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Linguistic *mudes*: how to become a new speaker in Catalonia

Abstract: New speakers of Catalan have come to represent, from a demolinguistic perspective, a substantial part of the community of speakers. Of those who presently speak Catalan as an “habitual language”, 41.6 percent are native speakers of Spanish. In this article, we shall follow up the various ways in which native Castilian speakers incorporate Catalan into their lives. This happens, as we will show, in specific biographical junctures that we call *mudes*, a Catalan term referring to (often reversible) variations in social performance. Our analysis is based on a qualitative study that included 24 interviews and 15 focus groups covering a total of 105 people of different sexes and linguistic, educational, social and residential backgrounds. We shall give a general overview of these *mudes* as we typified them: when subjects entered primary school, secondary school, the university, the job market, when creating a new family and when they had children (if they did). The study of linguistic *mudes* provides, in our view, a new and productive perspective on how people develop their linguistic repertoire, their attachment to specific languages and the significance of these aspects for social identity. It facilitates a processual, time-sensitive analysis that allows to contextualise and critique ethnonationalist discourses that have often saturated our understanding of language use.

Keywords: Catalan, linguistic *mudes*, life-cycle, ethnicity, bilingualism

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1 Introduction

During Spain’s transition to democracy in the early 1980s, one generation ago, Catalan became, alongside Spanish, an official language in most of the territories where it was traditionally spoken. It became a compulsory subject and a more or

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less widespread medium of instruction at all educational levels (Strubell and Boix 2011). Up to this point, it had been spoken primarily, although not exclusively, by those who had acquired it through intergenerational transmission, i.e. by native speakers. From 1980 onwards, those who had migrated from other regions of Spain began to learn it through formal instruction. However, learning a language in the classroom does not automatically lead people to use it routinely in social life, as we will show below.

In this article, we will describe how Spanish-speakers in Catalonia, the region in Spain where revitalisation policies were more decisive and successful (Strubell and Boix 2011), have gradually become “new” Catalan-speakers, i.e. functionally bilingual in the sense that they can routinely use both languages in daily life. This happens, as we will show, in specific biographical junctures that we call *mudes*, a Catalan term referring to (often reversible) variations in social performance, such as dressing-up for an event or change appearance generally (Pujolar and González 2012). Our analysis is based on a combination of quantitative data from the 2003 *Enquesta d’Usos Lingüístics* [language uses survey] and a qualitative study conducted in 2008 and 2009 that included 24 interviews and 15 focus groups covering a total of 102 people under 35 years old, of different sexes and linguistic, educational, social and residential backgrounds (González et al. 2009; Pujolar et al. 2010). We will provide a general overview of these linguistic *mudes*, which we define as changes in language behaviour of subjects at different stages in life. In doing so, we also intend to provide a map, hitherto largely unexplored, of how linguistic practices may evolve and change throughout the life cycle of individuals. This analysis, we argue, provides a nuanced view of the linguistic ideologies that underpin linguistic practices in the Catalan context, particularly a view that does not reduce these practices to their implications for ethnolinguistic belonging. Indeed, by focusing on how individuals become new speakers, we turn these phenomena into processes characterised by change, movement and maturation rather than staticity and placeness.

We also wish to argue that the perspective presented here is one that sociolinguists, activists and language planners involved in minority language politics must unavoidably take on board if they are operating within an agenda of revitalisation and therefore one involving social and linguistic change. Our work is especially indebted to that of Woolard (2011), both for her attention to the Catalan case and her bid to develop more diachronic analyses of sociolinguistic processes, including the lifecycle perspective. It was Woolard’s longitudinal study that actually gave Pujolar et al. (2010) the idea that important changes were taking place in the post-adolescent period in relation to the Catalan language, thus prompting them to extend the definition of “young” up to 35 years, as it is presented in this article. Woolard (2011) also reviewed the very limited body of sociolinguistic literature –

mainly variationist (Eckert 1998; Sankoff 2004) – in which biographical change, age grading or related concepts have been used. Coupland (2004) also attests to the scarcity of this specific perspective in his bid for a sociolinguistics of ageing and points out that even sociolinguistic studies that explore age-related phenomena usually under-theorise age and assume it to be a simple descriptive category that can be mobilised – rather like an independent variable – to investigate specific dialectal and ideolectal changes. Coupland rightly points out that most of these studies also assume that biographical linguistic changes can be expressed in terms of variations in age cohorts, thus reifying specific age ranges as if they operate as a linguistic community (see Chambers 2002). On the other hand, there is a recent emergence of research of “language biographies and autobiographies” related to the experiences of L2 speakers (Pavlenko, 2007). With this article we hope to contribute and build on this literature from a minority language perspective.

