

Towards an understanding of the contemporary sociolinguistic situation in the Pyrénées-Orientales. What questions need to be asked?¹

«Fill, jo som francès» – «Papa, moi je suis catalan» (Gene i Casals, 2004: 50)

1. Introduction

Pyrénées-Orientales is the southernmost *département* of mainland European France and is composed of three *arrondissements* (Perpignan, Prades and Céret), comprising 226 communes with a total population of 437,157 (INSEE, 2007 Census). Traditionally, the area forms the northernmost part of the *Països Catalans*, a cultural and linguistic entity which unites all areas where Catalan is considered an endemic language and spans four nation-states (Spain, France, Andorra and Italy). In this context, the area is known as *Catalunya Nord*, or more simply *Rosselló* (the equivalent of the French *Roussillon*).

The present article aims to serve as a much-needed reference work, providing a concise summary of the sociolinguistic situation in Catalunya Nord supported by relevant statistics. It will focus on the contemporary sociolinguistic situation in the Pyrénées-Orientales, examining recent developments and their impact on language use, most notably in the field of Catalan-language immersion education. Finally, based on a critical analysis of recent developments in the region, as well as my own research regarding other Catalan-speaking communities, a series of questions will be proposed which may provide interesting insight into a relatively under-examined linguistic situation.

It should be noted that this article is limited to the discussion of language usage. Indeed, cultural identity is not necessarily linked to linguistic practices (as suggested by the quotation from Gene i Casals), and as such this article will make only cursory reference to issues of identity where necessary. A fuller investigation into this linguistic community would naturally address the matter of identity more thoroughly.

2. A brief historical overview

«Soyez propres – parlez français» (La Bressola, 2007: 77)²

The traditionally Catalan-speaking area of Roussillon, roughly equivalent to today's Pyrénées-Orientales, passed from Spanish to French control as a condition of the Treaty of the

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² This was one of many slogans used to encourage the use of the French language to the detriment of regional languages like Catalan.

Pyrenees, signed in 1659. Homogenising French tendencies were first exhibited in 1700, with an edict signed by Louis XIV claiming that «l'usage du catalan répugne et est contraire à l'honneur de la nation française» (bressola.cat). Subsequent centuries saw several battles lost by Spanish military forces against the French (for example Parestortes and El Voló in 1793), and consequently the area has remained part of France (Puig i Moreno, 2004: 17). The French Revolution and its aftermath reached all corners of the country, and Republican rhetoric showed open disdain for regional languages. In a speech to the Committee of Public Safety in 1794, Barère stated : «federalism and superstition speak Breton... fanaticism speaks Basque. Let us smash these instruments of damage and error» (De Certeau *et al.*, 1975 in Pooley, 2005: 60). Later, the Lois Jules Ferry of the 1880s established free, obligatory, French language-medium education for all, and so within twenty-five years, every child in the Pyrénées-Orientales was schooled in French (ibid: 18).³ Such measures in conjunction with a great many other factors contributed to a long and steady decline of the Catalan language in Catalunya Nord throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It has been argued that increased French nationalism after the World Wars, the presence of French-language mass media, and a lack of communication with Catalan-speaking territories south of the Pyrenees (not to mention the Francoist oppression of the language) all led to the gradual loss of Catalan in the area (Gene i Casals, 2004: 49), along with public campaigns explicitly aimed at reducing the use of Catalan, as the quotation at the head of this section suggests. Moreover, the superior status of French, as opposed to Catalan, is reinforced to this day by the French government, with Article 2 of the Constitution of the present-day Fifth Republic added as recently as 1992 stating simply : 'la langue de la République est le français' (legifrance.gouv.fr). Such historical developments have led to a situation of *diglossia* in the region which persists to the present day, whereby one language occupies a position of high prestige and social function (referred to as the H *code*, in this case French), in relation to another, which is used in less prestigious scenarios and domains (the L *code*, in this case Catalan).⁴ Catalan and Occitan linguists have typically developed this notion, originally presented by Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1965) as present in linguistically stable communities, to include situations of language conflict whereby «the H language (French) enjoys precedence in the prestigious functions and the L language (Catalan)... is initially

³ It should also be noted, however, that prior to the Lois Jules Ferry, Catholic schools played a considerable role in the diffusion of the French language to French citizens (Pooley, personal communication).

