that sounds not only "*més col·loquial*" (more colloquial), but also "*desgastat*" (spent, worn down): "*El castellà ja s'ha sentit molt i massa s'ha anat desgastant*" ("Castilian has been heard a lot, too much, and it's gotten worn down"). In interviews, students elaborated: "*És que el castellà el fem servir molt per dir jo què sé qualsevol tonteria, no?*" ("It's because we use Castilian a lot to say, I don't know, whatever stupid thing, you know?"). Ironically, because Catalan is spoken less – "*a pocs llocs*" ("in few places") – students hold that it "*és com més nou*" ("it's like newer"), not as "used up" as Castilian is by its many speakers. Lesser-used language are more pristine in this view, rather than rusty or decayed, equally plausible images that are often found in other situations of language contact.

These were the overwhelming themes of linguistic imagery, repeated again and again and rarely challenged, although there were nuances and one fairly steadfast dissenter.¹⁰ Other notes were hit less frequently, but almost all were consistent with the template of Catalan elegance vs. Castilian coarseness. For example, other students said that Catalan "*suena... més dèbil, més sutil, ¿no?*" ("sounds ... weaker, more subtle, you know?"), Catalan is "*més distant, como si fuese una lengua para hablar formalmente, serio*" ("more distant, as if it were a language for speaking formally, seriously"); "*quan parles més seriosament, o més de tu a tu parles, jo parlo en català*" ("when you speak seriously, or more personally/frankly, I speak Catalan") said another, giving seriousness a different twist. For another habitual Catalanspeaking boy, Castilian is "*més directe, més dur*" ("more direct, harder"). Arnau, who thought everyone speaks poorly when speaking Castilian, nonetheless granted the language "*sonorital*" (sonority). In keeping with this, an L1 Catalanspeaker characterized Castilian as sounding "*més greu*" (deeper), and

10 The dissenter was recognized by all his peers as *espanyolista* in orientation on other grounds, such as his use of the Spanish *toro* sign on stickers and his cellphone screen.

another boy volunteered the same characterization of his own voice when speaking Castilian. Castilian “*té més força*”, (“has more force”) he added, while Catalan is “*més agut i més suau*” (“higher-pitched and softer”). Such characterizations suggest the feminization of Catalan, in the sense of a normative traditional femininity, a trend identified by both Pujolar (2001) and Woolard (1997) in the late 20th century sociolinguistic situation.

A boy who asserted that Castilian was better for insulting said it was also more useful “*quan has de donar ordres a algú; queda més, com si imposessis més*” (“when you have to give someone orders; it’s more, like it’s more imposing”). And it was also best “*si tu expliques un chiste verd*” (“if you tell a dirty joke”); for others it was better suited for joking (*fer bromes*) in general. For one boy who characterized Catalan as “*dolç*” (sweet) and Castilian as “*cabrejat*” (annoyed), there was another possible contrast, a seeming reversal of earlier claims: saying the same thing in the two languages could sound equally good, but Catalan would be “*més dolç*” (sweeter) and Castilian “*sembla més, més tecnic, més ben dit*” (“seems more, more technical, more well-put”). Two students associated Catalan with old people, but for one of these, Catalan made them sound especially “*savi*” (wise). Somewhat surprisingly to me, there were no other mentions of age, and no sign that Castilian was overtly associated with youth or popular culture, as might be expected (cf. Pujolar, 2001), except for the embrace of all kinds of popular music except music in Catalan by one student.

In these students’ stereotypic imagery, then, we see for each language a form of erasure that Gal and Irvine (2000) have called “register stripping”, although in complementary domains. That is, through ideological erasure, recognition or actual use has been lost of the language in particular registers. For Catalan, the lost registers are those of forceful and rough, careless everyday use. For Castilian they are high, formal, and refined registers. However, the erasure lies more in ideology than in practice for Castilian, while actual register stripping in practice is more significant and consistent for Catalan. When questioned further, most students could recognize high forms of Castilian and recall refined speakers with cultivated voices, such as their language teacher. But almost none of them had any awareness of variable forms of Catalan; to their knowledge there was only one kind of spoken Catalan. One immigrant said “*el catalán para mí es todo igual*” (“for me, Catalan is all the same”), no doubt in part because she is not an expert speaker, but her view was shared by native speakers and skilled bilinguals as well. “*No hi ha una manera deixada*” (“there isn’t any careless way”) of speaking Catalan, said one Catalan-dominant bilingual. In another inter-

view, a nearly monolingual Castilian echoed her: “*yo no conozco una manera dejada de hablar catalán*” (“I don’t know any careless way to speak Catalan”). The virtually monolingual Castilianspeaker Lola asserted “*el catalán suena muy fino siempre – siempre*” (“Catalan sounds very refined always – always”), and a nearly monolingual Catalanspeaker independently affirmed that even “*quan parles normal*,” (“when you speak normal”) Catalan “*queda elegant, queda bé*” (“sounds elegant, sounds good”). These students hold the same view that Susan Frekko has recently identified in relation to language experts’ view of Catalan: a standard register of Catalan is now taken to be the whole language (Frekko, 2009).

