

The Indexpla Applied to the City of Barcelona

by Montserrat Peitx

Abstract

In this article we look at the application of Indexpla to 120 organisations in the city of Barcelona, involving more than 300 observations. The advantages offered by this instrument are evaluated, as a tool which can improve the image of our own organisation, and as an objective diagnostic tool. Also looked at is its usefulness when planning actions within language plans, following them up, and measuring results. Additionally, an analysis has been made of the behaviour of organisations in all the sectors of activity in which they concerned and according to the six factors evaluated by the instrument. In no case does it claim to be a study of language use in the city, but rather the practical results obtained by the instrument¹.

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1. Introduction

The Indexpla is a tool which allows the level of linguistic normalisation of an organisation to be measured objectively at a given moment, and also allows the evolution of this normalisation to be measured over specific periods of time showing the results of any actions that have been taken to increase the level of Catalan usage. For each organisation observed, an index of linguistic normalisation (ILN) is obtained. This index is calculated from data obtained from the study of six factors (image and communications, linguistic competency of staff, linguistic usage criteria, external documentation, external communications, and internal documentation and communications).

The Language Normalisation Centre cpnl.cat (CNL) in Barcelona has made more than 300 Indexpla observations at more than 120 organisations throughout the city. The results have made possible an evaluation which goes beyond the linguistic evolution of each organisation. Furthermore, some overall conclusions have also been extracted which apply to the sectors or factors included in the study.

These conclusions, however, cannot be extrapolated to the linguistic usage of all of the organisations throughout the city, nor will they indicate the level of the presence of Catalan in the city. This information – the oral and written linguistic permeation of Catalan in public institutions, private organisations and throughout society in general – can be obtained by

¹ I should like to express my thanks to Toni Mataix and Anna Simó for their comments and evaluations which have proved very helpful in the writing of this article.

applying the Ofercat system, which was inspired by the Indexpla. A pilot trial of Ofercat has been carried out in the Ciutat Vella district of Barcelona.

2. The growth in the use of Catalan

One of the main objectives of the CNL in Barcelona is to encourage the use of the Catalan language in all areas throughout the city, especially within the socio-economic and socio-cultural sectors.

In 1995, a new, experimental technique was implemented – linguistic management. This was one of the services provided by the CPNL (the Consortium for Language Normalisation) in order to plan linguistic usage in such a way so as to incorporate and increase the use of Catalan in communications. It was important, if not essential, to have an objective and graphical method of diagnosis, and also a way in which to evaluate the process of the growth in the knowledge and use of Catalan in those organisations that the CPNL was working with – the Indexpla.

3. The Practical Results of applying the Indexpla

Over the years we have been able to observe how applying the Indexpla has produced a series of practical consequences that we can evaluate from various angles: - an improvement in our image, an objective diagnostic tool, a change in the way objectives were planned, and also a change in the follow-up and evaluation of the objectives of normalisation plans, and finally, a way of grouping organisations according to the ILN.

3.1 *The Indexpla and the improvement in our image*

Presenting this linguistic analysis to client organisations has added an innovative element to our image, which has proved to be of significant technical value when we have to communicate with such organisations. Before the Indexpla was applied, negotiations with organisations were poorly structured and it was often difficult to present our services in an objective way. Now, using the Indexpla, we can demonstrate the information we obtain regarding the linguistic situation observed in an organisation, in a simple, systematic way.

3.2 *The Indexpla as a diagnostic tool*

When an organisation allows us to produce an objective diagnosis using observations from multiple indicators, they are in effect opening the doors to a complete linguistic audit comprising personal interviews, observations, access to documentation etc. Before we worked with Indexpla, access to such information was often a problem – organisations were wary about providing certain data because they did not know what use might be made of it. Now, with the Indexpla, they know exactly why we want the information and that has made our relationship with the organisation much more straightforward.

3.3 *The Indexpla and Planning*

Whenever we have begun to work with an organisation we have produced an initial linguistic plan for them, but after the Indexpla is applied, the design of these plans changes, and new objectives, closely linked to the above-mentioned Indexpla factors, are then formulated. The plan can then be designed depending on the results of the initial diagnosis. A detailed analysis, employing and adapting to these factors, assists in defining the actions and achieving the objectives set out in the subsequently produced linguistic plan.

3.4 *The Indexpla and follow-up and evaluation of plans*

The Indexpla, from the initial diagnosis onwards, allows for successive analyses to be made (these are normally done on a yearly basis throughout the period when we are working with the organisation in question). These analyses are useful for any adjustments that need to be made to the agreements laid down in the original plan, re-channelling the measures established to improve results, and to evaluate what has actually been achieved when the collaboration has been completed. The Indexpla allows for summary sheets to be drawn up where any temporary measures results obtained are described, as well as those obtained whilst working with us. These summary sheets are useful when deciding whether to continue

with or call a halt to a programme, because they allow us to see whether the process is advancing satisfactorily or whether it has stagnated.