In this article we will show that to explain the processes involved in adopting Catalan it is not so important to define age categories as such, but rather to identify linguistically-bound performative changes associated with specific events and conditions that are intimately connected to age (or rather to age-related life changes and conditions) and which have an important effect on different aspects of social identity. We call these changes linguistic *mudes*, a notion that provides a crucial theoretical standpoint to our approach. Sociolinguistics has traditionally framed linguistic change in terms of language variation (focusing on features of discourse or structure), language shift (macro-level change of repertoire over time), style-shifting and code-switching (variability as seen in an interactional time-frame), language acquisition (focusing on more or less context-bound capacities), or language choice (with an eminently synchronic focus on social norms). Linguistic *muda* puts the focus on the fact that language choices are life investments with open meanings: “life investments” because they constitute performative acts of social consequence with enduring implications that unfold over (life) time; “with open meanings” because their significance need not be pre-defined by social norms that are given, but are open to (re)negotiation by subjects and their multiple interlocutors. Like Bakhtin’s (1981) “utterances”, the meaning of *mudes* cannot be foreclosed but depends on the responses they trigger as subjects engage in multiple dialogues.

Catalan sociolinguistics has had a fixation with the adolescent period (Boix 1993; Pujolar 2001; Woolard 2003; Vila 2004; Galindo and Vila 2008) derived from the assumption that this was the stage where the process of language acquisition and the acquisition of norms of language choice finally became established. More importantly, it was understood that the present use of the language by younger groups would determine the future vitality of the language. The inscription of this line of research within an agenda of language revitalisation explains this

particular slant. In a way, it was a way of assessing whether the school system was effectively producing (native) speakers of Catalan. But Eckert already observed that adolescence is “a hothouse for the construction of identities” (1998: 163) that should not be assumed remained intact after this period. Indeed, we will show that important changes happen after adolescence which are of direct relevance to revitalisation agendas and of interest to sociolinguistics in general. This provides a new window to understand how speakers develop varied and changing relations to the linguistic repertoire they encounter in the social milieus through which they navigate. It provides new clues as to the roles of languages in the access to symbolic and material resources and it queries the traditional sociolinguistic dichotomies of power/solidarity or integration/instrumentality that have been widely used and little critiqued. We argue that this perspective invites us to rethink the assumed purposes of minority language sociolinguistics and to formulate more general questions of what it means to be a legitimate speaker – of Catalan in this case.

2 New speakers of Catalan in numbers

Amongst those who speak Catalan, new speakers have come to represent, from a demolinguistic perspective, a substantial part of the community, particularly in younger generations. We use the concept of “new speakers” to refer to people whose language learned in primary socialisation – i.e. with parents or guardians – was not Catalan. In many cases, the adjective “new” may be misleading, given that they may have been Catalan speakers for many years. Many of them have arguably “nativised” the language to the point that they may see themselves and are seen by others as no different than “real” native speakers ; and we would not claim that this should be otherwise. The distinction we make is purely analytical and aims to examine different life trajectories across the Catalan-Spanish language boundary. In everyday life, Catalans tend to be aware of the day-to-day linguistic choices of others; not of their family histories. In fact, we rarely used the term in our interviews, as it requires unnecessary explanations.

According to the 2003 language use survey,¹ the native languages of the younger generation (16–35 year olds) were Catalan (36.8%), Spanish (55.1%), and

¹ Although there is a more recent version of the *Enquesta d'usos lingüístics* [linguistic usages survey] (2003), we draw upon a specific analysis we conducted during 2007 and 2008 in which some key synthetic variables were produced, such as “habitual language” (González et al. 2009). No such results are available for the later survey (2008), so we preferred to stay with the “richer” data to evaluate linguistic changes in the lifecycle. This survey is conducted by the Generalitat de Catalunya through telephone interviews to a sample of 7257 residents aged 15 and over.

both (6.1%). Native speakers of Spanish are therefore more numerous, not so much because any language shift has taken place but due to constant migration to Catalonia from the rest of Spain and abroad. We must bear in mind that in 2004, 34.6% of the population (all ages) were not Catalan-born and many locals were from Spanish-speaking families (see www.idescat.cat [accessed 20 January 2012]). In any case, the younger generation is overwhelmingly bilingual and uses both languages in their everyday life. Of those who speak Catalan as an “habitual language” (76.7% of the whole population), 41.6% are native speakers of Spanish. The notion of “habitual language” is not a category as such in the survey but it was constructed by averaging what respondents declared was the relative percentage of use of both languages in different social domains: home, work, study and in service transactions. We classify as “new speakers” of Catalan all those respondents of Spanish-speaking origins whose reports suggested that they used Catalan 25% or more of their time in everyday life.

Thus, nearly half of Catalan users are not, strictly-speaking, native-speakers of the language. This has wide-ranging implications for language policies, given that the speech community can no longer be portrayed as made up exclusively of those who have “inherited” the language in the conventional way and deserve the specific forms of protection or legitimisation associated with revitalisation policies. Rather, we must query how policies address and affect those who have “adopted” the language in other ways too. To do so, we need to understand how these processes of adoption take place; which is what we explore in the next section.