The view that Catalan has no register variation is linked to highly purist attitudes among these students. Purist attitudes are much less often expressed toward Castilian, although they are not entirely absent. In this purist view, there are not different ways to speak Catalan for different purposes, there are only pure versus mixed versions, which are defined as correct and incorrect, respectively. The only way these students know of speaking Catalan that differs from the elegant, refined way they think of first is that which mixes it with Castilian: “*Hi ha molta gent que diu ‘bueni’, i ‘bueni’ no és*” (“There are a lot of people who say ‘bueni’, and it’s not ‘bueni’”). Similarly, the only “*dejada*” way of speaking Catalan (so familiar for Castilian), is when “*la gente dice muchas castellanadas, palabras convertidas al catalán pero que son de castellano en realidad*” (“people say a lot of Castilianisms, words converted to Catalan that are really Castilian”). And there is no celebration of such hybridity among any of these young people, for they flatly reject language mixing: “*El català que no m’agrada és el català que, que barreja paraules amb castellà. Sona molt malament*” (“The Catalan that I don’t like is Catalan that, that mixes words with Castilian. It sounds really bad”).

Many of these young people felt it was simply the quality of the language itself that shaped their view of it, but a few recognized that their images of the languages owed in part to their personal home circumstances rather than to characteristics of the languages themselves. So, Alex, of Castilianspeaking background, acknowledges that he hears Castilian as not only “*más familiar*” (“more familial/familiar”), but also “*más cariñoso*” (“more affectionate”), because he’s accustomed to hearing it at home, a basic insight of sociolinguistics. But the very familiarity of Castilian is also what creates part of Catalan’s attraction for Alex: “*estoy bastante harto de hablar castellano, me siento mejor en catalán que en castellano, me gusta hablar el catalán*” (“I’m pretty tired of speaking Castilian, I feel better in Catalan than

in Castilian, I like to speak Catalan”). (See Stasch [2007] on the attraction to linguistic difference.)

Others understand that the value of a language is established through linkages to iconic speakers and social types as much as to domains of use. Paco was a disruptive student who spent most of his school day in the *aula oberta*, but with his monolingual Castilian speech habits, track suits, buzz-cut hair and gold earrings, he was an icon for all of his classmates of the street-tough style known as “*quillo*” (an Andalusian-derived term for a style popular among working class, Castilianspeaking youth, which will be discussed below). Using the stigmatized ethnic label “*gitano*” (Gypsy) that is less commonly also applied to *quillo* style, one female classmate explained how sociolinguistic iconization works by singling out Paco: “*él se podría considerar así, gitano, y él habla mal el castellano. Entonces mucha gente asocia eso, y tú dices va esto es castellano malo, y la gente se le pega hablar así a todo el mundo.*” (“He could be considered like that, Gypsy, and he speaks Castilian badly. So then a lot of people associate that, and you say well that’s bad Castilian, and people pin speaking like that on everyone”). Another girl gave a parallel picture of the linguistic iconization of a contrasting style-based identity, the *pijo* (roughly equivalent to American “preppie”). She explained that the Catalan language is perceived as more refined “*com que les persones que parlen català son més bé pijos i gent així que son més refinats*” (“since people who speak Catalan are more likely to be preppies and people like that, who are more refined”). This generalization may surprise people of older generations, for whom *pijos* are closely identified with Castilian.

These students treat language choice as primarily a matter of style, and they view style as an issue of personal choice, not ethnolinguistic background. However, the linkage of such styles to social class doesn’t escape their notice. A bilingual girl explained that Castilian is associated with “*els barris així una mica deixat*” (“the neighborhoods that are a little run-down”), where “*es parla més castellà*” (“more Castilian is spoken”), and she includes her own *barri* in that estimation. A Latin American immigrant student says “*asociamos el castellano mal hablante a gente mal educada así mal hablado*” (“We associate the poor-speaking Castilian with crude people, poorly spoken like that”) and goes on to link this explicitly to social class: “*el hablar castellano te hacía como más trabajador*” (“speaking Castilian made you like more working class”). Putting the matter most baldly, one student called out in the class discussion, “*El català és la llengua dels rics*” (“Catalan is the language of the rich”). Another student, himself very favorably disposed toward Catalan, put the same thought somewhat more picturesquely: “*és com a Inglaterra que*

abans els rics i els feudals feien servir el francès perquè era més, més elegant. En aquí el català sembla més” (“It’s like in England in the past, the rich and the feudal lords used French because it was more, more elegant. Catalan is more like that”).