If the ILN is low or very low, certain measures must be taken in order to guarantee the process of increasing the use of Catalan. This is achieved by extending the type of communication situations when Catalan is used. Our task here is to focus more on awareness-raising and the diffusion of the language, and not on achieving linguistic change. If the organisations have a medium to high ILN, the objectives should focus on the consolidation of the process of linguistic normalisation, and on the growth of the level of linguistic autonomy.

3. 5 The Indexpla allows organisations to be classified according to their ILN.

When the process is initiated, a linguistic analysis of the communications of the organisation and the linguistic aptitude of its staff is undertaken. This analysis is done by applying the Indexpla, which classifies organisations by their level of normalisation according to the ILN.

This index has a value of between 0 and 100: - if the index is above 80%, then the organisation is considered to have achieved a high level in the use of Catalan; if it is between 60% and 80% then it has reached the normalisation threshold; an index below this level would indicate that the organisation is not able to attend to the public or communicate in Catalan.

4. Analysis by sectors

The Indexpla has been tried in Barcelona in the 'Official use and linguistic rights', the 'Socio-economic sphere', and the 'Health and social institutions' sectors. It has been applied to more than 120 organisations over the last five years. This is a significant number of organisations, which means that we have been able to gauge the usefulness of the Index, and it has also allowed us to study the perceived changes in a more objective way. It cannot, however, be used to make extrapolations for all sectors, but it can detect the increase or decrease of activity in each sector.

In the 'Education, research and youth' and also in the 'Media and cultural industries' sectors, work has been of a sporadic nature, thus the data obtained was not considered to be of significance.

Figure 1. Number of organizations by sectors

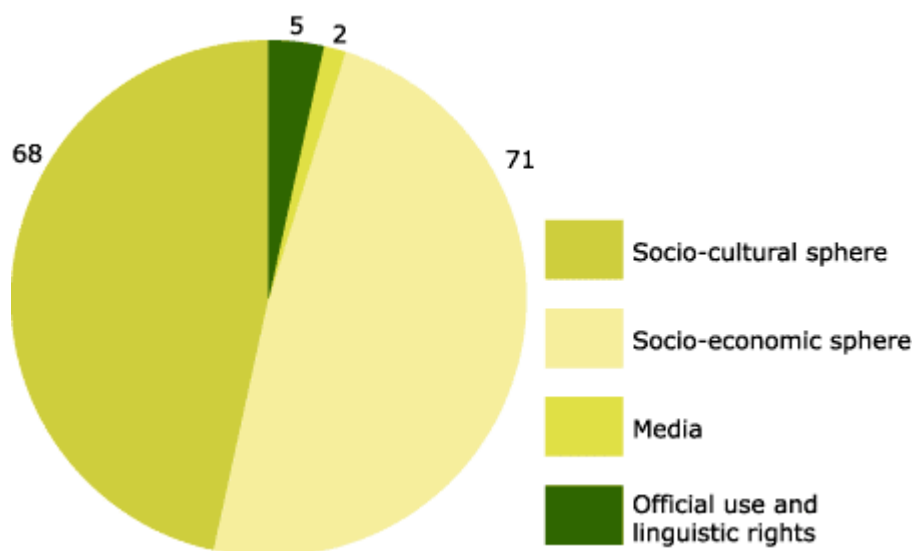
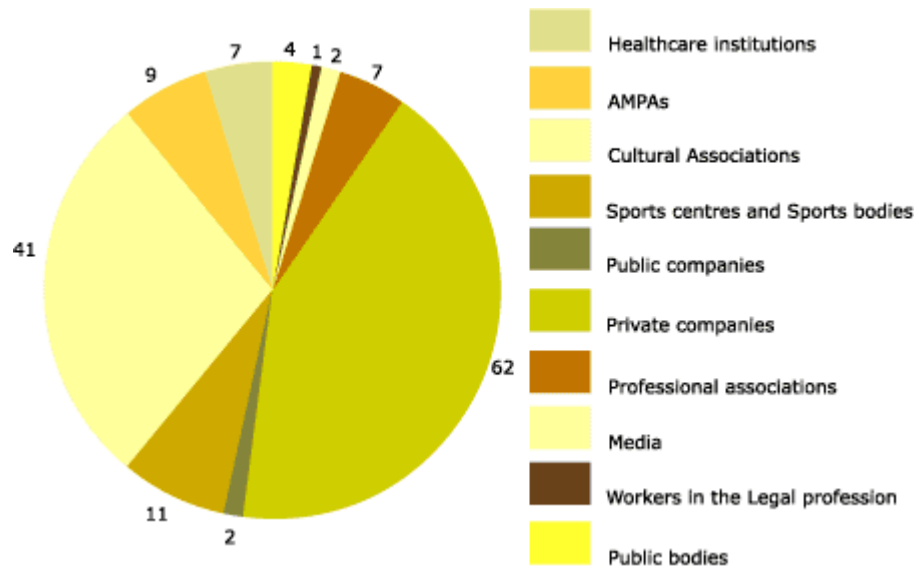