⁴ For a more complete analysis of the concept of diglossia, see Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1965).

confined to informal oral use and gradually squeezed out as universal literacy eliminates virtually all situations where (it) is a communicative necessity» (Pooley, 2005: 75).⁵

However, recent years have arguably seen a slight reversal in fortune for the Catalan language in the Pyrénées-Orientales, to the point whereby, in December 2007, Catalan was recognised as an official language by the *Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales*. This provided the first governmental acceptance of the use of Catalan within the area for official purposes (Habet, 2008: 77).⁶ As shall be shown, the last few decades have seen many such changes in the use of Catalan in Catalunya Nord, notably within the education system. Developments in acquisition planning have been underway for more than half a century. The introduction of the *Loi Deixonne* (1951) allowed Breton, Basque, Catalan and Occitan to be taught in state schools, albeit as a supplementary subject and with a maximum teaching time of three hours per week. Moreover, it was not implemented for another eighteen years due to a certain ministerial tardiness in granting the requisite approval (Ager, 1996: 68; Pooley, 2005: 64). From such modest beginnings, the regional languages of France gradually crept their way into the education system, but to what point are they present today? More specifically, to what extent is Catalan present in the schools of the Pyrénées-Orientales, and how does this impact upon language use in the region?

3. *La Bressola* and other recent developments

«La Bressola és una escaleta menuda, però una escaleta dins de l'esfera mono-idiomàtica del francès triomfant» (La Bressola, 2007: 46).⁷

In September 1976, unhappy with the limited (often non-existent) presence of the Catalan language in the education system, a group of «militants and parents» (Le Bihan, 2004a: 29) established the first Catalan-medium school in the region: *La Bressola* (literally, «the cradle»). It started with seven students and classes were held in the Croix Bleue veterinary surgery on the outskirts of Perpignan. Over the course of thirty years, the *Bressola* network has grown to include seven primary schools and one secondary school, responsible for the

⁵ For a more complete analysis of the concept of conflict linguistics, see Nelde (1997)

⁶ Indeed, not since the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 has Catalan been officially recognised in Catalunya Nord (Habet, 2008: 77), and as such this represents a huge symbolic concession on the part of the French government. All government officials in the area will now be able to receive free Catalan language tuition. It has been argued that, on a practical level, the legislation will have few perceptible implications, given the limited power of the *Conseil Général* (ibid: 78). Nonetheless, the symbolic significance of such an unprecedented measure should not be underestimated.

education of around five hundred students. Moreover, demand far exceeds provision, with over one hundred students turned away each year (Le Bihan, 2004b: 37).

La Bressola has had a difficult relationship with the French government, for obvious historical and cultural reasons. The *Bressola* network initially received very little support from the French government and subsidies were first given in 1982, not by the Ministry of Education, but the Ministry of Culture. Offers were made by the French government to incorporate *La Bressola* into the public education system, on the condition that 50% of teaching should be done through the medium of French. Viewed as blackmail, such a proposal was rejected outright (La Bressola, 2007: 24). Other attempts to integrate the schools into *l'Éducation nationale* have also been rejected as unconstitutional, and indeed the Loi Toubon (1994) states: '(La langue française) est la langue de l'enseignement' (langue-francaise.org). As such, the schools remain private, although the French state now makes a substantial contribution to their upkeep, paying the salaries of twenty-one teachers during the academic year 2004/5. It should also be noted that a great many institutions from the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (in Spain) support *La Bressola*, providing teachers, learning materials and financial backing (Le Bihan, 2004b: 37).

So what is the ethos of *La Bressola*? Despite not forming part of the public education system, *La Bressola* still adheres to some decidedly French principles: 'La Bressola defensa els valors tradicionals de la societat francesa... i es manté estatutàriament laic'⁸ (La Bressola, 2007: 40). Its unique pedagogical principles set *La Bressola* apart from other schools in the region and are attractive to parents. Each class is made up of students of different ages, and the older pupils begin the academic year slightly earlier than the younger ones. As such, the older students consolidate their spoken Catalan while assuming greater responsibilities than their peers in monolingual French education (Gene i Casals, 2004: 51; Le Bihan, 2007: 47; Torner, 2009 *inter alia*). Moreover, Catalan is encouraged as the language of socialisation in the playground, and children are witnessed predominantly using Catalan as the vehicle for social communication outside the classroom within a year of starting at *La Bressola* (Le Bihan, 2005: 13). The ultimate aim is for students to acquire a capacity for expression in Catalan which is 'almost equivalent' to that which they possess in French (Torner, 2009).