3 Linguistic *mudes*

We have developed the concept of linguistic *muda* (*mudes* in plural) to characterise how (in this case) native speakers of Spanish become users of Catalan at specific moments of their lives. Pujolar and Gonzàlez (2012) developed this concept to open up a theoretical examination of what it means to adopt a new language in social life. Sociolinguistics – and research on language revitalisation in particular – has historically relied on assumptions that frame language as an index of ethnicity, national adscription or a sense of belonging to a cultural group. However, as we gathered accounts of people’s diverse experiences with different languages, it became clear that this seemed like a heavily loaded assumption to make in relation to many of our respondents and their experiences. At best, it could only explain the position of a small minority of new speakers, who may have indeed developed an investment in Catalan as “their own” national language. Even so, the process that led them to this investment might well

involve different forms of engagement with language only partially connected with ethnicity. Thus, the notion of *muda* simply expresses the recognition that language choice has implications for social identity that need to be empirically established and may or may not imply ethnolinguistic identities.

Thus we explore what kinds of changes in social identity are brought about by changes in patterns of language choice. These changes bring about a reorganisation of one's linguistic repertoire that has significant implications in the ways that individuals present themselves to others in specific contexts. Essentially, they start projecting a new, different or additional linguistic persona, they become available to engage in interactions in the new language, and hence lay claim to participation in specific communities of practice, partly constituted by their newly adopted linguistic resource or performance. Indeed, this formulation assumes that mobilising a specific linguistic or discursive competence in social life cannot be interpreted as a simple, abstract, cognitive exercise. Instead it should be seen as a form of positioning, the production of a social persona that claims a specific discursive position that is open to recognition or contestation. This is indeed a key moment in the language-learning/using process, i.e., when the new language gets socialised. We shall explore how Spanish-speakers in Catalonia manage this transformation as they adopt Catalan in their social life.

Our exploration of linguistic biographies rendered a number of typical moments when *mudes* reportedly took place. These were generally moments of change within daily routines that involved a change of settings, activities in which, and participants with whom individuals engaged in a relatively intensive and routine fashion. At these moments, it is important to understand that individuals did not suddenly substitute the language(s) they had been using up to then: the new language usually came from meeting new people and the new social spaces and activities. However, the new spaces of language choice also queried the existing ones. The *muda* opened up a range of new options and by doing so it also forced subjects to construct the social, spatial and situational categories that bear on the decisions to use one language or the other. How did new speakers go about constructing these categories? Did they create new ones or did they borrow the categories available around them?

González et al. (2009) identified six main moments in which *mudes* took place: (a) in primary school (23.7% of Castilian speakers and 10.8% of Catalan speakers in our sample); (b) in high school (respectively, 16.9% and 2.7%); (c) at university (13.6% and 16.2%); (d) when getting one's first job (50.8% and 40.5%); (e) when establishing a new family (20.3% and 13.5%); and (f) when becoming a parent (45.8% and 5.4%). Here we present how these "moments" were narrated by informants and what social and linguistic consequences and implications we detected from their reports.

3.1 The primary school *muda*

Enrolment in kindergarten and primary school (available in Catalonia from age three) was for most informants the first moment when they were confronted with speakers of a different language. For those born from 1973 onwards, their school's medium of instruction could initially be in Spanish, Catalan or both languages, though Catalan was gradually gaining ground in line with policy changes. Virtually all Spanish speakers learnt and began to speak Catalan first in this classroom context. Very few informants reported in detail on this experience, given the limitations to the recollection of events at that age. However, beyond the conditioning factor of the language of instruction, another element emerged as very significant: the language predominantly spoken by fellow students in the playground was invariably the language predominant in the geographical area or neighbourhood where the school was located. When this dominant language was Spanish, Spanish-speakers restricted the use of Catalan to the classroom and when interacting with teachers. When it was Catalan, on the contrary, people almost invariably took to speaking mostly Catalan, thus creating a linguistic contrast between home/family and school/peers.

Nd was a 32 year old woman with Spanish speaking parents from Andalucía, born and raised in a Spanish speaking neighbourhood of Torelló, a town where Catalan is overwhelmingly dominant. She had a University degree and now lived in Ripoll, another predominantly Catalan-speaking town in the Pyrenees.

Nd: *quan feia EGB, sí que jo em relacionava amb poques nenes, dotze nenes, però dins d'aquestes dotze nenes hi havia un grup que eren filles d'immigrants, que ens deien xarnegues en aquell moment, i amb aquestes noies ens relacionaven en castellà, val? (...) i amb les altres noies en català. Vull dir que era mixt. I amb els nois en català, tots. (...) I actualment la majoria dels meus amics són catalanoparlants.*

'when I was at primary school, I did relate with small group of girls, twelve girls, within which a group were daughters of immigrants, and they called us "xarnegues" then, and with these we spoke in Spanish, OK? (...) and with the other girls in Catalan. I mean it was mixed. And with the boys Catalan, all of them. (...) And now most of my friends are Catalan speakers.'²

² The term *xarnego* is originally a pejorative term describing a person who migrated to Catalonia from other areas of Spain and who did not speak Catalan. For a more complete description, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xarnego> (accessed 20 January 2012).

In our sample, we encountered very few people who claimed that both languages were present in a balanced way amongst their first schoolmates: only one Catalan speaker. Most recollections portrayed a monolingual or quasi-monolingual school environment.

3.2 The high school *muda*

In most cases, access to high school involved a change of educational centre where respondents met new students from other neighbourhoods or neighbouring villages. More often than not, this meant that the student population became linguistically more diverse, so that the two languages were present amongst the pupils in classrooms and playgrounds. A few students whose use of Catalan had so far been restricted to academic tasks and situations took the opportunity to start speaking Catalan with peers.