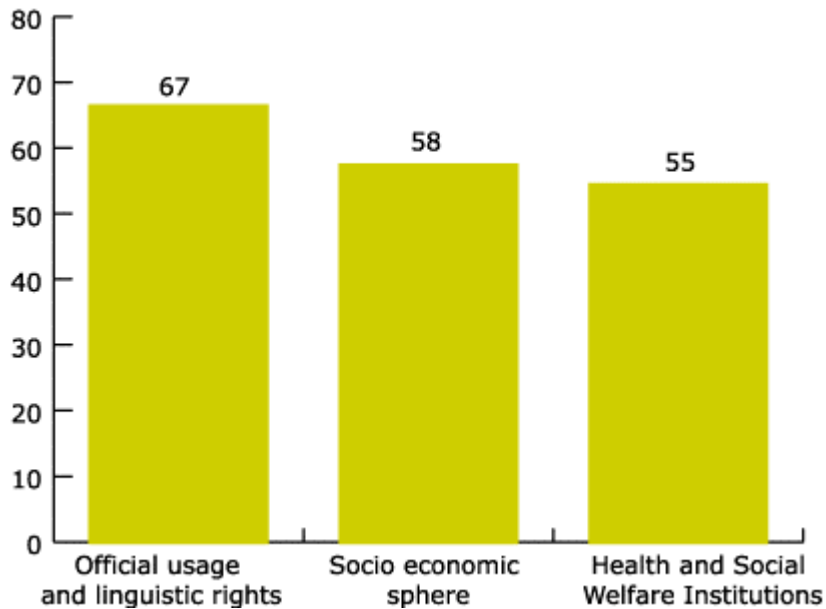
Figure 2. Distribution of organizations by sub sectors



5. Analysis of the first observations by sector

We compiled all of the first observations made over the period of the study. The organisations with which a collaboration agreement had only recently been agreed had only undergone this first observation.

Figure 3. ILN by sector – First observation

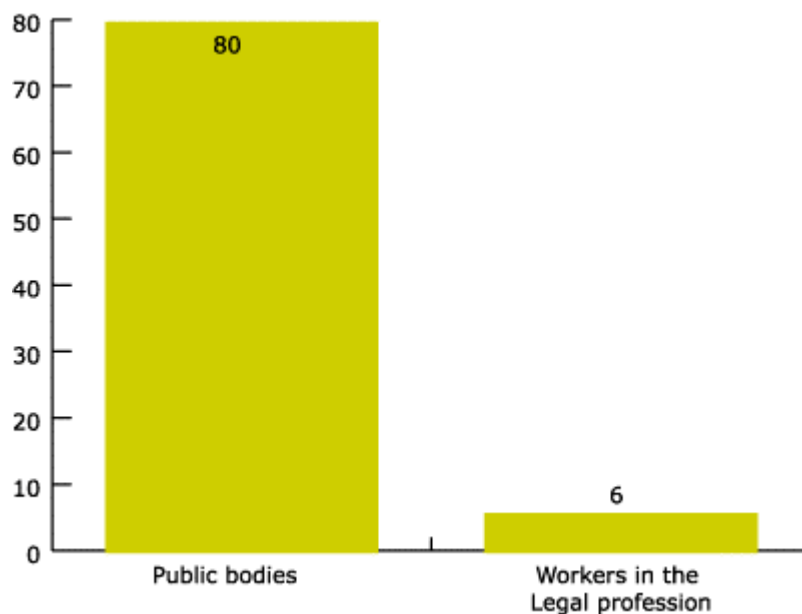


A study of the first observations of those organisations belonging to the three priority sectors gives a global ILN per sector. This index, done before measures designed to increase the knowledge and use of Catalan were implemented, was higher in the sector which included the Administration (the official usage and linguistic rights sector), and did not reach the previously mentioned threshold in the other two sectors. The first comment that could be made is to ask why, in the official usage sector, the initial global ILN does not reach a higher percentage in the use of Catalan considering that the Administration was included here. The fact that the legal sphere (lawyers' offices, legal services etc) was also included in this sector has influenced the outcome, not to mention the fact that there are no agreements to encourage the use of Catalan in those public bodies where normal usage is made of Catalan – other comments that might be made on this issue will have to be the subject of another article.

