



Language, Policy and Territory

A Festschrift for Colin H. Williams

Edited by

Wilson McLeod · Robert Dunbar
Kathryn Jones · John Walsh



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Anadl Enwau

(Er anrhydedd i Colin Williams, a ŵyr)

Beth yw iaith? Peirianwaith rhad
annynol, dieneiniad.
Enaid? Nid oes dim yno
ond gwynt a thamaid o go'
a cheg yn agor a chau
yn dymestl sain a 'stumiau.

Hyn yw iaith: gobaith a gwae;
chwerwedd a phlant yn chwarae;
ein cof hir a'n cyfeiriad
ymlaen; hi yw'n hamlhad
a'n hedwino; cadwynau
mawr o ddur, ac ymryddhau;
tir hawdd yr anturio rhwydd
a thir egr ei lithrigrwydd;
ein gorawen yn griwiau
a'n swildod ir fesul dau.

Hyn yw iaith: y gyfraith gudd
a lunia'n byw aflonydd,
ein crëwr trefn anhrefnus
mewn canu mawl, mewn brawl brys;
ein dawn hud, a dynodydd
ein byd oll a'n bod bob dydd;
y chwa a'n dynoda ni
ein hunain, a rydd inni
ein pŵer oes, ein parhau
drwy ddadl; ein hanadl enwau.

—Emyr Lewis

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Voluntariat Per La Llengua: Building Social Cohesion Through Language

Maite Puigdevall

1 Introduction

Colin Williams's influence is extensive in the field of language revitalisation of linguistic minorities. His work has provided knowledgeable insights on protection, promotion and policy action in many minority language contexts. One of the hallmarks of Colin Williams's comparative investigations is his search for best practice interventions by which linguistic groups may be served or strengthened and then proposed for adoption by other jurisdictions. This chapter will examine one such instance of good practice, Voluntariat per la llengua (Volunteers for the language),¹ which aims to build new speakers' skills and confidence in Catalan so that they can become active speakers of the language. The chapter begins by discussing the changing demographic context of

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Catalonia and the challenges involved in making migrants to Catalonia into active speakers of Catalan. It then describes the history, development and operation of the *Voluntariat per la llengua* programme, which has grown into a very large initiative, involving both public and private organisations. It then addresses the extent to which the scheme has been successful, showing how the programme has been evaluated in quantitative and qualitative terms. This evaluation demonstrates that the programme goes beyond facilitating the learning and adoption of Catalan by giving access to all kinds of resources to new speakers, providing social capital and favouring social cohesion. However, it has not quite succeeded in changing the habits of Catalan speakers when addressing migrants; therefore, further measures will need to be implemented to tackle this issue.

Since the recovery of democratic institutions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Government of Catalonia (*Generalitat*), which regarded language as one of its key policy priorities, has carried out a wide variety of measures to promote and protect the Catalan language, enacting two laws on language normalisation, the first in 1983 and the second in 1998, and developing a wide array of language policies in key domains: education, public administration, the media and the private sector (Puigdevall 2005). One of the effects of the active language policies promoting Catalan has been that many people who did not have Catalan as their first language have adopted it during their life trajectory. Currently in Catalonia, almost three million (57.6%) of the five million people who know how to speak Catalan of a total population of 7.6 million are new speakers who did not have it as their family language (*Generalitat de Catalunya* 2015: 15–17). Between 2003 and 2018, the date of the most recent language use studies by the *Generalitat*, Catalan has incorporated some 850,000 such new speakers who have Catalan as a language of identification and everyday use (*Generalitat de Catalunya* 2019).² This capacity for attraction to Catalan has operated within a demographic context of high immigration due to Catalonia's comparatively strong economy: first, between the 1960s and 1970s, mainly from different regions of Spain; and second, an influx of international migrants from a wide range of countries, which peaked between 2003 and 2008. According to data from the Municipal Population Registry

(IDESCAT 2021), Morocco, Romania, China, Italy and Pakistan are the five countries with the largest representation of their nationals in Catalonia. Between 1981 and 2019, the population of foreign origin has risen from 89,985 (1.5%) of a total of almost 6 million to 1,380,720 (18.2%) within a total of 7.6 million (Generalitat de Catalunya 2020). Therefore, migration is key to understanding the sociolinguistic dynamic of Catalonia. An additional factor is the balance between those who move to Catalonia and those who leave. For instance, from 2003 to 2018 Catalonia received 572,000 newcomers from outside Spain, but 480,000 left, resulting in a net migration increase of 90,000 newcomers within this period. Of these, about 50% have lived in Catalonia for 10 years or more, and 50% for less than ten years. This has had a great impact on the results of knowledge and use of Catalan by the foreign-born population.