Su and Teu were a 25 and 30 year old women respectively with Spanish speaking parents who lived in Sabadell, a big Spanish-dominant city near Barcelona. They both had university degrees and had linguistically mixed groups of friends.

Su: *Sí, elles anaven a una escola pública i elles ja feien les assignatures en català. Jo venia de fer-les en castellà i l'entorn i tot era propici pel castellà no pel català. I després ens vam trobar i ja et coneixes parlant català i ja continues amb un idioma. Llavors vas parlant, et vas coneixent i això i dius: osti, mi padre es de no sé donde, mi padre tal i et sobta, no? però és així ...*

‘Yes, they went to a state-funded school and they were doing all the subjects in Catalan. I came from studying them in Spanish and my environment was more favourable towards Spanish. Then you meet and get to know each other speaking Catalan and you continue in this one language. Then you talk some more, you get to know each other more and you go: gosh, my father is from god-knows-where, may father this-and-that and it is a surprise, right? But this is how it is ...’

Teu: *Jo per exemple a l'institut quan comences a relacionar-te amb gent molta gent que parla català i hi ha persones que canvien eh? et comencen a parlar en castellà. I jo en aquell moment vaig optar per dir que no canviessin que jo volia practicar més el català. (...) Després de la primera setmana de classe et parlaven en català i seguia parlant en català.*

‘I for instance at high-school ... you get in contact with people, many people who speak Catalan and there are people who switch, OK? They start talking in Spanish to you. And at this point I decided to say that they should not

switch that I wanted to practice Catalan more. (...) After the first week of lessons they spoke to you in Catalan and I kept on speaking Catalan.'

Su here attested to the circumstance that she had met people who she judged were Catalan speakers but were actually native speakers of Spanish, as she found out later. Her account must also be interpreted against the routine procedures used by people to decide what language to speak with others. People commonly settle for one language on the basis of their first impressions of the language preferred by other people, and this is done on the basis of observed behaviour: linguistic choices, accent and context. Once the appropriate language is decided, the custom is to stick to this choice. In this case, Su and her friends maintained Catalan even after discovering their "Spanish" family background. The reverse can also happen with native speakers of Catalan, although both circumstances are exceptional.

Because many Catalan speakers spontaneously address in Spanish those people they assume are not habitual speakers of Catalan, some respondents explained that they had had to repeatedly diverge linguistically (respond in Catalan even when addressed in Spanish) or ask explicitly to be addressed in Catalan. This is what Teu explained. He had to take steps to obtain recognition as someone who was available to be addressed in Catalan. This could only be done when a minimum number of Catalan-speakers were routinely present in the new social space. The socialisation of Catalan was therefore established in a very specific location. However, this localised act with specific people had repercussions in the whole of the lived time and space: as the moment of *muda* marked a break between a monolingual past and a bilingual future, Catalan increasingly became an option in future encounters elsewhere. Thus, Teu, through this specific strategy, first created a history for himself as a Catalan speaker; and this "new" history became a resource he could from then on mobilise in new spaces and with new acquaintances.

High school *mudes* into Catalan, although not very numerous, were overwhelmingly associated with "good" students with a successful academic track record. This is the first clear symptom of the ways in which Catalan became gradually associated with the social divisions between a highly educated bilingual sector and those "functional" monolinguals headed for less skilled sections of the employment market.

As our data included both adolescents and older young adults, it confirmed the view that high school is a period where language and identity issues are very often addressed within the processes of constructing all types of divisions connected to class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, consumption styles, music allegiances and so on. It was in this context that a minority of students resisted the

demands of teachers to use Catalan in the classroom. They perceived the use of Catalan as an unfair imposition and they adopted an “anti-Catalan” discourse. However, with older interviewees, these attitudes were rare.

3.3 The university *muda*

For those whose high school environment had retained a fairly monolingual character, university represented the definitive encounter with bilingualism (that is, for speakers of either language). The university population is slightly dominated, in demographic terms, by Catalan speakers, mainly due to their predominantly middle-class background. And to those who had adopted Catalan before, significant numbers of new speakers are added, thus making Catalan even more present.

Boe was a 33 year old woman from a Spanish speaking family, born in Barcelona where she still lived and worked. She had a University degree.

Boe: *Sí, a la Universitat sí que és un canvi ... (...) Bueno, jo ja ... diguéssim que acadèmicament ja l'havia introduït per fer alguns treballs ...*

‘Yes, in University, it is indeed a change ... (...) Well, I already ... let’s say that academically I had already introduced [Catalan] in some essays ...’

Inter.: *Com ho vius? Arribes i t’ho trobes, t’ho esperaves?*

‘How do you experience this? You go and you find it so? Did you expect it?’

Boe: *(...) allà descobreixo ... pues, no sé ... posicionaments més ... respecte la llengua més ... més ... no sé com dir-ho ...*

‘(...) there I discover ... well, I don’t know ... positions that are more ... in relation to language more ... more ... how to put it?’

Inter.: *Més militants?*

‘More militant?’

