

Informationalism, globalisation and trilingualism. An analysis of the statistics of Linguistic Practices in Small and Medium Companies in Catalonia

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Summary

Based on the data from two surveys conducted by the Secretariat of Linguistic Policy of the Department of the Presidency of the Generalitat of Catalonia,¹ this article makes an analysis of the effects of globalisation and informationalism on the linguistic behaviour of small and medium service companies in Catalonia. It concludes with the ambivalent effects of the growing importance of English over the use of Spanish and Catalan in these companies.

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1. Introduction

This article analyses the linguistic behaviour of the small and medium service companies in Catalonia.² This behaviour is explained on the basis of the processes of globalisation and informationalisation of the economy. For this reason we have chosen three main independent variables: a) the degree of linguistic intensity in job performance, as an indicator of the degree of importance of information management and knowledge production in the productive activity; b) the national origin of the capital and c) the degree of internationalisation of customers, as indicators of the internationalisation of the economic activity.

In regard to linguistic behaviour, we concentrate on the differentiated use of Catalan, Spanish and English in the different communicative functions of companies. Catalan and English represent better than any other language in Catalonia the new dialogue relationship between what is local and what is global in detriment of the traditional centre-periphery relationship and which is articulated around the Spanish and Catalan languages. In the context of globalisation each language has a differentiated use in each activity, time and place (Coulmas, 2005). According to the data available, we defend that in the social and economic environment of Catalonia, Catalan and English are gaining in use and functions in detriment of Spanish. In fact, this affirmation adapts to the so-called *the language crisis of modernity* (Graddol, 2004), where monolingualism and the language of nation states have more and more difficulty in satisfying the communicative needs of citizens.

2. Informationalism and linguistic intensity

Industrial companies are taking a new step towards a new post-industrial order based on global, flexible, customer-adapted production and distribution. The central elements of competitiveness are to be found in the application of science, technology and knowledge management. Industrial activities lose importance in the face of activities that produce services, often in the form of information. In this context there is an increasing need to produce and manage symbols.

1 This article has been possible thanks to the cession by the Secretariat of Linguistic Policy of the Generalitat of Catalonia of the individual results of two surveys conducted between 2005 and 2006 on the linguistic practices of small and medium service companies.

2 For a review of the latest research on linguistic behaviour in the business environment of Catalonia see Romani (2005), Solé, Castaño i Díaz (2005) and Riera (2005).

Information and knowledge are linguistically coded, and so there is an increase of the linguistic component required for production. A growing number of workers are dedicated to the manipulation of symbols to ensure better services, maintain the rhythm of innovation, and resolve complex new problems (Reich, 1993).

This orientation produces new social divisions linked to the intensity of knowledge. More specifically, a growing inequality is being produced between those that possess technological control and mass media resources and those that do not (Carnoy, Castells, Cohen, & Cardoso, 1993). According to Reich (1991), the growing importance of knowledge and in particular the manipulation of symbols in economic activity has influenced the unsuitability of the traditional classification of white-collar workers (office workers) and blue-collar workers (factory labourers).

Reich (1991) goes on to say that nowadays there are three groups of workers: 1) routine-production service workers, a category that includes industrial labourers, as well as workers of the information sector with very routine, repetitive and processing functions such as data processors; 2) in-person service workers, referring to workers who, even though their tasks may be routine and repetitive, are in direct contact with the final customer. This group includes jobs such as doormen, hospital orderlies, drivers, and 3) symbolic analysts, workers who dedicate much of their time to analysing the information contained in numeric and textual symbols; this group includes engineers, consultants, planners, lawyers, scientists. The required or crucial qualifications for a group of workers include analysis, evaluation, experimentation, collaboration, abstraction, systematic thinking and communication. The admission, status and opportunities for symbolic analysts are growing whereas the admittance, status and professional opportunities of the other two categories are waning.

The number of workers affected by linguistic diversity in the performance of their jobs has increased significantly during the second quarter of the 20th century. The evolution of working methods and of the nature of the goods produced, computerisation and the importance of services in the economy have transformed the nature of employment and made language a working instrument at all company levels. Heller (2005) indicates that what is new in the new globalised economy from a sociolinguistic point of view is not so much the globalisation but the economic conditions of the new economy, where if before we saw our physical work, we now see our intellectual and communicative work, both as a skill and a cultural artefact. This process means a mercantilisation of language and the growing development of the role of the linguistic worker in different business areas.

The effect of internationalisation of the markets and of the origin of capital are other key aspects that influence linguistic diversity. As companies develop operations in multiple foreign locations, their work force becomes more linguistically diversified. Companies have to manage vertical internal communication (between parent and subsidiary companies) and horizontally (between working groups of different subsidiaries), as well as external communication. Obviously, the new forms of organisation, more plain, with new hierarchical structures, imply greater communication between all members of the organisations. New practices and forms of organisation such as networked structures have extended linguistic needs to different levels of the hierarchical structure. Not only do executive directors often communicate in multiple languages, but so also do personnel at different levels of the organisation, such as secretaries or technicians (Charles i Marschan-Piekkari, 2002).