According to the language survey of 2018 (Generalitat de Catalunya 2019), knowledge and use of Catalan by foreign immigrants is considerably lower than for other groups and decreased slightly over the period 2013–2019. On average, 81.2% of the people surveyed declared themselves able to speak Catalan in 2018. This figure decreased to 52.8% if we only consider the population of foreign origin. Furthermore, although there was a slight increase of 0.8% in the proportion who declared themselves able to speak Catalan between 2013 and 2018, there was a slight decrease of 1.8% among the population born outside Spain during this period.

If we focus on language use, the figures show even greater disparities between the average use of Catalan among the population as a whole, in comparison with its use by those born outside Spain. In 2019, 36.1% of the total population declared that Catalan was their usual language; 7.8% declared that both Catalan and Spanish were their usual languages; 48.6% declared that their usual language was Spanish and 7.4% spoke other languages or a combination of languages as their usual languages. For the data on people born outside Spain, only 4.6% have Catalan as their usual language, 2.9% have both Catalan and Spanish while 59.1% have Spanish as their usual language and finally 12% declared that they usually spoke another combination of languages.

As we see in many minority language contexts, including Catalonia, it is one thing to be able to speak the language and another to have

the habit of speaking it every day and for all purposes. Many migrants chose Spanish as their usual language. This can be because learning two languages, Catalan and Spanish, requires a great investment in both time and effort and many cannot afford either. Also, to apply for Spanish citizenship, they must pass a Spanish language exam (at level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and that is a significant incentive for learning this language first and foremost. Although by attending a Catalan language course for a minimum of 90 hours they can obtain a certificate of ‘rootedness’ or social integration (Climent-Ferrando 2016), many immigrants still encounter difficulties in accessing the language in their everyday lives regardless of the availability of affordable Catalan language courses provided by the Catalan Government. A large part of the immigrant population living in Catalonia experiences segregation and exclusion in multiple public and private spaces: place of residence, school, health provider etc. (Pinyol-Jiménez 2016). There is also an added obstacle, in that Catalan speakers tend to code-switch to Spanish to address or to reply to newcomers or any person who looks or sounds foreign (accent, skin colour, appearance etc.). This is what Pujolar (2010), following Aracil (1983), calls ‘interposition’. As the American linguistic anthropologist Kathryn Woolard (1989, 2011, 2016) observes, the hegemonic linguistic accommodation norm, which still prevails, impels Catalan speakers to address and reply in Spanish to new speakers. However, Pujolar and González (2013) have observed that this norm is beginning to change.

Given these dynamics, it is imperative to pay attention to the processes that allow newcomers to have access to social spaces where they can develop their language skills. The existence of open, porous spaces where speakers of different profiles and origins can mix, interact and pass-through is at the core of the programme of *Voluntariat per la llengua* (henceforth *VxL*). This chapter describes how this programme was developed and how it works. Furthermore, I provide information about its value and success, both from a quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative data consist of secondary data derived from three main sources: (1) an early survey of the programme undertaken by the Institute of Catalan Sociolinguistics in 2004 (Campos and Genovès 2005; Camardons, Castaño and Díaz 2005); (2) an unpublished internal evaluation

survey of the programme by the Direcció General de Política Lingüística (DGPL, General Directorate for Language Policy) (Generalitat de Catalunya 2020)³ and (3) the results of the latest Language Use Survey regarding interpersonal language use (Generalitat de Catalunya 2019). Finally, the qualitative primary data is taken from an ethnographic study about learning Catalan and social integration in the VxL programme.⁴