■ 6 Language and Adolescent Social Identities

These strong stereotypes of language do not play out in a straightforward way in peer interactions. Almost all students, even those who had virtually monolingual social relations, insisted that language background and language choice were not important issues among young people anymore. “*Ya no nos peleamos para ver quien habla catalán y a ver quien habla castellano. Ahora ya da igual*” said Lola (“We don’t fight over who speaks Catalan and who speaks Castilian anymore. Now it’s all the same to us”). This nonchalance about language affiliation is confirmed by the results of the matched guise experiment, in which there were indeed no differences in Solidarity ratings between a given speaker’s Catalan and Castilian guises. This indifference has also been a common thread in young people’s discourse about language for much of the period of autonomy (Boix, 1993). It is part of what preoccupies Catalan activists who fear that such indifference will allow the loss of the language (Larreula, 2002; see Woolard 2008a, 2008b, for a different interpretation).

What was changed in 2007 compared to my earlier studies was not the surface discourse of adolescent linguistic *laissez-faire*, but rather the limited extent to which language actually entered into the diagnostics of social identity in the students’ own social arena. In the 1987 study at this same school, despite widespread insistence that language choice had little to do with friendship or peer relations, almost all students discussed the social landscape of their classroom, school, and city in terms of two groups: “Catalans” and “Castilians” (cf. Boix, 1993). At that time, even students who advocated that “all those who were born and live here are Catalan” usually quickly resorted to a language-based distinction between Catalans and Castilians when discussing social relations on the ground. Category membership was diagnosed on the basis of perceived language background and preference. Language rather than fashion and style was used to place people (although girls’ use of cosmetics was seen as predictable from their ethnolinguistic identities).

Now, the ordered relations between linguistic identity and style are reversed. No one in 2007 explicitly named “Catalans” and “Castilians” as a social contrast set, and only one student of the 24 interviewed drew on this contrast as she discussed her social world. Identities are defined now in style terms first (*pijo* and *quillo* being the dominant categories), and language generally enters into talk about social life only at a secondary level, as a corollary to more basic identity diagnostics. This certainly does not mean that language preference is not correlated with social relations and predictably aligned with adolescent groups that are defined by style. Rather, it means that the students do not themselves construe their social status and relations in linguistic terms. Importantly, they view identities that are socially significant to them as matters of choice rather than of ethnic ascription.

Various new lifestyle-based identities have emerged since 1987, such as the “*skater*” (for skateboarders, as in American English) and the “*rapero*” (hip hop style), but the most universally recognized style categories are the *quillo* and the enduring category of the *pijo*. The basic definition of *pijo* now is one who “*va de marcas*”, that is, who dresses in expensive brand-name clothing, most importantly skinny jeans. Girls are also identified by their pink tops, ballet slipper shoes, and soft sweaters and scarves. As mentioned earlier, at this working to middle-class school, the *pijo* is thought of as predominantly (although not exclusively) Catalan speaking, in keeping with the identification of Catalan with wealth and refinement.

The *quillo*, in contrast, is identified by track suits and earrings for the boys, and wide bell-bottom pants of synthetic material, tight shiny tops, exposed flesh and heavy makeup for the girls. The *quillo* (the label is said to derive from a common Andalusian diminutive for ‘boy’, “*chiquillo*”), is exclusively Castilian speaking; all interviewees asserted that a Catalan-speaking *quillo/a* would be a contradiction in terms. The *quillo* style is considered *basto* (coarse) and vulgar, in concert with the stereotype of the Spanish language as more coarse and vulgar than Catalan.