More decentralised and more independent organisational structures are more intensive from the linguistic point of view as they imply more volume and complexity of linguistic exchanges which, furthermore, involve a higher percentage of workers at different hierarchical levels. Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert (2004) pointed out that international communication is no longer the exclusive heritage of a group of executives expatriated from the parent company towards subsidiary companies. Supported by new technologies and increased mobility, a larger number of people on the staff regularly interact with colleagues and customers that speak languages other than their own (O'Hara-Devereaux i Johansen, 1994; Harris, 1998).

The growing need for communication and manipulation of symbols leads us to define the concept of linguistic intensity³ of the workplace. This is the component of communication required for the production and commercialisation of products that determines the linguistic costs of internal (in the management of production) and external transactions (in relation to suppliers and markets). Linguistic intensity in the context of economic activity can be defined through three elements: 1) the number of languages required for job performance (intensity by diversity), 2) the need of language or languages as an instrument for working in the business activity (intensity by extension) and 3) excellence in use understood as the evolution of requirements regarding knowledge of the language (intensity by quality).

3. Method and analysis groups

The empirical basis of our analysis and conclusions is comprised of the survey on linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia (2003), made available for statistical analysis by the Secretariat of Linguistic Policy of the Generalitat of Catalonia. The questionnaire is a multilingual adaptation for companies of the Indexplà indicators.⁴ Our analysis, even though the data provided by the survey covers far more, is limited, as explained in the introduction, to only three languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. On the other hand, the exceptionally low use of other languages in the companies analysed means that the data relative to these languages has little statistical significance.

The empirical analysis is an original treatment based on the secondary sources elaborated by the Secretariat of Linguistic Policy (Generalitat of Catalonia). It is a survey of linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia (10 to 99 employees), conducted in 2003 among service companies located in Catalonia. The survey was carried out in two phases. The first addressed to companies providing "services to other companies" (363). The second addressed to companies providing "other services" (391 companies). The total sample is of 754 companies.

Sector	Population	Sample	Error (%) n.c=95.5% p=q=0.5%	Period of the survey
Business and financial services	3.762	363	4,98	October 2005 to February 2006
Other services	5.221	391	4,86	February to June 2005
Total	8.983	754	3,48	

Source: adapted from the information provided by the Secretariat of Linguistic Policy of the Generalitat of Catalonia.

³ See Harris (1998)

⁴ See, in reference to Indexplà, Castells (2003).

The examination of the effect of linguistic intensity of the workplace on the linguistic behaviour of companies is based on the classification shown in the table below.

Table 2. Company details			
Profile	Label	Description	Examples: Professional categories
Profile 1.	Routine-production service workers	- Employees who have no contact with the outside whether oral or written. - They understand very basic communications of the organisation or from the outside related to their specific job.	Labourers; production workers; workshop staff; Warehouse employees; Maintenance staff.
Profile 2. A	(low) in-person service workers	- Staff who have contact with the public for information of first attention - They produce simple, brief oral messages - They do not produce written texts.	Reception staff; butlers; caretakers, receptionists; bank tellers.
Profile 2. B	(high) in-person service workers	- Staff that must provide oral information of basic attention in a workplace considered important for the image of the organisation - They produce fluent oral messages	Staff attending to the public; switchboard operators; salespersons; sales representatives; outside salespersons.
Profile 3.A	(low) symbolic analysts	- Staff who produce short or defined written texts They produce oral messages of little complexity They may have oral contact with the public	Secretaries; Administrative staff; clerks; Technical staff who write forms and defined texts.
Profile 3.B	(high) symbolic analysts	- Staff who produce written texts of different complexity - Correct and fluent oral expression, with a certain degree of improvisation - May have formal contact with the outside	Managerial staff; executives; staff who write complex reports; qualified technical staff; management staff; executive secretaries.

Source: adapted from the multilingual questionnaire for small and medium companies in Catalonia. Adaptation of the questionnaire used in Statistics on linguistic practices in public institutions, 2003 EULIP-2003 and Reich (1991).

We grouped the companies in the sample according to their similarity to each of the profiles. The questionnaire asked managers about the proportion of workers in each profile. Sufficient data is available on 718 of the 754 companies to assign a main profile to each company, even though they had lower percentages of workers. The idea was to obtain a classification of companies that reflected the majority worker profile in each one. The result is five company profiles, each with a majority linguistic profile. In each company profile consideration should be given that between 20 and 35% of the staff have a linguistic profile different from the majority. The company profiles reflect the specialisation in the production of knowledge of each group of companies.

