

Languages, belonging, and social categories in Catalonia: non-Catalan speaking perspectives

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According to official surveys, 56.6% of the inhabitants of Catalonia do not use Catalan as their everyday language, although 80.4% of the total population declare themselves being able to speak it (Generalitat de Catalunya 2015). People who do not tend to use Catalan in spite of living in Catalonia constitute a wide, blurred, and heterogeneous category because of its internal diversity regarding linguistic competence, places of origin, ethnolinguistic profiles, life trajectories, and, overall, levels of symbolic capitalisation. Most of them have experienced mobility, either from other parts of Spain (21.9% of the total population) or from other countries all around the world (19.1%): on the whole, 41% of the Catalan citizens were born outside of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya 2015). The aim of this paper is to explore different profiles of non-Catalan speakers in terms of how they experience belonging, or not, to Catalonia. Also, it will examine their positioning in relation to socially available categorisations connected to languages, ethnocultural identity, socioeconomic status, and access to symbolic resources; and how they negotiate, accept, or challenge general assumptions regarding these categories.

Recent research shows that language choice in Catalonia is experiencing a process of de-ethnicization (Pujolar and González 2012). Traditional assumptions about language, ethnicity and social class based on the duality Catalans/Castilians –the latter mentioned, people from other parts of Spain who migrated to Catalonia during the 20th century– are being shifted by everyday speakers' practices because most of these native speakers of Spanish and, especially their children, adopted Catalan as one of their languages. In this way, "Catalan linguistic authority is no longer firmly grounded in the authenticity value that sustained its legitimacy" (Woolard 2016, 300). However, this de-ethnicization trend does not seem to apply to new populations with origins outside of Spain, who do not tend to be addressed in Catalan by the

natives. This could lead to the construction of new social categories based on language, indexicality, and ethnicity.

Fieldwork conducted during 2016 shows that place of origin is a variable that strongly conditions positioning both in terms of belonging and perception of social existing categories: Spanish nationals –born in or outside of Catalonia– tend to have a stronger feeling of belonging to Catalonia and challenge traditional assumptions regarding social available categories (i.e. boundaries between ethnolinguistic groups and social classes identified with each group). In contrast, foreign non-Catalan speakers tend to not develop this sense of belonging and, moreover, tend to accept or even reinforce assumptions regarding social categories that seemed to be in process of being left behind as a consequence of four decades of language revitalisation policies. This paper will look at how these dissimilar perspectives between two profiles of non-Catalan speakers become concrete, and what the possible consequences are for themselves and for the community.

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