2 Voluntaris per la llengua: Origins and Development of the Scheme

The idea of including language exchanges in volunteer activities was first developed in Catalonia in university campuses in the early 1990s. In 1994, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) started a programme called Tàndems lingüístics (language tandems) whereby foreign students, mostly Erasmus exchange students, practised Catalan with local Catalan-speaking students so they could improve their knowledge of the language so as to be able to follow lessons in the language. It was also a good way to make friends and get to know the Catalan culture and way of life. Conversely, Catalan students profited from the exchange as they could also learn and practise the languages of the European students. The scheme was implemented in most of the Catalan universities with great success and it remains in place today (UAB 1997; Generalitat de Catalunya 2020: 67–68).

Language mentoring or language exchanges have been prolific in the Catalan context as there are a great variety of initiatives based on the simple idea of putting learners in contact with Catalan speakers, both native and new speakers alike.⁵ We can say that through these kinds of projects, planning agencies make virtue out of necessity, as they substitute for or complement Catalan language courses and other initiatives that these same agencies do not have the budget for. VxL has been ‘exported’ to other places, both inside the Catalan-speaking countries and other minority language communities in Spain and Europe. However, the largest initiative in terms of participants is what was initially known as Voluntaris per la llengua and later as Voluntariat per la llengua.

VxL is a Catalan Government language policy programme that started in 2002. The programme is led by the DGPL and managed by the Consorci per a la Normalització Lingüística (CPNL, Consortium for Language Normalisation). The CPNL is a de-centralised public organisation, coordinated and financed by the DGPL, together with a variety of local authorities, which oversees the teaching of Catalan to adults and promotes the use of the language at the local level.

The first version of VxL was implemented in Cornellà del Llobregat, a big city south of Barcelona, where Catalan is not widely spoken. The purpose of this scheme was to provide opportunities for new speakers of Catalan who faced many problems in practising and learning the language in informal settings. At the beginning the name of the programme was *Hores de conversa: parlem una estona?* (Conversation time: let's speak a while?), whereby learners of all levels met regularly to practise Catalan during course hours. Later the meetings were with volunteers from outside the courses who could spare time to meet up with learners. Nineteen linguistic partnerships were established in 2002, with learners and Catalan speakers agreeing to meet up a minimum of 10 times for about an hour. The scheme began with the realisation by Catalan teachers in Cornellà that while language courses taught formal Catalan to learners, many were not able to use the language spontaneously or informally outside the classroom (Freixa et al. 2016; Gallego et al. 2014). Many of these learners settled in neighbourhoods where little Catalan was spoken; therefore, they had few opportunities to practise the language in everyday life. This, together with the fact that migrants are rarely addressed or replied to in Catalan by Catalan speakers, makes it even more difficult for them to find the language useful and experience enough opportunities for practice and improvement. Thus, teachers thought about organising one-to-one contact between learners and Catalan-speaking volunteers who could spare at least an hour a week for 10 weeks to meet and talk in Catalan. These meetings had a dual aim: to offer opportunities to speak Catalan and to facilitate the spontaneous learning of Catalan by new speakers and to change the habits of Catalan language speakers, making them aware that it was not necessary to switch to Spanish to address and talk to new speakers. Another major objective was to facilitate the establishment of

emotional bonds between Catalans, both natives and new speakers alike, and newcomers to favour social inclusion.

As the initiative in Cornellà was highly successful, the scheme was extended nationwide from 2003 onwards, with the coordination of three government departments (DGPL, INCAVOL [Institute of Catalan Volunteering] and the Secretariat for Immigration) and the collaboration of about 280 different entities, including many NGOs such as Omnim Cultural, immigrant associations, universities, neighbours' associations, cultural associations and sports clubs (including Barcelona Football Club). During this first year, the scheme was extended to a further 34 locations, creating 1466 linguistic partnerships (Generalitat de Catalunya 2004). From 2003 onwards many partnerships were established with all types of businesses, such as shops, bars and restaurants, where the participants could be served in Catalan. In 2004 linguistic partnerships were also developed in private companies where workers could partner with each other and practice the language while working or during their breaks.