For these young people, there are no longer “Castilians” who come from within Catalonia. Whether from Catalanspeaking homes or Castilian-speaking homes, and regardless of their preference for speaking Castilian among friends, if young people are conversant in Catalan and use it in school activities, all of them are “Catalans” in these students’ view. Only two groups of students are not viewed as Catalan in this sense: new immigrants from outside of Spain and those born in Catalonia who refuse bilin-

gualism in Catalan and who in practice remain monolingual in Castilian. The former are “immigrants” and the latter are now known as “*espanyols*.”¹¹

In place of “Catalans” vs. “Castilians”, the principal social dichotomy invoked now is between Catalans and *espanyols*. The former category is expanded considerably over its meaning in 1987: bilinguals of Castilian-speaking background who continue to use Castilian preferentially in informal peer relations are now as likely to be included under the label “Catalan” as their Catalan-dominant classmates, if they use the Catalan language routinely at school. The term *espanyol* represents a significant shift in the ethnolinguistic interpretive frame, rather than simply a relabeling of the previously existing category “Castilian”. “Castilian” was a language-based identity, but “*espanyol*” is an ideological and politico-cultural category, indicating someone who is actually anti-Catalan in stance. It is not the Castilian or Spanish language as such that is associated with *espanyol* identity, but rather the *refusal* of Catalan. Castilian-dominant language choices do not disqualify a young person from being seen as “Catalan” in these students’ view. But a functionally *monolingual* Castilianspeaker who avoids use of Catalan even in school counts as “not Catalan.”

The *espanyol* identity, then, is attributed to those who do *not* do the expected and use Catalan in school. Since students must go out of their way not to learn and use Catalan in the classroom under current educational linguistic policies, such monolingualism is understood by these young people as deliberate, reactive, and politically motivated. It thus qualifies a person not simply as “Castilian” on the basis of language choice, but rather as anti-Catalan and *espanyol*. It is not only the strong Catalanists among the students (of whom there were in fact relatively few) who use the contrast set of Catalan/*espanyol* to talk about the social life of the classroom. Rather, it was invoked by a broader spectrum of interviewees to explain their social world to me. This is the one sense in which language use is socially definitional among these young people, but only in its absence. For most of these students, there is not necessarily anything significant about Castilian use in itself. Only those who are *not* bilingual, who do *not* also speak Catalan, are seen as *espanyol* on the basis of language use. However, *espanyol* or *espanyolista* identity can also be claimed or assigned to functional bilinguals on the basis of more overt political talk or use of symbols such as the Spanish flag and the Osborne *toro*, the black bull mas-

11 I retain the Catalan form “*espanyol*” to indicate that there are political and social nuances not captured by the translations “Spanish/Spaniard.”

cot of a big alcohol firm that has come to stand for Spain in popular culture (Brandes, 2008).

Basic terms of social identity have moved from an essentialist treatment of Castilian linguistic origins or habits as defining Castilian identity in contrast to Catalan twenty years ago, to a voluntarist conceptualization of *espanyol* vs. Catalan identity as a matter of politics and style. In earlier work I suggested that by 1987 “Castilian” was becoming a residual category, reserved for those who were not actively bilingual in peer interactions (Woolard, 2003). This social category, residual in the sense of being defined by what one does *not* do, has now become consolidated under the *espanyol* label.

“New Catalans” was the term I used for L1 Castilianspeakers in 1987 who publicly showed bilingual identities through bilingual practices with close peers. New Catalans were distinct not only from functionally monolingual Castilians but also from what I called “Catalan converts”, students from Castilianspeaking homes who had adopted Catalan-dominant linguistic practices and often hid their Castilianspeaking origins. In the 1987 study, the New Catalan bilingual identity and pattern of language choice were found only among students from middle class families. Working class kids of Castilian origin remained Castilian in identification by self and other as well as in language habits, for the most part.

By 2007, however, the “New Catalan” pattern of competent, casual public bilingualism and untroubled Catalan identity-claiming was extended to young people from working-class Castilianspeaking homes. The “New Catalan” had been a position of relative class privilege in 1987, but in 2007 it had become a normal type of “Catalan” identity in this classroom. New Catalans are now simply Catalans, and in this classroom they were almost as likely to be found among working class grandchildren of Andalusian immigrants, children of truck drivers, factory workers and housecleaners, as they had been among middle class children from Castilianspeaking homes in 1987. Undoubtedly, this pattern is tied to the high educational standing of this public school and the still generally positive orientation of the student body to the school as an institution; the *espanyol* and the *quillo* are the dominant figures at the lower-status schools in working class neighborhoods of this city.

■ 7 Language use

Despite the remarkably uniform stereotypes of the languages and particularly the positive images of Catalan that these students generally held, actual language use in the classroom and in peer relations was very complex, too complex to analyze in the space of this article. As Victoria herself continued, “*A mi, per exemple, m’agrada més parlar el català perquè el veig més elegant, vale, de llengua, però parlo més el castellà*” (“For me, for example, I like to speak Catalan better because I see it as more elegant, ok, as a language, but I speak Castilian more”). This apparent contradiction between linguistic consciousness and practice will be the subject of later analyses.