In addition to the model offered by *La Bressola*, other initiatives in the Pyrénées-Orientales foster the use of the Catalan language in the education system. The *Arrels* primary school in

⁷ Translation: "*La Bressola* is a crack, albeit a tiny one, in the monolingual, all-conquering fortress known as the French language"

⁸ Translation: "*La Bressola* defends the traditional values of French society... and remains statutorily secular"

Perpignan was established in 1981, and has been state-funded since 1995 on an experimental basis, while the *Comte Guifré* secondary school, also in Perpignan, is a private institution (Domingo Peñafiel, 2009: 202; Ricart, 2006: 18). However, these two schools are isolated organisations, and do not form part of a larger network like *La Bressola*. Moreover, the *Bressola*, *Arrels* and *Comte Guifré* schemes, when combined, only offer schooling to 1% of children in full-time education in the region (Becat i Rajaut, 2000: 27; Le Bihan and Rull, 2005: 68). Some of the remaining 99% receive a designated number of hours of Catalan-language teaching within an otherwise French-language curriculum, but these figures are low. According to statistics published in 2000, based on the school year 1998-9, only 19.1% of primary school children received any form of Catalan-language instruction, and on average this only constituted one hour per week. At secondary level, a mere 6.1% of pupils received Catalan classes, of anywhere between one and eight hours per week (with the occasional option of studying another school subject through the medium of Catalan) (Becat i Rajaut, 2000: 50-2). Moreover, while the last decade has seen an increase in Catalan-medium immersion education, with the creation of two new *La Bressola* centres including their first secondary school, figures for Catalan-language teaching within the French-language curriculum have shown no change, remaining low (Ricart, 2006: 18).

How, then, may these recent developments in Catalan-medium education prove relevant when examining language practices in the Pyrénées-Orientales? Thanks to programmes like *La Bressola*, Catalan-medium education is on the increase, albeit slowly. But how far do such language-immersion efforts go towards fostering the everyday use of the target language? In order to attempt to answer such large-scale questions, one must first be fully aware of the linguistic practices of the community of study. As such, this paper will now examine statistics of language usage in the Pyrénées-Orientales, as well as other Catalan-speaking areas. Then, with the necessary background information outlined, research questions can be proposed which will allow us to better understand the complex linguistic situation in Catalunya Nord.

4. Contemporary patterns of language use

«El repte (de la Bressola)... serà de donar un color català a la parla i no només un accent geogràfic al francès» (La Bressola, 2007: 35)⁹

The above mission statement of *La Bressola* is undoubtedly ambitious. In order to ascertain whether this goal is being approached, one must first be aware of the degree of presence of

⁹ Translation: “The aim (of *la Bressola*)... will be to inject Catalan language into the local way of speaking, not just to make people speak French with a regional accent”

the Catalan language, both within Pyrénées-Orientales, and in other Catalan-speaking territories.

In 2004, the *Generalitat de Catalunya* released official statistics concerning Catalan language use in Catalunya Nord. With regard to knowledge of Catalan, the findings were as follows:

Table 1. Knowledge of Catalan in Catalunya Nord 2004 (adapted from Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004a: 13-6).

	Understand Catalan	Speak Catalan	Read Catalan	Write Catalan
Total population	65.3%	37.1%	31.4%	10.6%
15-29 years old	51.2%	24.2%	11.4%	6.2%

It is worth noting that the younger group displays a lower level of ability than the total average in all four competence areas, thus implying a continued diachronic loss of proficiency in Catalan. However, the above statistics are based on self-report and are therefore imbued with all the flaws that such a data collection method entails. There is reason to believe that perhaps the situation is yet bleaker than the *Generalitat* figures suggest. In 2007, the University of Perpignan (Col·lecció setelCAT, 2007) conducted a study which first asked the general public to report their competence in the skill areas of comprehension and oral expression, and was then followed some months later by a telephone interview conducted in Catalan to ascertain the accuracy of the original figures (i.e. to determine whether participants' self-report matched language proficiency as demonstrated in the telephone interview). Their findings were as follows:

Table 2. Knowledge of Catalan in Catalunya Nord 2007. Self-report contrasted with demonstrated competence (adapted from Col·lecció setelCAT, 2007: 75-8).