In 2007 the CPNL enrolled 22 language animateurs or specialised language planners, one for each of the 22 branches of the CPNL services, to run the programme locally and manage the partnerships, contacts with volunteer organisations and collaborations with retail companies and other businesses to give both new speakers and volunteers 'real' and safe spaces where they could go and be served in Catalan. In addition, in 2007 a software application was developed that allowed easier access to volunteers to participate in the scheme, as they could enrol online. This helped the language animateurs to better manage the database of participants and the task of establishing partnerships, considering different aspects such as place of residence, time available (days of the week and specific hours), hobbies, age, gender, etc.

In 2017 the virtual version of VxL provided an opportunity for Catalan language learners living outside Catalonia and learning Catalan through Parla.cat (www.parla.cat), a distance Catalan language learning platform created in 2008, and those with difficulties meeting face-to-face, to practise and improve their language. In 2019, 777 people were enrolled in the virtual programme, of which 501 were learners and 276

volunteers. These numbers will increase in the next report as the coronavirus pandemic has made holding face-to-face meetings more difficult and many have used internet platforms to keep in contact and chat in Catalan regularly.

By 2019 the scheme had grown considerably and developed as a programme that goes beyond the individual partnerships. It is present in 200 towns and cities in Catalonia, being coordinated by 22 Catalan Language Normalisation Centres, while around 144,000 partnerships have been established since it was launched. Every year around 70 learners become volunteers as they reach fluency and confidence to keep connected to the programme and help other learners through the journey of becoming new speakers of Catalan. There are 5689 ‘meeting points’ in Catalonia, of which 745 are civic organisations and 4944 are private establishments. Some 2800 partnerships are active in hospitals, public health centres, in the justice sector, in jails and youth education centres, in cultural and educational organisations and many other governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as religious organisations, which constitute 24% of the total partnerships created. Furthermore, in 2019 the CPNL had organised some 1800 activities which range from excursions, readings in libraries, cooking sessions and gastronomic meetings, sports, visits to museums and other cultural and political sites, such as the Catalan Parliament or the local city and town councils, with the participation of more than 49,600 volunteers and learners (Generalitat de Catalunya 2020).

Since its establishment, most of the learners participating in the scheme have been migrants from outside Spain, although many learners born in Catalonia and Spain have also joined. The prototypical profile of a volunteer is a woman between 50 and 65, whereas most learners, both men and women, are 30–39 years old. Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that the majority of participant learners come from outside Spain (67%). Of these non-Spanish participants, the plurality is from South America (44%). Those from North Africa constitute 19%, followed by EU citizens (12.7%) and those from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean comprise 10%.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in September 2005 the European Commission, coinciding with the European Day of Languages,

Table 1 Origin of learners in 2019

Origin	Total numbers	Percentage (%)
Catalonia	272	7
Spain	798	15
Outside Spain	3.490	67
Virtual VxL	584	11

Source Generalitat de Catalunya (2020: 79)

Table 2 Origin of learners from outside Spain in 2019

Origin	Total numbers	Percentage (%)
South America	1545	44.3
North Africa	664	19
EU	444	12.7
Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean	381	10.9
Asia	143	4.1
Europeans outside EU	134	3.8
The rest of Africa	130	3.7
USA–Canada	46	1.3
Oceania	3	0.1

Source Generalitat de Catalunya (2020: 79)

published a booklet of a commissioned project entitled Lingo: Motivating Europeans to Learn Languages, in which VxL was considered one of the best 50 pedagogical experiences to reinforce the learning of languages in the EU (Kolvyá and Angelescu 2005). Indeed, this programme has been presented in various meetings and conferences in Spain and elsewhere in Europe which has prompted interest by other language policy and planning officials both inside the Catalan-speaking countries and in other minority language jurisdictions in Europe. Many have contacted the CPNL to learn more about the scheme with the aim of implementing it in their own language communities. So far, VxL has been deployed in Perpinyà (French Catalonia), Andorra, Valencia and the Balearic Islands. In the Aran Valley the objective is to encourage the use of Occitan by newcomers (Voluntariat per aranès—Volunteers for Occitan). Also, a similar scheme is being developed in Galicia, Faladoiros (places to speak) and for some time the Habla conmigo-Hitz egidazu