4. Results

4.1. Linguistic intensity of the study and linguistic practices

The following comparison of averages shows how the more linguistic intensity of the content of the job, the greater the use of English and Catalan and the lesser use of Spanish. If we consider the first row, the synthesis of the 29 main indicators, the use of Catalan increases from 51.4% (profile 1) to 55.2% (Profile 3.B). The reduction of Spanish is notable, from 42.6% to 36.9%. On the other hand, the presence of English almost doubles between the less intensive and most intensive profile, from 2.2 to 4.1%, although it remains at very low levels. These tendencies are especially evident in reference to training and job performance, mainly, working documents and meetings.

Table 3. Distribution of the linguistic behaviour according to linguistic intensity (*)

		<i>Profile 1</i>	<i>Profile 2.A</i>	<i>Profile 2.B</i>	<i>Profile 3.A</i>	<i>Profile 3.B</i>	Total
		Routine-production service workers	Low in-person service workers	High in-person service workers	Low symbolic analysts	High symbolic analysts	
Total: 29 indicators ⁵	Catalan	51.4	33.4	52.0	54.2	55.2	52.8
	Spanish	42.7	60.2	41.6	39.5	36.9	40.5
	English	2.2	2.5	2.5	3.2	4.1	3.1
Name of the company (v11)	Catalan	44.3	23.0	40.9	45.4	41.1	42.3
	Spanish	33.0	51.1	25.5	33.2	28.7	31.4
	English	2.8	11.1	8.7	6.5	11.4	7.7
Signs ⁶ (v12, v13, v14)	Catalan	51.5	27.2	61.0	59.9	64.2	58.3
	Spanish	35.2	59.9	25.0	29.5	21.2	28.8
	English	3.5	2.6	3.1	2.6	5.1	3.6
Advertising (v15, v16)	Catalan	53.5	31.0	48.7	51.9	51.0	50.6
	Spanish	38.7	57.7	43.8	38.2	41.6	41.0
	English	2.0	3.7	2.0	3.9	3.2	3.0
Training (v33a, v33b)	Catalan	52.2	36.8	45.7	52.2	51.9	50.4
	Spanish	45.4	63.3	51.0	42.7	42.8	45.5
	English	1.9	0.0	2.9	4.9	5.1	3.9
Communications with customers and suppliers (v53a, v55a, v55b, v56)	Catalan	59.8	39.1	61.6	61.4	67.1	61.8
	Spanish	37.8	57.3	37.4	37.0	31.1	36.3
	English	1.3	2.7	0.7	1.3	1.2	1.2
Stationery, stamps and invoices (v41, v42, v44).	Catalan	47.3	23.6	48.1	47.7	47.6	46.7
	Spanish	42.3	61.0	42.4	41.0	40.0	42.0
	English	2.4	2.4	2.1	3.0	3.4	2.8
Working documents (v61, v62, v63)	Catalan	46.6	40.2	53.7	54.5	58.1	53.3
	Spanish	53.1	59.8	45.4	44.5	39.8	45.5
	English	0.3	0.0	0.6	1.0	1.8	1.0
Working meetings (v64_1, v64_2)	Catalan	55.5	50.9	67.9	71.0	73.4	67.2
	Spanish	43.4	49.1	30.2	26.3	23.9	30.6
	English	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.1	1.3	0.8
Publications: (v57, v65)	Catalan	53.8	58.3	42.9	51.4	48.2	48.5
	Spanish	44.5	70.8	53.2	44.8	48.4	48.2
	English	0.9	0.0	2.6	3.4	3.4	2.8
Total (n)		153	28	111	214	212	718

Source: developed from the data of the survey on linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia. (*)Each data item corresponds to the mean percentage use of a language among a profile of companies according to its linguistic intensity. The participants were asked to make sure that the sum of the different languages for a function or indicator was 100%. The sum of Catalan+Spanish+English is not 100% in the table as they could indicate other languages. There was also the possibility that the indicator observed did not have linguistic significance.

In reference to profile 1, where we find workforces comprised of routine-production service workers, note the lesser presence of English in all profiles and one of the highest rates for the use of Spanish. The percentage of working documents in Spanish (53.1%) and working meetings employment (43.4%) are significantly higher. English is not present in almost any working document or meeting (0.2% and 0.3%).

The tendencies to increasing use of Catalan and English are practically lineal from profile 1 to Profile 3.B. with the exception of profile 2.A. There are few companies in this profile (28) in comparison with the other profiles, and the cases may not be very representative. If we consider

⁵ Apart from the indicators shown in the table, the synthesis of indicators also includes: communications with public institutions (v54); automatic answering machine (v52a) and new communication environments: word processing software (v66); web home page (v18); electronic forms (v46); boilerplate e-mail texts (v45); new communication environments (messenger, chat, e-mail...) (v53_b).