A brief overview of linguistic practice nonetheless can be given here. The preponderance of students in the regular class (as opposed to those who went to *aula oberta*) were “Catalan” by the students’ standard of school use of Catalan. The majority participated in Catalan-medium instruction with general ease, dropping into Catalan in the classroom, some with noticeable Castilian accents. Most students, even the few who avoided speaking Catalan, wrote their assignments in that language. Only one of the regular class, a Latin American, chose Castilian for a major class presentation. Only a small number of Castilianspeakers in the regular class remained mostly silent, saving them from speaking in Catalan. However, a number of students, particularly girls who favored the *quilla* style, could be expected to intersperse Castilian and Catalan turns, and a few to use mainly Castilian, when participating in class discussion.

In peer interactions in 2007, there was no one pattern of language etiquette, but rather some of everything: virtual monolingualism in Castilian, near monolingual practice in Catalan, passive bilingualism, bilingual accommodation to Castilianspeakers, bilingual accommodation to Catalanspeakers. These varied and more subtle patterns remain to be explored through close analysis of recorded interactions.

■ 8 Conclusion

In this first analysis of data from an ethnographic case study of a Barcelona classroom in 2007, I have examined metalanguage as well as more indirect indicators of linguistic consciousness among a group of secondary school students. A language attitudes experiment, general patterns of language use, and students’ own discourse about languages and social identities all suggest both continuities and changes in the last twenty years.

The high status of the Catalan language compared to Castilian has been maintained since Catalan autonomy, and if anything is more accentuated now than in my previous studies. Catalan-medium schooling is taken for granted as unproblematic and untroubling by almost all of these students, even those who rarely use the language. A corresponding perception of Catalan as a language of elegance and refinement and of Castilian as a coarser language has become nearly absolute for many of these students. They do not recognize intra-linguistic variability and register differentiation, particularly for Catalan.

Because of myriad other changes – political, social, economic, demographic, cultural – over the same period, we cannot know how directly these developments in young people’s linguistic consciousness can be attributed to educational linguistic policy. Nonetheless, the ethnographic aspect of the study allows us to see how these stances toward the language are fitted into and supported by formal and informal interactions within the school. Language affiliations are viewed by these young people even more than those in past years as the exercise of options, as stylistic choices that individuals can and do make, rather than as enduring essential characteristics. Many of these students and their families have moved toward increasing use of Catalan over the years and generations. At the same time, there are several signs that there is less peer-sanctioned social motivation among bilingual students than before to choose one language over the other in interaction. Overall, these findings show that there is increased bilingualism, a broadened acceptance of the Catalan language, and an accompanying expansion of Catalan identity among these young people compared to their counterparts of twenty years ago. In spite of these positive developments for Catalan, there is paradoxically at the same time a narrowing vision of what the language is, what it is about, and what social purposes it can serve. ■

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Resum: Aquest estudi etnogràfic de l'any 2007 va investigar la consciència lingüística entre alumnes d'un institut públic de l'àrea urbana de Barcelona prèviament estudiada l'any 1987. Es va trobar que el català conserva el seu alt prestigi i connota "elegància", mentre que el castellà ara es caracteritza com una llengua degradada. A la vegada, els estudiants no reconeixen variació de registre en la llengua catalana. Les fronteres etnolingüístiques s'han debilitat des del 1987. Els estudiants ja no classifiquen els seus companys com "català" o "castellà" a base de llengua, i l'elecció de llengua ha perdut el seu valor de solidaritat des del 1987. El bilingüisme és l'expectativa normal, i el monolingüisme funcional en castellà a l'escola ha esdevingut una elecció socialment marcada. ■

Summary: This ethnographic case study from 2007 investigated linguistic consciousness in a public high school in the Barcelona urban area previously studied in 1987. Catalan was found to retain its high status and connote "elegance", while Spanish is now characterized as a debased language by the majority of students in this case study from varying linguistic backgrounds. Students do not recognize register variation in Catalan. Ethnolinguistic boundaries have weakened considerably since 1987. Peers are no longer categorized on the basis of language background, but in voluntaristic and commodified stylistic terms. Bilingualism is the normal expectation, and while language choice has lost its solidarity value since 1987, functional Castilian monolingualism is a socially marked choice. [Keywords: language attitudes, language ideology, linguistic identity, national identity, youth language]. ■