6. Analysis of the first observations by sub sector

6. 1 Official usage and linguistic rights

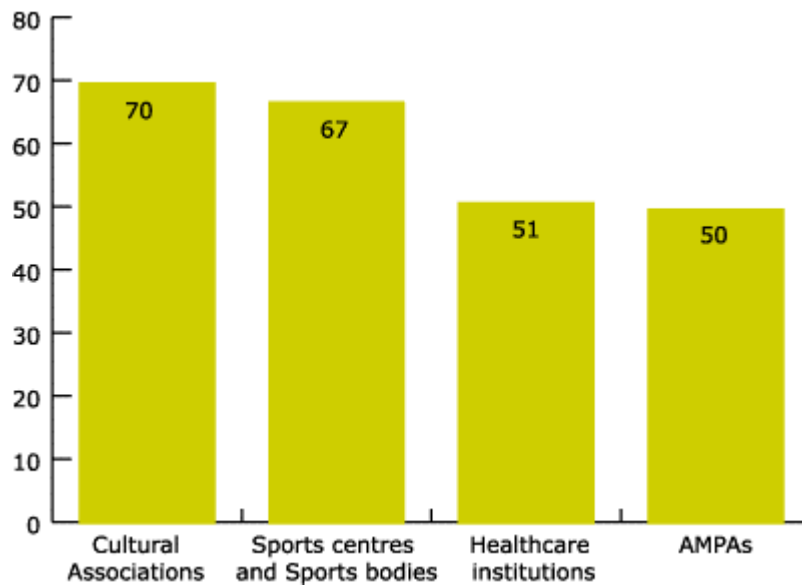
Figure 4. Official usage and linguistic rights



In the Official usage and linguistic rights sector a significant difference was observed between the two sub sectors which make it up. Those organisations linked to the Administration have an average ILN of 81%; on the other hand, a lawyer's office which belongs in this sector, but is, nonetheless, a business, has an ILN of just 6%. Four observations were made of the public bodies, and just one of workers in the legal profession.

6. 2 Health and Social Welfare Institutions

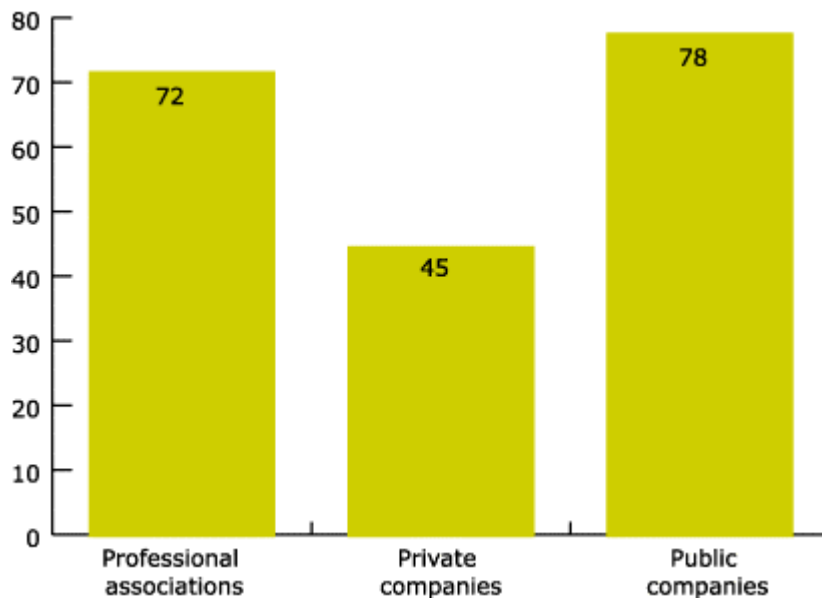
Figure 5. Health and Social Welfare Institutions



The Health and Social Welfare Institutions sector, with an index below the threshold level (55), when analysed by sub sectors, shows a difference of 20 points at either extreme. Those healthcare institutions (hospitals, clinics, friendly associations etc.) where we have worked and continue to work, demonstrate behaviour typical of businesses - very similar to that displayed by the Private Companies sub sector.

6. 3 The Socio-Economic sphere

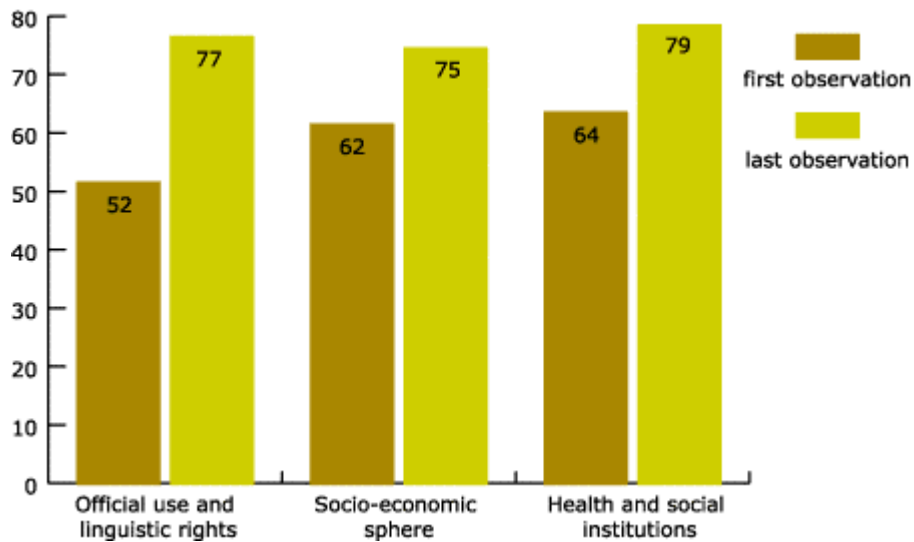
Figure 6. The Socio-Economic sphere



In the Socio-Economic sphere there are two sub sectors that fall within the high ILN block, (they are those that could be easily assimilated into public institutions - the Professional associations and the Public companies). The Private companies, on the other hand, were 27 points below the Professional associations, and 33 points below the Public companies.