⁶ The composition of the additional indicators is: signs: main sign (v12), interior signs (v13) and opening hours (v14); advertising: advertising (v15) and merchandising (v16); training: training material (v33a) and vehicular training language (v33b); Communications with customers and suppliers: oral communication with customers (v53a); with other companies in Catalonia (v55a); customers or users in Catalonia (v55b); suppliers in Catalonia (v56); stationery, stamps and invoices: stationery (v41); in-house or standard stamps (v42); invoices, receipts or tickets (v44); working documents: circulars, directives (v61); agenda of the day (v62); forms and internal printed matter (v63); work meetings: last two internal meetings (v64_1;v64_2); publications: regular publications (v57); annual report (v65).

the survey data in detail and the characteristics of the work performed in these companies we find a high number of Hotels (8), Cleaning services (2) as well as communications services (2) located in Barcelona and which provide coverage to large companies that operate throughout Spain. The outstanding trait in these companies is the low use of Catalan and a below average use of English. It must be considered that the managers in sectors such as hostelry and, even in communication services such as *call centres* or private postal services, who have a very measured contact with customers, could have classified their workers under this profile. In fact these sectors are frequently considered from the sociology of employment as sectors where recruitment of the Catalan population is difficult and, especially over the last few years, inclined to contract the immigrant population mainly that from Latin America.

In profile 2.B, even though it is a group of companies that by definition have a high level of contact with the public (staff attending to the public, switchboard operators, salespersons, sales representatives, outside sales), the rates of use Catalan are only slightly above those of profile 1. Only in meetings (67.9%) and working documentation (59.8%) do we find a use of Catalan notably above that of previous profiles. Obviously, the use of Catalan in communication with the environment (61.6%) shows no significant difference between the profiles. The use of English is very modest (2.5% on an aggregate level) and this language is never used in working meetings. Profiles 1 and 2.B, therefore, show very similar linguistic behaviour. The most significant is the progressive transfer of workers from production service towards in-person service and in the context of the tertiarisation of the economic activity, but, as we can see, without this significantly affecting the linguistic behaviour.

The most notable changes occur when comparing profiles 3.A and 3.B. with the previous ones. These profiles, relative to symbolic analysts or companies more intensive in human capital, are the ones which, according to the theoretic framework, are increasing most in the context of informationalism. Note that in these profiles English is significantly introduced as the training language (4.9% and 5.1%, respectively) and for signs (2.6% and 5.1%). Especially outstanding is the section of new communicative environments where the use of English by these two profiles is 6.1% and 8.3%. On the other hand, this increase in the use of English is not in detriment to the use of Catalan. In these two profiles the use of Catalan is especially high in job performance, both in working documents (54.5% and 58.1%), and working meetings (71% and 73.4%). Spanish reaches the lowest rates in these two indicators and is used in about 25% of working meetings.

When we consider new information and communication technologies and place them relation with the linguistic intensity of the workplace, we see a relationship that is unfavourable to Catalan, neutral for Spanish and very positive for English. The use of English advances from 4.5% (profile 1) to 8.3% (Profile 3.B) in the new communicative environments brought about by new technologies. The more qualified the work to be done the more difficult it is to perform it normally in Catalan. This general tendency becomes especially visible in computer software, an area where the use of Catalan wanes noticeably in favour of Spanish and English.

Table 4. Distribution of the linguistic behaviour according to linguistic intensity. New communicative environments

		<i>Profile 1</i>	<i>Profile 2.A</i>	<i>Profile 2.B</i>	<i>Profile 3.A</i>	Profile 3.B	Total
		Routine- production service workers	Low profile in-person service workers	High profile in-person service workers	(low) symbolic analysts	High profile symbolic analysts	
Aggregate new commu- nicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Catalan	42.5	22.8	37.9	41.6	38.9	39.8
	Spanish	50.4	69.8	54.5	50.8	49.2	51.3
	English	4.5	5.6	5.1	6.1	8.3	6.3
Word processing software (v66)	Catalan	30.1	10.6	25.9	29.7	24.2	26.8
	Spanish	66.4	89.4	69.4	66.3	70.2	68.8
	English	2.9	0.0	4.8	4.0	5.6	4.2
Web home page (v18)	Catalan	40.9	22.2	26.8	37.0	36.7	35.6
	Spanish	50.9	68.1	59.9	56.7	48.5	53.7
	English	5.5	9.7	6.2	4.9	9.2	6.8

Electronic forms (v46)	Catalan	40.5	12.8	33.7	36.3	30.7	34.1
	Spanish	53.0	76.1	57.6	52.3	55.1	54.7
	English	5.9	11.1	7.6	8.6	10.8	8.8
Boilerplate e-mail texts (v45)	Catalan	47.8	27.3	49.1	49.3	46.5	47.5
	Spanish	40.5	59.1	44.4	39.3	34.7	39.5
	English	4.7	4.5	4.9	8.6	11.4	8.0
New communication environments (messenger, chat, e-mail...) (v53_b)	Catalan	53.4	41.1	54.2	55.6	56.5	54.9
	Spanish	41.4	56.1	41.3	39.6	37.4	39.9
	English	3.7	2.9	2.2	4.2	4.3	3.8
Total (n)		153	28	111	214	212	718

Source: Developed from the data of the survey on linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia.