Boe: *Sí, més militants ... no? I això també ... Descobreixo tot un món que no coneixia, fins aleshores ... (...) Això sí ... Aviam, a la universitat, pràcticament amb tothom parlava ja en català ... Amb molta gent parlava ... Perquè era ... era la llengua ... bueno, tothom ... casi ... casi bé tothom parlava el català ... O sigui que allà ... allà sí que ... amb tots els amics parlava ... [en català] ...*

‘Yes, more militant ... no? And this also ... I discover a whole world that I did not know, up until then ... (...) Of course ... Let’s see, at the university, practically everybody spoke Catalan ... With many people I spoke ... Be-

cause it was ... it was the language ... well, everyone ... almost, almost everyone spoke Catalan ... Which means that there ... it was really ... that I spoke [Catalan] with all my friends ...’

Boe attested to her contact and involvement not only with Catalan as such but also with the discourses that invested Catalan with specific social and political values. This was not always the case, given that people might access spaces and networks where Catalan was not so present, or not so invested with sociopolitical meanings. Others could retain a predominantly Spanish speaking network and spoke Catalan only exceptionally, or none at all, but got used to being addressed in Catalan by others. One interesting asymmetry between the two linguistic groups at this stage was that Catalan linguistic militants became common, whereas Spanish-speaking “functional” monolinguals became very rare (most of them not having pursued university education after secondary school).

In Table 1, informants from A to F declared not to have undergone any significant change in linguistic practices at university. It is noticeable that this group displayed a tendency to use more Catalan socially. This also happened amongst those performing *mudes* at this stage (G to J), where five displayed a *muda* towards more Spanish and nine towards more Catalan. This helps understand why university was perceived as a predominantly Catalan-speaking space.

Table 1: Linguistic trajectories of the university-trained informants

A	Catalan speakers who do not use Spanish socially	12
B	Spanish speakers who do not use Catalan socially	6
C	Catalan speakers who had already adopted bilingual usages	1
D	Family bilinguals who were already using mostly Catalan	1
E	Spanish speakers who had already adopted bilingual usages	1
F	Spanish speakers who were already using mostly Catalan	6
G	Catalan speakers who started using some Spanish at the university	5
H	Catalan speaker who had used exclusively Spanish before and used now some Catalan	1
I	Spanish speakers who started adopting bilingual usages	2
J	Spanish speakers who started using mostly Catalan	6
Total		41

3.4 The workplace *muda*

When Catalans started their working life, whether it was after secondary school or university, they were generally aware that bilingualism was the norm. It is difficult to overestimate the sociolinguistic impact of this moment. First, according

to the 2003 data, the workplace was the social setting where the indexes of use of Catalan were highest: 27.8% declared to use only and 15.1% mostly Catalan, 21.7% both languages and 10.5% mostly Spanish but Catalan significantly; “Spanish only” represented the remaining 24.8%. For both Catalan and Spanish speakers who have so far managed to conduct a fairly monolingual life, who may have been avoiding contact with speakers of the other language or even actively resisted the use of Catalan in class, the workplace constitutes a totally different situation.

Ber: *No, yo empecé hablando catalán porque mi primer jefe ... O sea, mi primera entrevista fue con el director de operaciones ... Que me llamó y me dijo: “Hola Bernat”. Y empezó a hablar en catalán y yo le contesté en catalán. Perfecto. Empezamos a hablar en catalán. Y el primer jefe que tuve allí ... que él no fue mi jefe directo, sino que me dijo: “Ahora te voy a presentar a tu jefe”, que era el director de calidad ... pues ... vino y también era ... catalán, y empezamos a hablar en catalán, y a partir de allí sí que todo el entorno era catalán.*

‘No, I started speaking Catalan because my first boss ... that is, my first interview was with the chief operating officer ... Who called me and said “Hello Bernat”. And he began speaking in Catalan and I answered in Catalan. Great. We started speaking Catalan. And the first boss I had there ... because he was not my direct boss; but said: “now I am going to introduce you to your boss”, who was the quality manager ... and then ... he came and also was ... Catalan, and we began by speaking Catalan and from that moment on all the environment was Catalan.’

Inter.: *Y tu viste que allí ...*
‘And you saw that there ...’

Ber: *Todo era catalán, allí ... Lo que pasa es que allí los mandos era catalán ... todos hablaban catalán ... Y los operarios era castellano ...*

Inter.: ‘Everything was Catalan there ... What happens is that for the bosses it was Catalan ... They all spoke Catalan ... and for the shop floor it was Spanish ...’

Ber provided an interesting case of a man from a Catalan-speaking family, living in a predominantly Spanish speaking neighbourhood in Barcelona, who had already made a full *muda* and adopted Spanish with peers and siblings as a child. Moreover, he had adopted the “functional monolingualism” of his surroundings, which had even survived through his university days. When faced with the pros-

pect of a Catalan-speaking workplace, with a manager who even catalanised his first name, he claimed not to have hesitated in his decision.