	Understand Catalan	Speak Catalan
Self-report	65%	37%
Competence demonstrated to at least an average level	53%	35%
Competence demonstrated to a high level	35%	18%

One can see that the self-report results are very similar to those derived by the *Generalitat de Catalunya's* 2008 study (see Table 1), but that actual competence is considerably lower. While an analysis of the University of Perpignan's study arguably raises some methodological questions (How can one be sure this is truly reflective of each participant's competence? Who decides what is 'to a high/average level'?), it certainly serves to make the researcher aware that the situation regarding Catalan language competence in the Pyrénées-Orientales may be worse than official statistics imply.

Moreover, levels of Catalan language use in Catalunya Nord seem to be decreasing rapidly, if one examines the results of a survey in 1993 conducted by the *Média Pluriel Méditerranée* group, the results of which are as follows (alongside the recent *Generalitat* survey for ease of comparison):

Table 3. Knowledge of Catalan in Catalunya Nord 1993 and 2008 (adapted from *Média Pluriel Méditerranée*, 1993: 12-21; *Generalitat de Catalunya*, 2004a: 13-6).

	Understand Catalan	Speak Catalan	Read Catalan	Write Catalan
1993	63.2%	48.6%	36.4%	9.2%
2008	65.3%	37.1%	31.4%	10.6%

The most notable difference between the results of 1993 and 2008 is the decline in the percentage of the population claiming to speak Catalan (the other three areas showing comparatively little fluctuation). This is congruent with the 1993 survey revealing a higher rate of oral competence among older age groups than younger people, once again implying the continued diachronic loss of Catalan in the region (only 16% of 18-24 year-olds claimed to speak Catalan, as opposed to 73% of people aged 65 and over) (*Média Pluriel Méditerranée*, 1993: 17). In addition to the *Média Pluriel Méditerranée* study, two in-depth surveys of Catalan language usage and attitudes in the city of Perpignan were conducted in 1988 and 1993 by Dawn Marley (Marley, 1995), which are extremely useful in providing a full understanding of the linguistic community at hand.¹⁰ A dearth of more accessible statistics impedes extensive study of past linguistic practices in the region, although recent results can be compared with those of other Catalan-speaking regions to offer further insight into the situation:

¹⁰ Once again, any results obtained regarding Catalan language competence are reliant on self-report. Marley's work, rather than focusing on different language skill areas, chooses to examine the domains of language use, that is to say, whether language is used in the home, in the street, with colleagues etc. While enlightening, some of her chosen domains are potentially confusing (*à la maison* and *avec des parents* are regarded as completely independent, with no apparent consideration of overlapping), and if one compares the 1988 findings with those of the 1993 survey, results are misleading, since the later survey contained very few older participants. As such, the perceived diachronic loss of Catalan is more acute than is actually the case. Nonetheless, the study is essential reading for those wishing to understand the situation at hand, and particularly with regard to studies of language attitudes in the region, which the surveys cover very thoroughly.

Table 4. Knowledge of Catalan in different Catalan-speaking areas 2003-4 (adapted from Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007: 26).

Country	Catalan-speaking region	Understand Catalan	Speak Catalan	Read Catalan	Write Catalan
Spain	Catalonia (AC) ¹¹	97.4%	84.7%	90.5%	62.3%
	Balearic Islands (AC)	93.1%	74.6%	79.6%	46.9%
	Comunitat Valenciana (Catalan) ¹²	81.6%	58.4%	51.1%	27.3%
	Franja de Ponent (AC: Aragon)	98.5%	88.8%	72.9%	30.3%
Andorra	Andorra	96.0%	78.9%	89.7%	61.1%
Italy	Alghero	90.1%	61.3%	46.5%	13.6%
France	Pyrénées-Orientales	65.3%	37.1%	31.4%	10.6%

It is clear from the above statistics that the Pyrénées-Orientales is the Catalan-speaking region with by far the lowest proportion of inhabitants demonstrating Catalan language competence in all four skill areas. Moreover, it has been made clear that not only is the situation potentially worsening with the passage of time, but that these already bleak figures may not in fact be accurate, since they are largely based on participants' self-report and not proven linguistic competence.