Finally, in this section it is important to note that companies of profile 3 (both A and B) are those that find more advantages and inconveniences in the use of Catalan, a fact that is no impediment for Catalan to be the most used language. The centrality of the language for these companies means that the use of different languages has a more reasoned component in function of competitive variables and not a simple unthinking adaptation to the environment.

Table 5. Do you think that the use of Catalan in your organisation had advantages/ inconveniences?

	Catalan has advantages				Total	Catalan has inconveniences				Total
	Yes	No	Don't know	No answer		Yes	No	Don't know	No answer	
Profile 1	13.7%	83.7%	2.6%		100.0% (153)	39.9%	54.9%	4.6%	0.7%	100.0% (153)
Profile 2. A	14.3%	82.1%	3.6%		100.0% (28)	32.1%	53.6%	14.3%	-	100.0% (28)
Profile 2. B	19.8%	79.3%		0.9%	100.0% (111)	54.1%	43.2%	2.7%	-	100.0% (111)
Profile 3.A	19.2%	79.0%	0.9%	0.9%	100.0% (214)	48.1%	46.3%	4.7%	0.9%	100.0% (214)
Profile 3.B	20.8%	77.8%	0.5%	0.9%	100.0% (212)	49.1%	46.7%	3.8%	0.5%	100.0% (212)
Total	18.4%	79.8%	1.1%	0.7%	100.0% (718)	46.9%	48.1%	4.5%	0.6%	100.0% (718)

Source: Developed from the data of the survey on linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia.

4.2. Origen of the capital

The table below shows that the highest use of Catalan takes place in companies whose proprietors are Catalans (57.7%). In this case Spanish (36.8%) has a relatively low use, and the use of English (2%) is also very low. Even in new communicative environments, the use of English does not exceed 4%. The fact that the capital of the company is mainly from the rest of Spain produces a notable increase in the use of Spanish, in detriment, mainly, of Catalan. In this category the use of the Spanish drops to 40.1%. The increase of Spanish is notable: from 36.8% to 53%. The variation in English is of little significance, with an increase of 1.3%.

When we move more to the right of the table we see that internationalisation of the capital has a moderate effect on Spanish, which reaches 57.3% of the linguistic behaviour, even though it continues increasing compared to previous type, that is, companies with Spanish capital. The most evident effects of the internationalisation of capital are related to the significant reduction of Catalan (26.3%) and the high increase of English (to 11.1%). In these companies, then, the data indicate that the aggregate use of Catalan only doubles the use of English.

This type of companies with international capital are where the concept of trilingualism best describes the linguistic practices. English in companies with foreign capital is especially present for more symbolic reasons, such as the name of the company or the signs. But on highly instrumental environments such as training (18.1%), publications (14.1%) or the work environment based on

new information and communication technologies (19.9%), they show a noticeable reduction of Catalan in favour of English. In this latter indicator, English is above Catalan (14%).

Table 6 . Distribution of the behaviour linguistic according to origin of the capital		Main origin of the capital in Catalonia	Main origin of the capital in Spain	Main origin of the principal of the capital from the rest of the world	Total
Total:	Catalan	57.7	40.1	26.3	54.0
29 indicators (*)	Spanish	36.8	53.0	57.3	39.8
	English	2.0	3.3	11.1	2.7
	Name of the company (v11)	Catalan	47.5	37.1	9.9
Signs: (v12, v13, v14)	Spanish	29.5	38.8	40.0	31.1
	English	5.9	5.6	22.6	6.9
	Advertising (v15, v16)	Catalan	62.8	47.8	31.0
Training (v33a, v33b)	Spanish	26.5	35.2	39.8	28.1
	English	2.4	4.1	17.5	3.4
	Communications with customers and suppliers (v53a, v55a, v55b, v56)	Catalan	56.9	35.8	17.7
stationery, stamps and invoices: (v41, v42, v44).	Spanish	35.2	55.6	67.9	39.3
	English	2.5	4.2	6.1	2.9
	Working documents. (v61, v62, v63)	Catalan	56.6	42.5	27.2
Working meetings (v64_1;v64_2)	Spanish	40.6	54.9	53.6	42.9
	English	2.5	2.6	18.1	3.6
	Publications: (v57, v65)	Catalan	65.6	50.6	42.1
New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Spanish	32.9	47.9	52.5	35.4
	English	0.9	1.3	4.4	1.1
	Total	51.0	34.7	14.8	47.3
Working meetings (v64_1;v64_2)	Spanish	38.7	54.8	64.8	41.7
	English	2.0	3.4	8.7	2.6
	Publications: (v57, v65)	Catalan	58.4	37.2	26.8
New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Spanish	41.2	61.4	66.8	45.0
	English	0.3	1.5	6.1	0.8
	Publications: (v57, v65)	Catalan	71.0	50.7	48.0
New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Spanish	27.4	48.5	45.5	30.6
	English	0.2	0.8	2.1	0.4
	Publications: (v57, v65)	Catalan	55.5	29.9	10.0
New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Spanish	43.0	66.9	76.3	47.7
	English	1.0	2.7	11.5	1.8
	New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Catalan	45.5	26.5	14.0
New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Spanish	47.7	63.8	63.3	50.7
	English	4.0	7.0	19.9	5.3
	Total	546	62	36	644