7. First and last observations of all sectors

Figure 7. First and last observation by sector

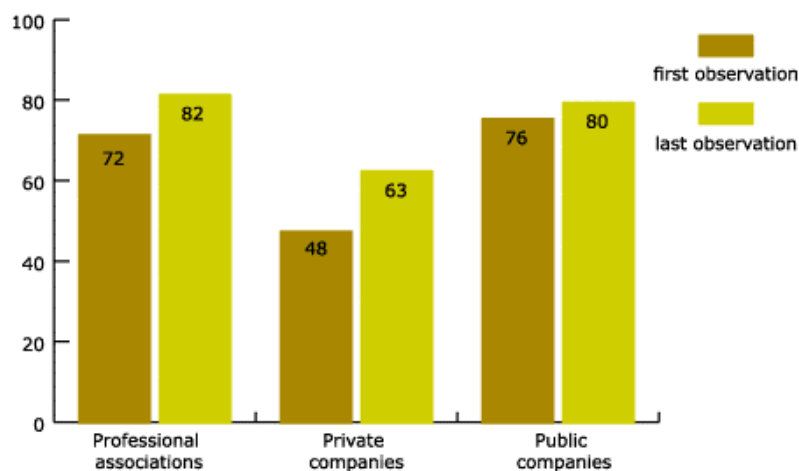


The bodies shown in the graph are the subtotal of organisations where three or more observations have been made, i.e. where they have been working to extend the use and knowledge of Catalan over more than 2 years.

The ILN grew by a similar extent in the 'Socio-economic' and in the 'Health and Social Welfare' sectors (by about 15 points). And the area which showed the largest increase was in organisations within the Official usage sphere. The 'Socio-economic' (and related areas) sector is the one that showed slowest growth in achieving the set objectives.

7. 1 The Socio-economic sphere

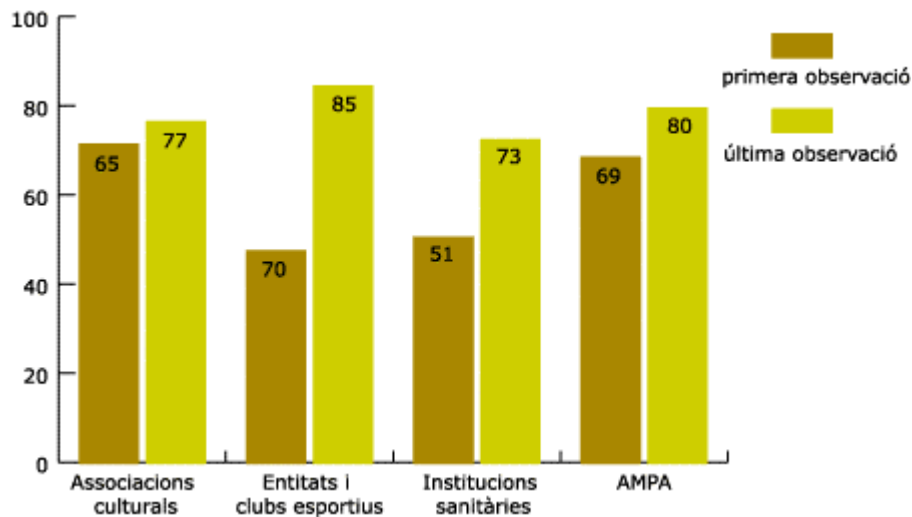
Figure 8. The Socio-economic sphere



If we study the ILN in the sub-sectors of this area, we can see how 'Professional associations' and 'Public companies' have grown by 10 and 14 points respectively, and have achieved a high level in the use of Catalan. On the other hand, 'Private businesses', which began with a very low ILN, has increased by 15 points and is now on the threshold of normalisation. We can see that the higher the ILN to begin with, the lower the relative growth - this behaviour is similar to that shown by the index of knowledge of Catalan which has been observed in censuses and town hall registrations.