Beyond the fact that Ber's case illustrates how linguistic trajectories may involve contrasting shifts between both languages, his initial workplace experience attests to the fact that he perceived this context to be qualitatively different from previous ones. In our data, it was linguistic educational policies that were usually an object of criticism: a number of respondents complained that it was an "imposition" to learn Catalan or to be "compelled" to use Catalan at school. However, linguistic requirements in the workplace, whether in public or private institutions, were rather understood to be a "natural" consequence of the fact that speakers of both (or even more) languages were active in the marketplace and rarely perceived as an obligation. This is best illustrated by the following excerpt from a focus group of teenagers which almost unanimously agreed against using Catalan at school or in private life, but considered the use of Catalan at work as the norm.

Ki and Sm were an 18 year old boy and girl respectively living in Castellar del Vallès, a predominantly Spanish speaking town near Barcelona. They were both studying at a vocational training school. Ki had bilingual parents and Sm's parents were both Spanish speaking:

Ki: *Ya, pero tu imagínate que estás haciendo, esto, administrativa y te cogen en ...*

'OK, but now picture yourself working as a secretary and they take you in ...'

Sm: *En el ajuntament*

'The city council'

Ki: *En el ayuntamiento por decirte algo, y te viene una persona mayor, o quien sea tía! hablando catalán, y tu no le vas a contestar en castellano.*

'In the city council to say something, and some elderly person comes, or anyone, speaking Catalan and you are not going to reply in Spanish.'

Linguistic skills and linguistic performances were constructed inside and outside the workplace in markedly different ways. Thus, when referring to the reasons why one would wish to use Catalan generally in social life, people mentioned issues of politeness, of cultural value, of territoriality, of taste, and generally of aspects that were open to questions of personal preference. In the workplace, on the contrary, the focus was on the need to display skills and leave the personal preferences behind. Thus Ber, for instance, declared later in the interview that knowing Catalan provided an "added value" to his credentials as employee. He also reported on the experience of functionally monolingual Spanish workmates who had found themselves in Catalan-speaking workplaces that were having

“a bad time” and had asked him to adopt Catalan in informal talk to be able to practice and acquire fluency.

This is not to imply that Catalan overwhelmingly predominates in workplaces: some can be Catalan-speaking, Spanish-speaking, bilingual or even multilingual. What is a common experience is that people may well experience different linguistic situations in their increasingly mobile work-life, which means indeed that speaking more languages, including Catalan, enhances their employability.

3.5 *Mudes* in the new family

In this section we address an aspect of sociability that presents a substantial contrast with those analysed so far: significant others, steady partners and parenting. So far we have seen subjects navigating through institutions and spaces largely controlled by others and constituted prior to their engagement with them. Within these spaces people were able to actively define considerable aspects of their daily life with their peers but with partners and children there is much more room for negotiation (although wider social norms continue to come to bear). In our group of informants, four Catalan speakers spoke only Spanish with their couples, two men and two women, and two more were doing so despite using mostly Catalan outside the family. Amongst native speakers of Spanish, five men and four women spoke Catalan with their partners. Very few people, four, declared to combine the two languages in this specific context. Approximately half of these were already using the partner’s language in other social settings. This partner *muda* was of significance particularly for Spanish speakers who had never used Catalan before and it typically opened for them the possibility to develop a fluency that they tended to use with the partners’ families, networks of friends and beyond.

However, the 2003 survey yielded the highest rates of Catalan language use in parent-to-child communication. Amongst respondents with children, 47% declared to use Catalan, 28% Spanish and the rest combinations of the two languages. Our participants in interviews and focus groups declared to speak or intended to speak Catalan (38), Spanish (22) and both languages (13) to their children. Fourteen of those who were speaking or planned to speak Catalan to their children, and nine who intended to use both languages, were speakers of Spanish (no Catalan speaker intended to speak Spanish to their children). These could be divided in two groups, namely those that had adopted Catalan as their first language and who resided in predominantly Catalan-speaking areas; and those living in predominantly Spanish-speaking towns and neighbourhoods who

had either Catalan-speaking couples or thought it important to compensate the predominance of Spanish in their social milieu in order to ensure that their children would grow up bilingually.

Oi was a 26 year old woman from a Spanish-speaking family born and raised in a predominantly Spanish speaking neighbourhood of Badalona, a city in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. She had a University degree and her partner was Spanish speaking.

Oi: *Això és una altra pregunta perquè de vegades em plantejo, i hem dit: jo li parlo català i l'altre li parla castellà. Potser ens plantejem això. No ho sé perquè no hem tingut un fill però és una bona manera de que ... no, potser serà un caos, no ... aquell de ... diuen que els nens quan són petits ... hi ha gent que els parla en anglès i tot, no ... però des de petits potser realment no tindrien cap problema si identifiquessin ... aquest seria el tema jo crec. És el que t'estava dient, si identifiquessin el moment que comencen a parlar, que amb una persona hi parlen català i que amb una altra persona hi parlen castellà pot ser una manera de que tinguessin naturalment aquest xip de parlo totes dues.*

'That's a different question because sometimes I reflect, and we have said: I speak to him/her in Catalan and the other speaks to him/her in Spanish. Maybe this is what we are aiming to. I don't know because we have not had a child but it is a good way ... No, maybe it would be chaotic, no ... *that* ... they say that small children ... some people even talk to them in English, no ... But as small children maybe they would not really have a problem if they identify ... that's the question I believe. What I just said, if they identify the moment they start speaking, that they speak Catalan with one person, and with another person they speak Spanish it would be a way that they would naturally develop this spontaneous predisposition towards speaking both.'