Source: developed from the data of the survey on linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia

4.3. International distribution of customers

There are practically no linguistic differences between companies who only have customers in Catalonia and companies with customers in Catalonia and the rest of Spain. Nevertheless, if we concentrate on the different grouping of indicators, there are significant differences in the working language. In companies with their market throughout Spain, when we refer to the working language for meetings or for relationships with customers and suppliers, there is a high perception of the use of Catalan, even above those companies who only have customers in Catalonia.

The most significant differences regarding linguistic practices are observed in the different ways of internationalisation of companies located in Catalonia. The companies where a greater aggregate use of Catalan is observed are those who only have customers in Catalonia and in the rest of the world (without customers in the rest of Spain). In these companies the use of Catalan reaches 76.4% to only 18.9% of Spanish.

In those companies, associated with de-localised services for large international companies, which indicate not having customers in Catalonia, the use of Catalan (19.6%) is below that of English (21.6%). This is an interesting case since the perspective of the international organisation of the job which takes advantage of new technologies and the relatively low cost of staff in Catalonia to offer knowledge intensive services to production centres in other countries (Solé et al., 2005)

With abovementioned exception, the use of Catalan is not prejudiced by the internationalisation of the markets of the companies' customers and, on the other hand, the use of Spanish is reduced when the companies have customers in the rest of the world.

Table 7. Distribution of linguistic behaviour according to the international distribution of customers

		Customers only in Catalonia n. 159	Customers in Catalonia and Spain n. 309	Customers only in Catalonia and the rest of the world n. 219	Customers in Catalonia, Spain and the rest of the world n. 18	Without customers in Catalonia n. 11	Total n. 716
Total: 29 indicators	Catalan	54,5	53,4	74,8	50,6	19,6	52,8
	Spanish	41,7	41,6	18,9	39,9	53,6	40,6
	English	0,7	1,7	4,0	5,4	21,6	3,1
Name of the company (v11)	Catalan	45,7	41,2	62,8	42,5	9,1	42,6
	Spanish	34,1	34,6	6,7	27,3	50,0	31,7
	English	2,8	4,5	16,7	13,5	27,3	7,6
Signs (v12, v13, v14)	Catalan	62,0	56,7	75,3	58,6	7,3	58,4
	Spanish	28,4	30,8	10,7	28,4	53,1	29,1
	English	1,1	2,1	8,0	5,6	16,3	3,4
Advertising (v15, v16)	Catalan	57,4	51,6	73,0	44,6	9,8	50,5
	Spanish	37,5	43,7	21,0	40,6	66,9	41,2
	English	0,6	1,0	2,4	6,8	12,8	3,0
Training (v33a, v33b)	Catalan	55,0	50,9	87,4	45,4	29,2	50,6
	Spanish	44,4	45,0	5,0	48,9	44,2	45,1
	English	0,6	3,8	7,7	5,1	25,8	4,0
Communications with customers and suppliers (v53a, v55a, v55b, v56)	Catalan	60,0	63,6	76,3	60,5	27,5	61,7
	Spanish	39,5	35,8	21,7	35,9	49,5	36,4
	English	0,1	0,5	1,9	2,1	20,4	1,2
Stationery, stamps and invoices (v41, v42, v44).	Catalan	50,7	46,0	74,0	44,7	7,7	46,8
	Spanish	41,4	45,1	18,5	39,8	64,5	42,3
	English	0,6	0,9	3,1	5,7	15,6	2,6
Working documents (v61, v62, v63)	Catalan	55,5	53,9	72,6	51,4	23,9	53,4
	Spanish	44,2	45,9	22,1	46,6	63,3	45,4
	English	0,1	0,1	4,4	1,9	12,8	1,0
Working meetings (v64_1, v64_2)	Catalan	56,7	70,3	91,0	67,8	43,1	66,8
	Spanish	41,4	28,5	6,4	28,9	46,8	31,1
	English	0,2	0,3	2,1	1,3	10,1	0,8
Publications (v57, v65)	Catalan	53,3	48,3	80,4	46,0	0,0	48,6
	Spanish	45,8	50,1	17,1	48,6	68,3	48,1
	English	0,8	1,2	2,5	4,5	31,7	2,8
New communicative environments (v66, v18, v46, v45, v53_b)	Catalan	41,9	41,2	61,0	36,3	20,1	39,8
	Spanish	54,8	52,6	34,6	49,7	42,8	51,4
	English	1,7	3,8	2,4	10,5	37,1	6,2

Source: developed from the data of the survey on linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia.