(speak to me) and Mintzapraktika (language practice) programmes have been in place in the Basque Country. In Europe, language officials in Flanders, Belgium, Bolzano in South Tyrol and the city of Padua in Italy have also contacted the CPNL to apply the scheme for the promotion of the use of Flemish (Samen Inburgeren- Integration together) in Belgium; German and Italian in South Tyrol (Voluntariat per les llengües—Volunteers for languages)⁶ and Italian for refugees (Cleopa-Volontariato Linguistichi per profughi) in Padua (Generalitat de Catalunya 2020: 78; VxL 2016). Furthermore, since 2018, the National Centre for Learning Welsh has put in place a similar programme (Siarad—Speak) so that Welsh language learners can improve and practise Welsh in informal settings (Welsh Government 2019: 24).

If we only consider quantitative data based on the numbers of participants, both individuals and all types of public and private organisations, we could say that it is a successful initiative. In addition, many learners become volunteers after achieving a good command of the language (Gallego et al. 2014). Furthermore, the fact that the programme is still growing since it was established almost 20 years ago and that it has inspired other language communities to follow its steps and it is additional proof of its success. However, the question that comes to our mind is how successful it has been in reality in achieving the two main goals for which it was created: to increase the use of Catalan by newcomers and to encourage Catalan speakers to maintain Catalan when addressing or replying to new speakers that sound or look foreign, that is, to change the hegemonic accommodation norm?

3 How Successful Is the VxL? Evaluating the Programme in Quantitative and Qualitative Terms

Before presenting the data, it is important to bear in mind that although the DGPL commissions studies both internally and externally to research institutions and universities regarding different aspects of language use in different fields, only one official and published study, in 2004, has

been commissioned to evaluate the VxL scheme. However, the VxL programme internally gathers information yearly about the running of the programme through questionnaires sent to participants to monitor its progress and as the basis for further improvements, but it does not publish them. The major tools that the DGPL uses to assess whether their policies are effective are basically macro quantitative data: the general census, which is undertaken every 10 years (from 1975 to 2011) and the language use surveys, which are carried out every 5 years (from 2003 to 2018). We have presented above some data regarding Catalan language use by people born outside Spain, which is notably lower than other groups. In this section, I present data from the 2004 study of VxL; the internal survey of the VxL programme for the year 2020 and the results of a qualitative research of the NEOPHONE II project on VxL. Finally, I will analyse data regarding interpersonal language use from the last language use survey to understand the linguistic habits of Catalan speakers when addressing strangers (Generalitat de Catalunya 2019).

In 2004 the Institute of Catalan Sociolinguistics commissioned an evaluation of the VxL scheme, which was carried out by a specialised consultancy firm (CIES) between September and November 2004. The study combines a quantitative analysis through questionnaires and a qualitative analysis from a series of short interviews with all participants, plus one semi-structured in-depth interview carried out by a researcher at the Institute with a volunteer. The study's objectives were: (a) to identify the sociodemographic and sociolinguistic profile of participants; (b) to evaluate the degree of participant satisfaction together with the subjective perception of learners as to whether they knew and used more or less Catalan after taking part in the scheme and finally (c) to learn about organisational aspects of the programme, such as the suitability of materials etc. The survey was carried out through telephone interviews with 1300 participants (650 learners and 650 volunteers) out of a total sample of 4016 participants (Campos and Genovès 2005).

Aspects of the sociodemographic and sociolinguistic data are outdated, and it would be very interesting if the DGPL could commission a new study to revisit the profiles of current participants and to find out if and how they have incorporated Catalan in their linguistic repertoire at some point after their participation in the programme. However, one constant

is the fact that the majority of the schemes' volunteers and learners are women. Gender gap in volunteering is quite common across different fields of social action. Studies on motivation behind volunteerism point out that women seem more inclined to engage in volunteerism because they are socialised into nurturing and caring roles (Gil-Lacruz et al. 2019: 128).