It should be noted that demographic factors may contribute to the low proportion of Catalan-speakers in the Pyrénées-Orientales. Under half (44.6%) of the residents of the Pyrénées-Orientales were born in the region, as compared with 49.1% of the residents of Andorra, 59.9% in the Balearic Islands, 65.6% in Alghero, 68.9% in the Catalan-speaking area of the Comunitat Valenciana, 71.9% in Catalonia and 89% in the Franja de Ponent (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007: 18). However, this does not mean that the statistics for Catalunya Nord are any less disconcerting. Indeed, if one compares the figures with those of Andorra (where similarly, under half the population was born in the area), the low rate of Catalan competence in the Pyrénées-Orientales is evident.

In short, to what may the current linguistic situation in Catalunya Nord be attributed? Having outlined the historical background and statistical information, I now discuss other factors which merit attention, beginning with the aforementioned 'mission statement' of *La Bressola* and ask what kind of role Catalan-medium education can play; indeed, given its marginal status in the region, is it even able to make an impact? The following research questions and comparisons with other Catalan-speaking regions where Catalan-medium education is well established will help shed light on such issues.

¹¹ 'AC' stands for 'autonomous community', and in this case means that the terms 'Catalonia' and 'Balearic Islands' refer to their respective autonomous communities (i.e. Catalunya and Illes Balears).

5. What research questions need to be asked ?

Here follows a series of research questions which have received little to no academic attention to date and may provide scholars with useful insight into linguistic practices in Catalunya Nord and similar regions.

5.1 To what extent are language usage and education policy interconnected in Catalunya Nord?

Education policy has always been instrumental in dictating the domains in which a given language is to be used. The well-established sociolinguistic concept of ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles *et al.*, 1977) was introduced to articulate the position of certain speech communities and their languages in relation to others, and relies on the notions of status, demography and institutional support, this final idea encompassing 'representation of the group and its language in the media and education' (Giles, 2001: 472). As such, the importance of education policy as a determining factor in practices of language use is widely attested, and the logical connection between language-in-education policy and linguistic practices can be witnessed when looking at other Catalan-speaking regions. The following table reproduces the results given in Table 4 regarding Catalan language competence in all four skill areas and compares it with the specific figures for the younger members of each community, who would have benefited from any recent educational reforms.

The figures cited yield interesting information if one divides the regions into those with well-established or significantly developing Catalan-language education programs (i.e. Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Comunitat Valenciana, Franja de Ponent and Andorra), and those without (Alghero and the Pyrénées-Orientales).

¹² Only the traditionally Catalan-speaking, coastal part of the Comunitat Valenciana Autonomous Community was taken into account (inland Valencia has never been Catalan-speaking).

Table 5. Knowledge of Catalan in different Catalan-speaking areas 2003-4. Total population and 15-29 year old subsection. (adapted from Generalitat de Catalunya, 2005: 33; Generalitat de Catalunya and Govern de les Illes Balears, 2004: 16-9; Academia Valenciana de la Llengua, 2005: 7; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004b: 15-9; Generalitat de Catalunya and Govern d'Andorra, 2004: 14-8; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004c: 15-8; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004a: 13-6)

Country	Catalan-speaking region	Age group	Understand Catalan	Speak Catalan	Read Catalan	Write Catalan
Spain	Catalonia (AC)	Total	97.4%	84.7%	90.5%	62.3%
		15-29	98.9%	95.4%	97.7%	94.1%
	Balearic Islands (AC)	Total	93.1%	74.6%	79.6%	46.9%
		15-29	93.2%	80.1%	89.8%	77.4%
	Comunitat Valenciana (Catalan)	Total	81.6%	58.4%	51.1%	27.3%
		15-29	<i>Statistics unavailable</i>			
	Franja de Ponent (AC: Aragon)	Total	98.5%	88.8%	72.9%	30.3%
		15-29	99.3%	89.5%	87.0%	61.0%
Andorra	Andorra	Total	96.0%	78.9%	89.7%	61.1%
		15-29	95.8%	85.7%	91.1%	75.4%
Italy	Alghero	Total	90.1%	61.3%	46.5%	13.6%
		18-29	86.6%	47.2%	25.6%	5.5%
France	Pyrénées-Orientales	Total	65.3%	37.1%	31.4%	10.6%
		15-29	51.2%	24.2%	11.4%	6.2%