7.2. Health and Social institutions

Figure 9. Health and Social institutions



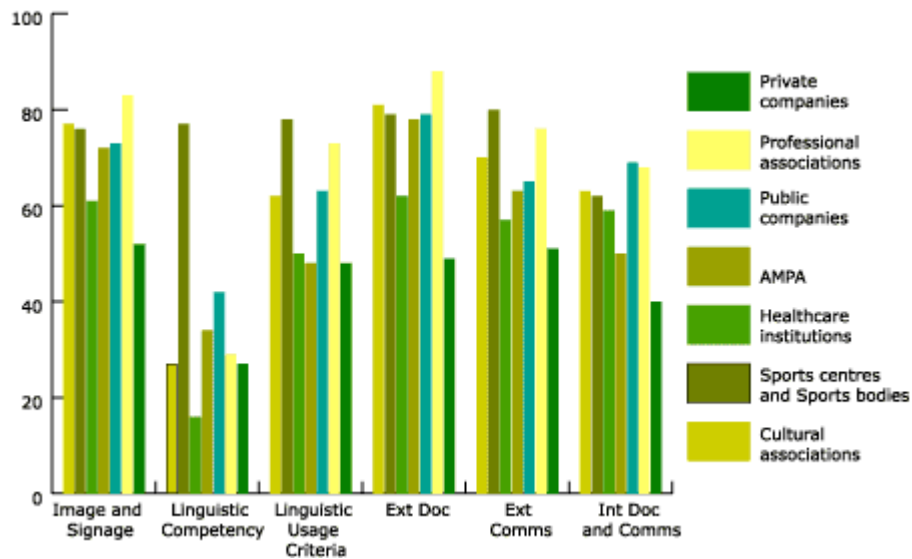
In the sub sectors of the 'Health and social institutions' sector, the biggest differences were found between health institutions and the AMPAs (Parent and Student Associations). The AMPAs and cultural associations showed a similar growth between the first and last observations made, and sports centres grew by 15 points, continuing to appear in the highest band when compared with other sub sectors. The growth of 22 points amongst healthcare organisations is comparable to that shown by private companies, even though, in our opinion, the close contacts maintained by bodies in this sector with public organisations, made the initial ILN higher than that demonstrated by private companies.

8. Analysis by factors

The Indexpla is based on a system of indicators, grouped by factors. Here is a brief description of each factor:

1. Image and Signage: this is the public image of the organisation.
2. Linguistic Competency of the Staff: this is the linguistic competency level of the staff.
3. Linguistic Usage Criteria: this refers to the adoption of linguistic usage criteria.
4. External Documentation: these are printed documents for external use.
5. External Communications: these are written and spoken texts used outside the organisation.
6. Internal Documentation and Communications: these are standard documents, and written and spoken communications used internally.

Figure 10. Results by factors of all sub sectors

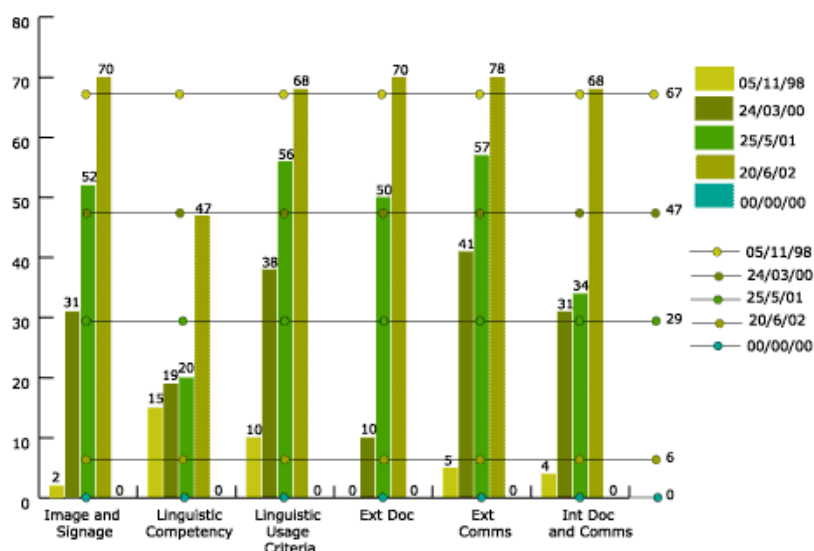


The results of the Index shown by factor, based on all of the organisations of each sub sector, demonstrate that those factors which imply relatively simple changes, (for example image, or external documentation and communications) and which depend directly on a decision taken by the management of an organisation, are easier to assume than those changes which affect the staff, such as linguistic competency. This factor is the one which shows the lowest index in all of the sectors we observed. It is also the index which is most difficult to raise, both because of the financial investment and the time on training that an organisation would need to spend, as well as because of the fact that changes in this area are observed only over the medium to long term, and not in the short term.

Below is a comparison of the objectives and the actions planned in two organisations whose initial ILNs were very different:

a) Analysis of an organisation with a low ILN

Figure 11. Lacoma, Santolaya, Malet y Cornet, lawyers and economists



This is a suite of lawyers with a workforce of eight. It is a small company, as regards staff numbers. Economic and production factors are not relevant when measuring the Index of Linguistic Normalisation (ILN) of an organisation.

The first Indexpla observation made, gave an ILN of 6%. Therefore, according to the index, this organisation is not able to attend to the public in Catalan. And any intervention should be focussed on achieving a substantial increase in the use of Catalan in all areas, from the identifying image of the company, to the linguistic competency of the staff, and also on establishing some linguistic criteria for both attending to the public and for written communications.