5. Conclusions

In the sample as a whole there is a predominance in the use of Catalan above Spanish and far above English. The use of foreign languages is, in general, very low and undoubtedly related to the fact that there is a marked linguistic division of work between workers, so that those who have to make international communications are still a minority and that these communications occupy a very small part of the total work time. Only in companies with foreign capital does English reach rates of use that make this language an important new competitor to Catalan in practically all communicative functions without, according to the results, affecting Spanish in these companies.

Informationalism as a process that designates new forms of work and organisation does not, in general, have a negative effect on the Catalan language, but rather a positive one. We have seen how the profiles with greater linguistic intensity, that is in companies where the management of information and production of knowledge is more important, the use of Catalan and English increases in detriment of Spanish. The extension and reinforcement of Catalan in the university system, that in Catalonia this language be that of institutional prestige and that Catalan public

institutions are a reference in the promotion of activities of the so-called knowledge society should reinforce this tendency in the future.

Obviously, one of the components of the process of economic globalisation analysed here, the penetration of markets in the rest of the world and the lesser dependence on the market of the rest of Spain, have also shown positive effects on the use of Catalan. The growth of exports from Catalonia to Europe and the lesser relative weight of the Spanish market also has positive effects for Catalan.

On the other hand, the negative effects of the use of Catalan were found in two factors associated with globalisation and informationalism: a) the new communicative spaces provided by new information and communication technologies and b) the international origin of the capital, and in the first environment Spanish and English are very well placed languages, the first in regard to the large market and the second as the main language for technological development. The increased intensity of these variables shows negative effects on the Catalan as a local language. On the other hand, the foreign origin of the capital implies new languages for co-ordination and prestige inside companies.

The particular case of Spanish is very interesting when considering the variables. It is the second language in the activity of the companies analysed and the growing linguistic intensity of processes as well as the internationalisation of the markets of Catalan companies show negative effects on its use. On the contrary, the positive situation of the origin of the capital and new technologies brings about an ambivalent behaviour to globalisation and informationalism.

In fact, the situation of Spanish does not precisely correspond to the so-called language crisis of modernity (Graddol, 2004). It loses functions before English because of the regionalisation of the European economy and because it is the reference language for the management of knowledge on a world-wide level. It also loses functions in the framework of the increasing local claims that form part of the resurgence of nationalisms on a global scale. But it is emerging as one of the main languages for regional economic activity on a world level in Central and South America and also with large markets in Spain and the USA. It is precisely the process of globalisation accompanied by regionalisation of the economy (European Economic Union, Mercosur, NAFTA...), that puts Spanish in a situation of privilege because is the language of one of these large markets, and because it acts as a commercial and cultural bridge between the European Union and Latin America.

Finally, the representation we have made of the linguistic practices in small and medium companies could be considerably improved by analytically distinguishing the different functions of instrumental the languages in the business world. These could be grouped as follows: a) corporative language or that of the proprietors; b) languages for international co-ordination of the production; c) languages of local job markets, and d) languages of the consumer and supplier markets. This classification refers to a progressively quadrilingual social and economic world, even though the linguistic division of the workplace could be compatible with mainly monolingual or bilingual employees because of the existence of a notable linguistic division of the workplace. Monolingualism, however, generates the risk of segmentation of the employees based on the prestige of each language.

6. Bibliography

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Annex 1. General distribution of linguistic practices in small and medium companies in Catalonia