The autonomous community of Catalonia has operated a system of Catalan language-immersion education for nearly thirty years, and official statistics from the school year 1999/2000 show that 94% of primary education and 85% of secondary education is either Catalan-medium or predominantly Catalan-medium (with the majority of the remainder favouring bilingual Catalan/Castilian programmes) (Vila i Moreno, 2008 : 34-5). The autonomous community of the Balearic Islands also operates a system of largely Catalan-medium education, with statistics from the academic year 2002/3 showing that 83% of primary schools were predominantly Catalan-medium, and the remaining 17% reached the legally-required minimum of 50% Catalan language teaching, as stipulated by the regional government (ibid: 36). The Catalan-speaking region of the Comunitat Valenciana has implemented different Catalan-language immersion education programmes, but these are only taken by 24.2% of the students in the area, the remainder receiving Castilian-medium education with Catalan-language lessons (ibid: 37). Schools in the Franja de Ponent region of Aragon, where Catalan is endemic but holds no official status, offer Catalan-language classes to students. While such classes may only consist of up to four hours per week, they have a take-up of 81% of all students (ibid: 38), a high figure when compared to the proportion of children in Catalunya Nord who receive any form of Catalan language teaching. Andorra has its own Catalan-medium education programme, which is followed by just over a third of

pupils (ibid: 39). On the other hand, Catalan receives little educational support in Alghero, with only one peripatetic Catalan language-teaching organisation and one recently opened school where Catalan forms part of a trilingual education program (ibid: 40). The similarly weak presence of Catalan in the education system of Catalunya Nord, with only 1% of pupils schooled in Catalan, is detailed above.

As stated, the above statistics show a marked difference between the areas where Catalan is arguably well-integrated into the education system, and those where it is not. In all areas except Alghero and the Pyrénées-Orientales, young adults perform above the regional average for reading and writing of Catalan (language skills which would be fostered in education), while performing at or near the regional average with regard to understanding and speaking Catalan.¹³ The opposite is the case in Alghero and the Pyrénées-Orientales, with the youth performing significantly below average, again implying the diachronic loss of Catalan in these areas.

So to what point can developments in systems such as *La Bressola* in Catalunya Nord affect patterns of language usage? As seen here, young people in the areas where Catalan-medium education is being successfully implemented are showing levels of linguistic competence above the regional average. Could arguably marginal developments like *La Bressola* change matters in Catalunya Nord and reverse the potential diachronic loss of Catalan in the area? In other words, is it possible for *La Bressola* to fulfil its mission 'de donar un color català a la parla'? In order to investigate this, Catalan language competence in all four skill areas could be measured in students who have received some form of Catalan language teaching (be that through language-immersion schemes like *La Bressola* or through Catalan L2 programmes in state schools) at regular intervals after leaving the school. This would show whether the language competence acquired at the school is retained into adulthood. Then, such statistics could be compared with regional-level findings regarding Catalan language competence, which would reveal any changing trends with regard to the knowledge of Catalan. Arguably, given the marginal status of Catalan-language teaching in the region, such results may not be favourable with regard to the future of Catalan. However, they may prove necessary in order to provide a greater understanding of the situation in the Pyrénées-Orientales.

¹³ While the report for the Comunitat Valenciana does not provide a breakdown of results ordered by age, it states that 'the youth is the sector of the population which demonstrates the highest level of Valencian (Catalan)-language competence in all skill areas, especially reading and writing' (Academia Valenciana de la Llengua, 2005: 7) Moreover, the report claims that 53.68% of informants aged 15-24 learned Valencian in school, as opposed to only 1.16% of those aged 64 and over, implying that Catalan-language education is having a great impact in this region, despite the arguably limited number of students enrolled on Catalan-medium programmes.

James Hawkey

5.2 Are spoken varieties of French and Catalan affected by educational developments in Catalunya Nord?

My ongoing research addresses a similar question with relation to varieties of Catalan and Castilian in Barcelona. I posit that, despite the undisputed presence in Barcelona of contact linguistic phenomena such as code-switching (c.f. Calsamiglia and Tuson, 1980 *inter alia*), the younger bilingual population possesses a refined ability to identify normative and non-normative Catalan language use as a result of Catalan-medium education. Such awareness of norms should prove less refined in Castilian, as young Barcelona residents are schooled almost exclusively in Catalan. But how may such hypotheses be applied to Catalunya Nord? Are such contact linguistic phenomena even present?