In terms of satisfaction with the programme, this is a summary of the main findings:

- participants give an average of 8.66 points—on a scale of 0 to 10—to the global satisfaction with the scheme (8.91 for learners and 8.4 for volunteers);
- regarding global satisfaction with the scheme, participants give an average of 8.56 points (8.91 for learners and 8.22 for volunteers);
- on the effect of the scheme in improving the knowledge of Catalan among learners, the great majority of learners, 95% feel more able to speak Catalan than before;
- regarding the effect on the use of Catalan among learners, 84% indicate that they speak Catalan more often than before;
- learners found the scheme helpful for two reasons:
 - language-related:
 - 43.9% feel that they learned Catalan;
 - 31.1% feel more confident and less shy in speaking Catalan;
 - 20.2% improved their fluency;
 - 14.2% valued being able to speak Catalan spontaneously or naturally.
 - social-related:
 - 29.3% declared themselves to be very happy to have met and started a friendship with a habitual Catalan speaker;
 - 23.2% state that their knowledge of Catalonia has increased, and they feel more integrated into Catalan society;
 - Other positive aspects highlighted were the help received by volunteers, and the constant motivation as well as the improvement in their employability.
- volunteers found the scheme valuable for three reasons:

- language-related:
56.4% found the scheme effective because it increased the number of Catalan speakers.
- social-related:
31.2% were happy to have met and started new friendships with other people;
11.7% felt happy to have exchanged and shared experiences.
- and solidarity reasons;
21.3% felt very good about helping people; and
4.6% believed the scheme was very useful to learners.

Finally, regarding organisational aspects, a few respondents suggested improvements. Those who did noted that there should be more volunteers available and greater publicity, and that the programme should run for longer than 10 meetings. Many of these demands have since been implemented, although the 10 meetings aspect has remained in place with the possibility for the pair to start a new cycle of 10 more meetings if they wish.

Camardons et al. (2005) provide more information on the results of what transpired from the short interviews with some participants and the one interview with a volunteer. The results of the short interviews showed that both learners and volunteers are very satisfied with their participation in the scheme. Learners who were successfully enrolled with the programme for different reasons, mainly to improve their opportunities in the job market or because they were interested in learning the Catalan language and its culture. Many expressed their satisfaction in being able to tap into Catalan-speaking networks, as they used to socialise mainly in Spanish-speaking circles, and to meet new people, make friends and integrate better in their local social environments.

The 2021 internal survey run by the VxL programme shows that both learners and volunteers are very satisfied with their participation in the VxL and figures are even higher if we compare them with the 2004 study. The survey presents data gathered through questionnaires both to learners and volunteers in 2020 about their satisfaction with the two types of meetings, depending on how they met to practise Catalan: virtual and face-to-face. In 2020, 7341 linguistic partnerships were

established, 3884 of which were face-to-face (52.9%) and 3457 virtual (47.1%). They received 1343 responses (704 from virtual participants and 668 from face-to-face participants).

If we look at Table 3, we can see that the scores regarding satisfaction with all the aspects of the programme are very high. We can see also that the face-to-face modality has slightly higher scores from both learners

Table 3 Appraisal of VxL in virtual and face-to-face modalities, 2020

	Learners of Virtual VxL	Learners of face-to-face VxL	Volunteers of Virtual VxL	Volunteers of face-to-face VxL
Satisfaction with number of meetings (10 (%))	95	94	92	95
Improved capacity to speak Catalan after participation in the programme (%)	92	93	–	–
Satisfaction with modality of programme (Score from 1 to 5)	4.56	4.74	4.40	4.47
Usefulness of general orientation and documentation (Score from 1 to 5)	4.45	4.45	4.27	4.14
Attention received from the organisation (Score from 1 to 5)	4.75	4.69	4.63	4.55
Recommendation of the modality of the programme to others (%)	98	100	98	100

Source Author’s elaboration from internal VxL report (Generalitat de Catalunya 2021)

and volunteers than the virtual modality. Also, the perceived capacity to speak Catalan after participating in the programme has increased in both cases, virtual (92%) and face-to-face (93%) learners. Unfortunately, the survey does not enquire if learners have become habitual users of the language or investigate where and with whom they speak Catalan.