	Catalan	Spanish	English	French	German	Other languages	Not distinguishable/ Not significant
Image and signs	47,3	32,4	5,1	0,3	0,2	1,1	13,7
Name of the company	42,34	31,38	7,7	0,27	0,3	0,19	17,82
Main sign	45,04	25,27	8,32	0,31	0,15	0,36	20,63
Collection for observation: Main sign	47,07	23,29	8,05	0,68	0,49	8,39	12,26
Opening hours sign	68,66	28,95	0,98	0	0	1,63	2,17
Merchandising	50,84	36,35	3,14	0,02	0,16	0	9,5
Collection for observation: Stationery and Merchandising	24,78	16,05	6,6	0,27	0,06	0,84	51,3
Home web page	35,58	53,72	6,82	0,57	0,15	0,3	0,2
Advertising leaflet or activity brochure most widely distributed (observation)	36,86	30,28	7,81	0,63	0,1	0,45	23,86
Percentage of interior signs	61,17	32,29	1,39	0	0	0,2	4,95
Collection for observation: Percentage of interior signs	57,32	33,47	2,42	0,11	0,32	0,13	6,23
Advertising	50,46	45,6	2,86	0,38	0,2	0	1,41
Training	50,4	45,5	3,9	0,1	0,2	0,0	0,0
Material de la formació	45,46	49,7	4,39	0,23	0,22	0	0
Llengua vehicular de la formació	55,25	41,26	3,33	0	0,16	0	0
Documents for outside use	42,0	37,1	5,3	0,2	0,1	0,2	15,1
Stationery	49,95	39,07	3,04	0,12	0,15	0,15	7,52
Collection of documents: Stationery, fax model	27,03	19,65	6,94	0,21	0,02	0,47	45,59
In-house or standard stamps	45,41	34,76	3,01	0	0	0,19	16,62
Collection of documents: In-house or standard stamps	28,21	15,34	6,72	0,23	0,45	0	49,15
Percentage of documents for external distribution	47,54	47,86	3,8	0,3	0,19	0,15	0,17
Collection of documents: Documentation for external use	51,4	34,09	2,94	0,07	0,01	0,32	11,16
Percentage of invoices, receipts or box labels	44,69	52,08	2,36	0,23	0,13	0,04	0,47
Collection of documents: Invoices, receipts or box labels	34,35	39,66	3,72	0,26	0,07	0	21,77
Percentage of e-mail boilerplate texts	47,49	39,49	8,02	0,12	0,11	0,26	4,56
Collection of documents: Electronic message	31,59	37,41	11,24	0	0	0,1	19,65
Electronic forms	34,1	54,72	8,83	0,93	0,48	0,57	0,36
Collection of documents: Electronic form	62,74	30,86	2,45	0	0	0	3,95
Communications for external use	61,0	32,2	1,8	0,2	0,1	0,3	4,4
Language for personalised telephonic and oral attention	76,01	21,1	0	0	0	2,9	0
Language of the automatic answering machine	52,81	46,91	0	0	0	0,28	0
Most usual or daily oral activity with customers or users	58,59	37,07	2,99	0,41	0,13	0,26	0,57
Use of Catalan in new communicative environments	54,87	39,88	3,77	0,32	0,2	0,17	0,59
Written communications addressed to public institutions in the territory	85,27	14,57	0	0	0	0	0,16
Collection of documents: Models of written documentation for institutions	73,91	14,81	0,07	0	0	0	11,24
Written communications with other companies or customers in Catalonia	62,53	36,57	0,56	0,01	0,01	0,15	0,17
Written communications addressed to private customers in Catalonia	65,16	33,83	0,48	0,05	0,05	0,25	0,19

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Collection of documents: Models of written documentation for customers	59,72	24,02	1,98	0,22	0,06	0,22	13,77
Communications addressed to suppliers in Catalonia	61,08	37,77	0,92	0	0,08	0	0,16
Collection of documents: Models of communications to suppliers	50,17	33,83	2,83	0	1,03	0	12,14
Regular and non-regular publications addressed to Catalonia	49,61	45,35	4,08	0,64	0,19	0,25	0
Percentage of regular publications	42,78	32,37	5,36	1,52	0	0	17,67
Internal documentation and communication	52,4	41,6	1,8	0,2	0,0	0,4	3,5
Memos, directives or written notes	58,51	39,69	1,46	0,04	0,05	0,08	0,17
Collection of documents: Model of circular to staff	53,42	35,47	0,63	0,4	0	0	10,08
Collection of declaration: Agenda of the day or minutes of meetings	59,11	39,57	1,29	0,02	0,02	0	0
Collection of documents: Agenda of the day or minutes of meetings	59,69	27,73	2,47	0,25	0,06	4,59	5,21
Collection for declaration: Forms and internal printed matter	42,41	57,24	0,35	0	0	0	0
Collection of documents: Most usual internal form	49,16	40,97	1,48	0	0	0	8,15
Languages of the last two internal meetings: Meeting 1	66,97	30,48	0,98	0,3	0,24	0,12	0,9
Languages of the last two internal meetings: Meeting 2	67,5	30,73	0,55	0,32	0,01	0	0,88
Collection for declaration: Languages for annual project or report	47,33	51,09	1,58	0	0	0	0
Collection of documents: Annual report or project	45,52	36,11	4,91	0,51	0,03	0,12	12,8
Languages of the word-processing program or more usual application	26,83	68,81	4,21	0	0	0	0
Aggregate index (Not weighted, 49 indicators)	50,90	36,09	3,47	0,22	0,12	0,49	8,70

Survey of linguistic practices in small and medium companies, 2003. n= 754