In order to ascertain whether increased Catalan-medium education affects spoken varieties of French and/or Catalan in the region, one must first know what the features of the vernaculars actually are. It is impossible to state whether initiatives like *La Bressola* have an impact if one does not know how the languages are spoken to begin with. Are the varieties of French and Catalan spoken in the Pyrénées-Orientales characterised by features attributable to language contact?

There are few studies to date outlining the characteristics of the French spoken in the Pyrénées-Orientales. Wanner (1993: 81-4) carried out a sociolinguistic survey in Catalan- and Occitan-speaking areas of Languedoc-Roussillon, wherein the question was asked: 'Le français tel qu'on le parle en Languedoc-Roussillon est-il différent du français parlé à Paris?'. Subjects' metalinguistic representations of the language situation yielded answers ranging from 'Mais non, c'est tout à fait la même chose; drôle de question, ça' to 'Ah oui, beaucoup. C'est très différent' (ibid: 81). The majority of informants (78%) reported some level of difference between Parisian French and that spoken in Catalunya Nord, although this finding was age-graded, in that older participants showed a tendency towards differentiating between the two varieties of French.¹⁴ Few illustrations were provided of the French of Catalunya

¹⁴ An interesting point of comparison is provided in Kuiper (2005), whereby varieties of Provençal and Parisian French are compared and analysed. Participants from the two regions were asked to evaluate various regional varieties and rank them based on 'correctness', 'degree of difference' and 'pleasantness'. This study provides interesting information regarding Pyrénées-Orientales French (termed 'Languedoc' French). Parisian informants provided different results to Provençal participants regarding Languedoc French. Of the twenty-four regional varieties provided, the findings regarding Languedoc French were as follows:

Correctness. Parisian participants rated it 16th, with Provençal respondents rating it 15th out of 24. (Kuiper, 2005: 40).

Degree of difference. Parisian participants rated it the 19th most differentiated variety of 24, while Provençal participants only rated it 4th (ibid: 38).

Pleasantness. Parisian participants rated it the 4th most pleasant variety of 24, and Provençal participants rated it 2nd (after Provençal) (ibid: 42).

Nord, short of scant reported examples of typical contact phenomena such as lexical or syntactic calquing, as follows (ibid: 84):

Pyrénées-Orientales French:	encore	je n'ai pas	bu	le	café
Standard Catalan:	encara	no he	begut	el	cafè
English Gloss:	<i>still</i>	<i>I have not</i>	<i>drunk</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>coffee</i>
Standard French:	je n'ai pas encore bu le café ('I have still not drunk the coffee')				

Considerably more work has been undertaken outlining the characteristics of Catalan as spoken in Catalunya Nord. Numerous lexical and syntactic interferences are attested from both French and Occitan. The use of the numerals *desasset*, *desavuit*, *desanou* and *quatre-vingts* in Pyrénées-Orientales Catalan, following the French model of *dix-sept*, *dix-huit*, *dix-neuf* and *quatre-vingts*, as opposed to the standard Catalan *disset*, *divuit*, *dinou* and *vuitanta*, is one such example (Verdaguer, 1974: 99). It has also been noted that some *rossellonès* verb conjugations bear close resemblances to Occitan: Pyrénées-Orientales Catalan has the first-person simple present tense ending in *-i* (compare 'I speak' in Pyrénées-Orientales Catalan *jo parli* with Occitan *ieu parli* and standard Catalan *jo parlo*) (ibid: 107). Moreover, the Catalan of Catalunya Nord is characterised by certain phonetic and phonological qualities, including the raising of many instances of tonic [o] to [u] (Veny, 1986: 60). These distinctive traits have occasionally given rise to a spirit of *rossellonisme*, such that there was debate as to whether to use standard Catalan (with geographical origins in and around Barcelona) or the local *rossellonès* variety as the basis for teaching and other Catalan-language activities within the region (Becat i Rajaut, 1995: 22 *inter alia*).