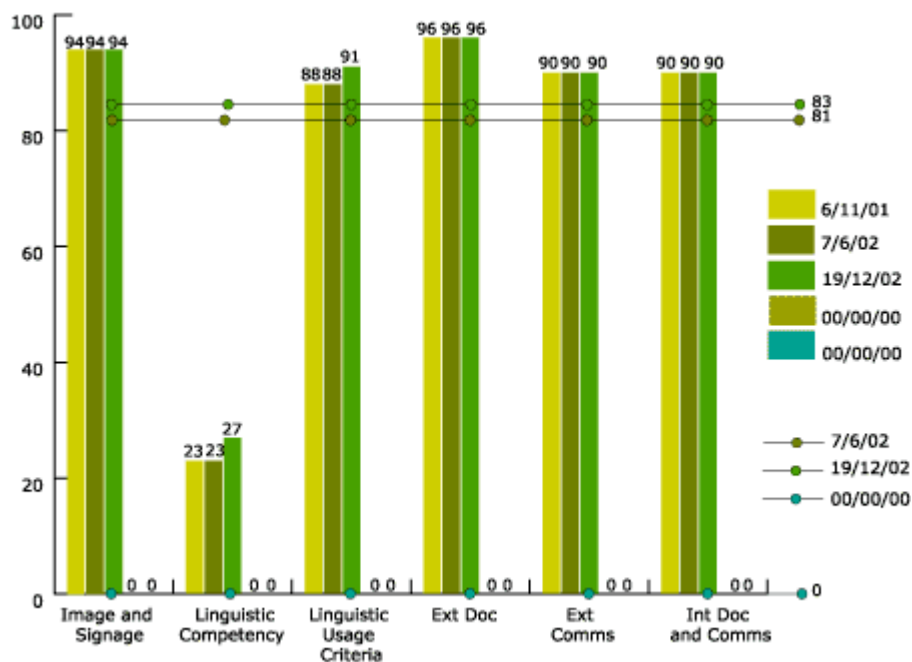
The second time it was measured, the ILN had moved up here by 24 points. Those actions which give immediate results, such as those affecting the image factor and the translation and correction of documentation, were the factors which showed most growth. More time is needed to reflect on the progress of other factors such as linguistic competency and the application of linguistic usage criteria.

By the third and fourth time the organisation was observed, we can see how those factors which needed more time to achieve the proposed objectives are reflected.

To conclude, the increase of the ILN, from 6 points to 67 points by the fourth observation, was positively viewed, and a final observation was proposed at the end of the training process. We should like to stress that the staff training process is the action that requires most time to give satisfactory results, and is the one where most obstacles to linguistic change are often found.

b) Analysis of an organisation with a very high ILN

Figure 12. Indexpla '98



9. Indexpla Eix de Serveis

This is a service company that provides services for schools and leisure activities. It has a workforce of 22 workers.

The first observation made for the linguistic plan gave an ILN of 81%. This shows that the level of Catalan achieved in the company is very high. In this example a linguistic autonomy protocol was devised.

If we look at the six factors we can see that the company's image, documentation and communications gave an ILN of approximately 90% at the initial observation. Linguistic competency however, showed the lowest index with just 23%.

Obviously, with respect to the linguistic needs of the company, it only needed to undergo staff training. The other factors hardly needed any intervention at all, and the growth of linguistic competency alone nudged the overall ILN level up when considered and interrelated with the other factors.

Only two further observations were made here, and despite the fact that the documentation revisions and other specific elements of the assessment were deemed concluded, there was very little variance demonstrated by the factors during these observations. If the competency level of the staff is to reach a stage where they can be considered linguistically autonomous, a longer training process is necessary and the company must encourage its staff to undergo further training.

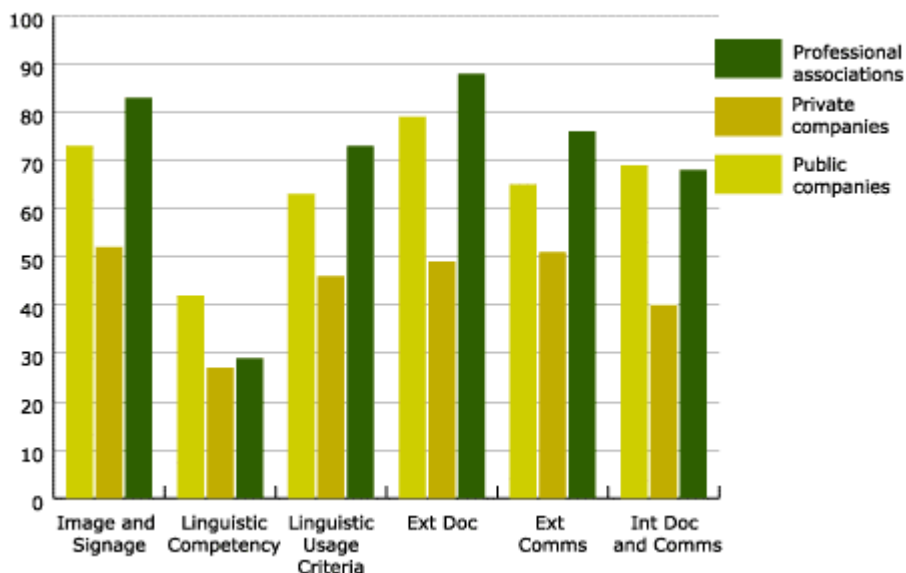
9.1. Fundamental Change in the structure of normalisation plans

With the application of the Indexpla, linguistic normalisation plans were designed based on the diagnosis of the factors described here in, and an organisation's objectives to increase the use of Catalan could be defined in a much more structured and specific fashion.