Thus, many of the positions displayed by respondents of Spanish speaking origin went in the direction of ensuring the children's bilingual capabilities and making their access to Catalan easier than it had been for themselves. Thus, a family *muda* was often an investment in bilingualism, not necessarily a nativisation of and assimilation into Catalan. Even native Spanish speakers raising a Catalan monolingual family often said that they trusted the school and the strong social presence of Spanish to do the work of bilingualisation.

4 Navigating linguistic spaces

After visiting the typical moments of linguistic change or linguistic reorganisation for young Catalans, we proceed to explain some general aspects that affected all *mudes* as well as discussing their significance in terms of how respondents constructed their relationship with the two languages. First, it is important not to lose sight that most *mudes* led to bilingualism, but not all. Some led to monolingualism: (a) Spanish-speaking adolescents who developed a resistance attitude at this age, and responded to teachers in Spanish and thus became functionally monolingual after having practiced some bilingualism in the classroom as young children; and (b) Catalan-speakers who developed a “language loyalty” stance at secondary school or university. Thus, for some speakers a *muda* did not necessarily involve a change of language, or an expansion of their linguistic repertoire; it could be the opposite: a redefinition of linguistic norms that effectively restricted their repertoire.³ Moreover, these two *mudes* may seem to be mirror-images of each other but actually entailed many important differences. The former had been using Catalan in very restricted contexts anyway, namely the classroom; while the latter continued to use Spanish in educational or professional contexts but restricted (never completely) the use of Spanish in informal sociability (which had normally been not very frequent anyway).

In any case, for most Spanish-speakers who had somehow got used to speaking Catalan in academic tasks only, the key issue was the moment when the language was “socialised”, was adopted or internalised as a language they could use for all purposes of daily communication: practical tasks, enjoyment, expression of affect, i.e. their development of a social persona in that language. This was indeed an important qualitative change, though usually much less important in terms of the “amount” of Catalan that was introduced in the person’s everyday life.

Mudes consisted basically of adopting Catalan to speak with new acquaintances, commonly in a new context. In Catalonia, as in most places, everyday norms of language choice define it as “normal” or “natural” to be consistent with the language spoken with the people you already know. So even Spanish speakers acquainted with Catalan speakers may not wish to, or see any sense in switching languages with old acquaintances. Thus, if they wish to speak Catalan, they must do so in the early stages of a personal relationship, make sure that their efforts come across credibly and be prepared to maintain it later. And when doing

³ We are assuming here a focus on codified languages. As it is known, people’s repertoire can also be expanded through the adoption of registers, dialects or jargons.

so, they must be able to differentiate between those that will be happy to speak Catalan with them and those that will not. This is why, once the speech-act is performed, it generates a series of continuities: first, Catalan becomes established in relationships and/or in the spaces newly constituted through it; second, all new acquaintances and situations become characterised by the need to decide what language to use. This is probably the reason why it becomes common for some Spanish speakers to display a generic preference to use Catalan in everyday life. Amongst our informants, Spanish speakers who used Catalan often either spoke this language first in “new” situations (13), showed no preference (11) or continued to display a preference for Spanish (21). Amongst the first group, some lived in areas where Catalan was predominant and hence became adopted as the default public language, sometimes leading to situations in which native speakers of Spanish could get used to speak Catalan amongst themselves. This happened almost invariably with new acquaintances, while informants continued to speak Spanish within the family and with former friends. Those who lived in predominantly Spanish-speaking areas normally did it as a strategy to “practice” the language and develop their fluency, usually after having realised that they had to improve their Catalan because they needed it at work. This also meant that the institutional pressures that initially created the need to speak the language eventually led them to use it in informal contexts too, thus gradually blurring the contrast between Catalan as an institutional language and Spanish as both institutional and informal.

Thus, a *muda* into Catalan typically produced important effects in the way people related to the languages that had a significant “temporal” component: Catalan was more recent, belonged to newer relationships and spaces; Spanish stayed in the initial family and in previous acquaintances.

Mev: *No, casi totes és que ... bueno, jo tinc un grupet d'amigues que és del, de l'escola d'art que amb elles parlo català. Però després tinc amics de fa molts anys des de que, doncs això, érem adolescents que amb ells parlo castellà. Però bueno ... això ... igual ara, avui dia, veig més a les amigues de l'escola d'art que no pas ... amb ells perquè estan treballant també i tot i llavors ...*
 ‘No, almost everyone ... this is ... well, I have a little group of female friends from art school with which I speak in Catalan. But I have also old friends from, when we were teenagers with which I speak in Spanish. But well ... this ... maybe now, nowadays, I see more of my art school friends than ... with the others because they are also working and such, and then ...’