With an increased awareness of the regional varieties of French and Catalan, how is one to ascertain whether recent developments in Catalan-medium education will impact on the said varieties? Once developments concerning Catalan-language medium education have been investigated in other Catalan-speaking areas, they can be used to predict the potential future linguistic situation of Catalunya Nord, which is in a less advanced state regarding Catalan-medium schooling. Such predictions could include the impact on vernacular varieties. This is an area which clearly needs more exploration, given the dearth of currently available material, and a full and thorough linguistic study of spoken French and Catalan in the Pyrénées-Orientales may prove illuminating.

While such results are detailed and informative, one should remember that participants were not from the Pyrénées-Orientales. (indeed, this would have made no sense for Kuiper's purposes), and as such, their views

5.3 What language attitudes do the inhabitants of Catalunya Nord display?

As stated in the opening paragraph, this article has largely aimed to address practices of language use in Catalunya Nord. However the question of language attitudes is inextricably linked to patterns of linguistic usage within a given community, and as such, any thorough study of the French/Catalan language situation in Catalunya Nord should contain an in-depth examination of language attitudes. Language attitude elements of sociolinguistic surveys in the Pyrénées-Orientales to date have largely consisted of eliciting metalinguistic commentary from participants. The Generalitat de Catalunya's 2004 study regarding language use in Catalunya Nord split its 'language attitude' component into four subsections. The first proposed a hypothetical situation whereby the informant, a Catalan speaker, was addressed in French by an interlocutor. 85.9% of participants claimed they would maintain the conversation in French (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004c: 38). The second subsection questioned participants as to their interest in learning Catalan, with under half claiming to be at all motivated to learn the language (ibid: 41). The third subsection asked informants their opinions as to whether the use of Catalan in contemporary society was increasing or decreasing, with 40.5% of respondents believing that use would decrease in the next five years (ibid: 47). The final subsection asked whether participants felt a sense of belonging to a Catalan linguistic community, with 68.5% answering affirmatively (either 'very much so' or 'reasonably') (ibid: 49). Earlier studies (Wanner, 1993) simply asked participants to state their preferred language. As can be seen, all of these approaches rely on self-report and metalinguistic commentary on the part of informants. This could perhaps be complemented in future with techniques that rely less on direct questioning, such as matched-guise tests, as pioneered by Lambert (1967) in Quebec and applied to the Barcelona Catalan speech community by Woolard (1989). Alongside the existing metalinguistic data, this would provide a more complete image of language attitudes in Catalunya Nord.

6. Concluding remarks

The purpose of this article was to pose relevant questions, allowing scholars to deepen research of the linguistic community of the Pyrénées-Orientales. While existing sociolinguistic studies have revealed interesting information, further investigation is required before a full understanding of the region can be approximated. In-depth knowledge of this linguistic situation could prove useful to scholars of language policy, as it provides a case study whereby language-immersion education of an endemic linguistic variety is in an

regarding Pyrénées-Orientales French should be treated as those of outsiders.

embryonic stage (much as would have been the case in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia twenty years ago), and therefore its progress can be accurately charted. Moreover, scholars of Romance Linguistics would undoubtedly benefit from a more thorough familiarity with another territory where two Romance varieties are in a dynamic situation of language contact.

This article has chosen to compare Catalunya Nord with other Catalan-speaking territories, since any full examination of the region takes into account its position as a member of a larger cultural and linguistic entity, *els Països Catalans*. However, comparisons with other regions in similar situations could provide new insight. Such studies may choose to examine Catalan in the Pyrénées-Orientales in conjunction with other regional languages of France, namely Breton, Corsican, Occitan etc. Indeed, the Flemish-speaking community in Northern France may provide a useful point of comparison, since, like Catalan, it is in a considerably more prestigious position outside of France than within. However, pending a fuller understanding of the region, all such proposals are merely speculative.

So, in short, what is the prognosis for Catalan in Catalunya Nord? I maintain that it is too early to tell, and much more research must be undertaken before a fully predictive analysis can be made. If this article has highlighted one thing, it is the dearth of existing information. Only when the research questions proposed in this paper have been attempted, can the academic community know more. Indeed, the prognosis may prove bleak. Catalan may have little to no future in the Pyrénées-Orientales. But, as academics, we should be fully informed about the region before making any such assumptions. Catalunya Nord is in a dynamic period from a linguistic point of view, and the academic community still has a great deal to explore and discover if it is to appreciate this region fully. 'Encara queda molt de camí per fer!'

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