Both the results of this earlier, mostly quantitative study and the internal appraisal of the VxL programme coincide with the findings of our ethnographic study, but we can say that VxL goes beyond helping newcomers to become Catalan speakers (Puigdevall et al. 2019). We carried out the fieldwork between January 2018 and January 2020 as part of the NEOPHON II project on new speakers in Catalonia. The aim of the research was to study linguistic *mudes* ‘in real time’ by learners participating in VxL and find out how they engaged in new linguistic practices, such as using Catalan in their everyday life. We define *mudes* as the sociolinguistic junctures or moments of transformation of the linguistic practices and forms of self-presentation of new speakers (Pujolar and González 2013; Pujolar and Puigdevall 2015; Pujolar 2019). We combined participant observation fieldwork together with the gathering and analysis of a variety of materials (brochures, pictures, web pages and blogs and other documents).

VxL is quite easy to access and with the various media campaigns by the CPNL and contacts with many organisations the scheme is becoming widely known. Learners joined the programme in three ways: through agreements between the CPNL and the organisation where they were members; voluntarily when they found out about the programme (especially when they enrolled and started language courses at CPLN); or because other people they had met told them about CPNL and the VxL. Apart from being easy to join, the programme gives both volunteers and learners a safe space as there is no segregation by origin and it offers the possibility of ‘training’ to be a new speaker of the language in quite ideal conditions without being too exposed to the usual linguistic scrutiny of society in general. This programme can be seen as a space of inclusion that overcomes some implicit barriers and where new speakers can be legitimised simply as speakers, being able to build new identities related to the use of Catalan. It also favours the creation of new friendships and social networks, while helping new speakers to access new spaces that

allow them to continue using the language and strengthening their *mudes* (Puigdevall et al. 2022). Therefore, VxL fulfils a function that Catalan society at large should play spontaneously, but which it is not doing because the language is not hegemonic in all fields. VxL goes beyond facilitating the learning and adoption of Catalan because it gives access to all kinds of resources that prove very useful for immigrants. These include not only knowledge of Catalan language, culture and society and acquaintance with new people and social networks where Catalan is the main language but also elements that can be transformed into material resources such as training, education, work and housing.

From the results of these studies and surveys, we can say that the scheme has been successful in achieving the main objectives set by language policy authorities to encourage immigrants to learn and use Catalan. But, if we have seen that migrants show the lowest use of the language for the reasons identified in the introduction, how much of the habit of code-switching to Spanish by Catalan speakers when addressing newcomers has changed?

We do not have segregated data specifically showing interpersonal language use between Catalans and migrants, but when being interviewed, many new speakers complain about only rarely being addressed in Catalan. However, we do have information on the choices Catalan speakers make between using Catalan and Spanish when interacting with strangers. Again, these data do not provide further information about their linguistic choices when interacting with people who speak Catalan with a non-native accent. Thus, in the first column of Table 4, we can see that there are around 12% of what we call the ‘maintainers’ of the Catalan language, that is, those Catalan speakers who always or normally address and reply to everyone in Catalan. However, in column two we have what the majority (75.6% in 2018) of Catalan speakers still do: switch to Spanish when addressed in Spanish. We see that between 2008 and 2018 the percentage of those who speak Catalan and who declare that they never address anyone in this language has increased from 6.4 to 9.1%.

However, the second column of Table 5 demonstrates that the majority of Catalan speakers (79% in 2018) switch to Catalan if they are answered in Catalan when addressing someone in Spanish. We can also

Table 4 Population that speaks Catalan according to their response when addressing someone in Catalan get a reply in Spanish (%)

	Carries on in Catalan	Carries on in Spanish	Ask the person to speak Catalan	Never addresses people in Catalan	Stops the conversation	No information
2008	12.2	76.7	1.7	6.4	..	3.0
2013	12.3	71.0	2.5	12.2	..	1.9
2018	11.8	75.6	1.4	9.1	0.3	1.9

Sources Data for 2008: Generalitat de Catalunya (2015). Data for 2013–2018: Generalitat de Catalunya (2019). (..) Data not available