10. Analysis of the first observations of the factors

10.1. Socio-economic sphere

Figure 13. Factors in the Socio-economic sphere



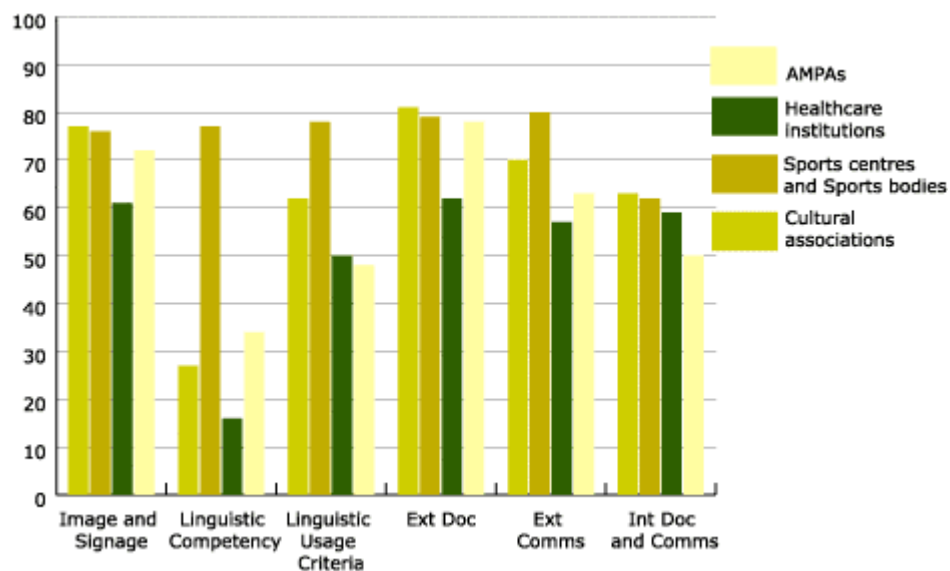
This graph depicts the differences, by sub sector, of all the factors in the first Indexpla observations made of the Socio-economic sphere. It is obvious that most intervention is needed in staff language training, and this is where businesses must concentrate most effort. In the Public companies sub sector however, no factor, apart from the linguistic competency of the staff, gains more than 80% of the ILN. What is considered to be the threshold of normalisation has been reached in all areas. But, it must be born in mind that only two entities were observed, and this could have distorted the overall results.

The Professional associations behave similarly to Public companies, however the differences observed between the level of linguistic competency of the staff and most of the other factors is much more marked.

Within the Private companies grouping, no factor goes beyond the threshold level of linguistic normalisation, all fall below the 60% mark. And linguistic competency is the factor showing the lowest ILN, as in all of the other sub sectors.

10.2. Health and Social Welfare Institutions

Figure 14. Factors in Health and Social Welfare Institutions



This graph depicts the differences in the first observations made of all of the factors in the sub sectors of the Health and Social Welfare Institutions area.

In the Cultural Associations sub sector one can see how all factors, except that of linguistic competency, fall inside the threshold level of normalisation.

In the Sports centres and Sports bodies sub sector, all factors are inside the threshold level of normalisation, even the linguistic competency of the staff. This is the only group where this factor is at the same level as the other factors.

Similar vales were observed at the Healthcare institutions and the AMPAs.

11. Conclusions

Having analysed the results of the study of the 300 Indexpla observations in the city, we can conclude that it is not just a useful tool – it is an essential one if we are to be able to measure the advances in, or the stagnation of, the uses of the Catalan language amongst all of the organisations in the city with which an agreement has been signed, and which therefore have demonstrated their awareness and interest in incorporating or improving Catalan within their organisation.

Conclusions by sectors and factors have been noted after each graph – once again it must be noted that the Linguistic Competency factor is the one that presented the lowest levels, and we know also, that this is the factor where most time is required to push the level upwards because the process for achieving linguistic competency takes longer than any of the other factors.

The private companies sub sector study was a global one and did not take account of the type of activity the companies were involved in. We should look at the distribution of these companies by activity, as it is possible that the conclusions reached in such an analysis may give a new focus to the services provided to them.

It is obvious that the entities that we have studied are not a representative sample of the range of organisations of the city, as we stated above: It would be very interesting to undertake the Ofercat observation in order to have a complete diagnosis of the uses of Catalan in the city.

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