This state of affairs plausibly explains why surveys show much less use of Catalan in personal relationships than in institutional contexts: only 19.2% of respon-

dents used “only Catalan” and 16.4% “mostly Catalan” with friends. Institutional contexts may bring people into Catalan-only spaces but linguistic change in networks of friends is much slower. *Mudes* can therefore have limited impact on language use as seen from a quantitative perspective; but the qualitative (emotional, symbolic) impact should not be underestimated. As the participant below indicated, speaking Catalan became something that both gave access to Catalan identity and the right to participate in the (re)definition of this identity.

Wa was a 28 year old woman born in Sabadell, a large city near Barcelona from a Spanish speaking family. She had a high school degree and she became more acquainted with Catalan after adolescence.

Wa: *No, porque utilizo más el catalán y porque estoy empezando a ... descubrir ciertas cosas de la cultura catalana que yo antes no sabía eh, como eran los catalanes porque yo era charnega, pues ya está! y ahora te pones a investigar y te pones a mirar y te das cuenta de que ... oye, pues que es una cultura que es apasionante, empiezas a identificar poco a poco, cada vez conoces a más gente que es catalana y al final te das cuenta de que no es que tu estés integrando en eso, es que ya eres eso! O sea, dejas de creer que tienes que hacer un esfuerzo por integrarte. Es que llega un día que como dice ella, dices: yo soy catalana, leches! Porque tengo que seguir esforzándome si, no sé! Yo, mis padres llegaron aquí de jovencitos formaron parte de algo de aquí conforme iban pasando los años y yo creo que ... los hijos lo hemos heredado y que por ello no soy menos catalana que otra persona porque no lo hable a menudo. Pero vamos, que no sé, que a menudo.*

‘No, because I use more Catalan and because I am beginning to ... discover certain things about Catalan culture that I didn’t know before, you know, how Catalans were because I was a “charnega”, and that was it! And you start inquiring and looking around and you realise that ..., that this is a culture that is fascinating. You start to identify little by little, you get to know more and more people who are Catalan and in the end you realise that it is not that you are integrating into this, you already *are* this! I mean, you stop believing that you have to make an effort to integrate. You get to a point when, like she says, you say: I am Catalan, damn it! Why should I keep making an effort if, I don’t know! I, my parents came here when they were very young. They became a part of here as years went by and I believe that ... the children we have inherited this and I am no less Catalan than somebody else because I speak it less often.’

5 Conclusions

We believe that our research demonstrates the need to be aware of the ways in which people develop their linguistic repertoire not only across different social spaces, as has been the traditional focus of sociolinguistics, but also throughout their lifetime. We hope that the account presented here does not only provide a convincing analytical argument; but also strikes a chord with readers who surely must have similar or related experiences in their linguistic biographies, and may be willing to expand our understanding of how people relate to languages in multiple ways, as life and society changes around them and they position themselves in the face of these changes. The notion of linguistic *muda* is to us a means to this end, namely to develop an understanding based on empirical research on how individuals and social groups develop their relations to elements of their repertoire.

As we see it, this approach may significantly contribute to our understanding of how language becomes associated with specific social identities emerging from the diverse experiences that accumulate in complex ways throughout people's lives. It also has the potential to address many of the issues connecting language with symbolic and economic power that are often presented in an eminently conceptual way that is difficult to connect with specific experiences of "real people". Thus, our analysis of linguistic *mudes* clearly shows how the use of Catalan gradually becomes bound up with the pursuit of educational qualifications from secondary school to university, thus providing an implicit connection between language and social groups that have a strong position in the labour market. Moreover, the fact that most Spanish speakers feel the need to adopt Catalan when they enter the labour market provides an interesting glimpse into the ways in which languages become invested with symbolic capital indirectly through their position in the economic market. And not only this, the very contrast between the positions that many take when they inhabit public institutions and as they move into the labour market, also points at important ideological divisions that subjects construct around their rights and obligations in these different settings, which are in turn connected with how ideologies of capitalism circulate and are contested.

Finally, our findings also suggest interesting ways to revisit traditional sociolinguistic dichotomies such as power and solidarity, us and them, integrative versus instrumental motivations. As social subjects invest in specific linguistic capitals that are marked by the struggles over access to symbolic and material resources, they inevitably accompany their positions with emotional investments that also draw upon the discourses and ideologies that partake in these struggles. Thus, an exclusively "instrumental" investment into speaking Catalan appears

as a theoretical oxymoron only possible for those who believe languages to be neutral cognitive resources. This is not how Catalans, or any other group, live languages.

There are also important implications from this analysis that affect the ways in which linguistic minority communities have been constructed in nationalist discourses and for the language policies that have traditionally drawn upon these discourses. Language revitalisation has historically privileged the significance of using the language as a form of embodying national identity, even in the face of ongoing language shift due to economic or other factors – that have, in turn, been treated as spurious, discordant or even as false consciousness. This ideology has been complemented with the notions of linguistic purity and of language as cultural inheritance that has privileged the focus on the reproduction of the community of native speakers, and this while other out-group speakers could be easily ignored. Catalonia, as Pujolar (2007) showed, was one such context where the experiences of new speakers of Catalan were silenced. This is no longer tenable. The future of Catalan, as arguably for many other minority languages, lies in the ambivalences and contentions encountered and confronted by non-native speakers.

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