Table 5 Population that speaks Catalan according to their response when addressing someone in Spanish and get a reply in Catalan (%)

	Carries on in Spanish	Carries on in Catalan	Ask the person to speak Spanish	Never addresses people in Spanish	Stops the conversation	No information
2008	10.1	79.5	1.1	6.8	..	2.3
2013	13.4	75.7	1.4	8.2	..	1.1
2018	12.2	79.0	1.1	6.1	..	1.5

Source Data for 2008: Generalitat de Catalunya (2015). Data for 2013–2018: Generalitat de Catalunya (2019). (..) Data not available

see that those who declare that they never address people in Spanish are in a minority and that there was a slight decrease between 2003 (6.8%) and 2018 (6.1%).

To sum up, we see that the great majority of Catalan speakers switch to Spanish very easily when addressed in this language and even some still carry on in Spanish when addressed in Catalan. This is something that many migrants also report and complain about and makes them feel that all the efforts in learning Catalan are for nothing (Puigdevall et al. 2019, 2022). It is clear that this kind of language behaviour is still very ingrained in the psyche of Catalan speakers, and it dates from earlier experiences of language minoritisation, chiefly during the dictatorship regime when speaking Catalan in public was forbidden (Woolard 1989: 69–87).

Macro quantitative results provided by language surveys do not show major changes in relation to interpersonal use of the language between Catalan natives and new speakers, especially with immigrants. However, the realisation that we need to be more aware of this behaviour, which is pernicious and detrimental to the Catalan language community, has grown recently. Many initiatives have emerged to convince Catalan speakers to avoid switching languages and most importantly not to do so with immigrants (Junyent 2020).⁷ Clearly, many efforts and actions across several fronts by language planning authorities are needed to make Catalan the common and hegemonic language for social relations in Catalonia for all its inhabitants. But we can say that programmes like VxL can help to achieve this goal, and even more significantly prevent segregation and favour social cohesion at the same time that they foster greater understandings between Catalans of all origins.

Notes

1. The programme changed its name in 2007 from *Voluntaris* to *Voluntariat*, both meaning ‘volunteers’ in English, as the latter form is gender-inclusive in Catalan (Generalitat de Catalunya 2008).
2. Language of identification is the language that the speaker considers to be his or her own language or languages. The language of identification can be different from the first language learned at home. In language statistics in Catalonia the language of identification represents the answer to the question ‘What is your language?’.
3. I am grateful to the Documentation Centre of Language Policy (https://llengua.gencat.cat/ca/direccio_general_politica_linguistica/centre_de_documentacio/) for providing me with the internal non-published report.
4. This chapter presents results from the following projects: Linguistic Mudes: An Ethnographic Approach to New Speakers in Europe (NEOPHON II), ref. FF12015-67232-C3-1-P, funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación and ‘New Speakers as Agents of Sociolinguistic Transformation in Catalonia’ (Equi-Ling_cat), ref. PID2019-105676RB-C44, a sub-project of the main

coordinated project ‘Critical Linguistic Awareness and Speakers’ Agency: Action-research for Sociolinguistic Equality (EquiLing)’ (AEI/10.13039/501100011033), also funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación.

5. Other similar programmes in Catalonia that are also worth mentioning are *Quedem?* (Shall we meet up?), a scheme by the most important cultural organisation in Catalonia, Omnium Cultural (<https://www.omnium.cat/ca/projectes/quedem/>) and *Xerrem* (Chatting) organised by CAL—Coordinadora d’Associacions per la Llengua, an umbrella organisation for Catalan language NGOs (<http://www.cal.cat/projecte/projecte-xerrem/>).
6. The programme in South Tyrol has taken the same name as the original Catalan: see <https://www.provincia.bz.it/formazione-lingue/lingue/volontariato-linguistico.asp>.
7. There are other initiatives that encourage Catalan speakers to address and speak Catalan with newcomers. One such initiative is the campaign *No em canviis de llengua* (Don’t change your language) run by activist Rosario Palomino, born in Perú but resident in Catalonia for thirty years, using social media such as Twitter (@CanviisEm) and YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj6bbos0h6iYT_JvVU7bymA).

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