

NOW IT'S "ON DEMAND": THE CATALAN LANGUAGE IN AN ELITE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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Abstract

In Catalonia, the number of international schools has increased continuously since 2008. Internationalization can be undertaken in very different ways in each centre, but internationalization often involves intensifying the presence of English, and including curricula such as those offered by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). As such these schools are often imagined as centres that “do everything in English”. This article adopts a critical ethnographic perspective to nuance this idea, starting from the study of the practices and discourses on multilingualism and the Catalan language circulating in the educational community of the Forum International School, a school founded in the late 80s and which has recently become internationalised. This study explores how the Catalan language is constructed in these environments, which have not been greatly studied so far, what linguistic ideologies inform the value of Catalan, and how the desire to take advantage of various languages reflects broader political, economic, and social processes.

Keywords: Catalan language; international education; sociolinguistic ethnography; linguistic ideologies.

ARA ÉS “A GUST DEL CONSUMIDOR”: LA LLENGUA CATALANA EN UNA ESCOLA INTERNACIONAL D’ELIT A CATALUNYA

Resum

A Catalunya el nombre d’escoles internacionals no ha parat de créixer des del 2008. La internacionalitat pot fer-se de maneres molt diverses a cada centre, però sovint internacionalitzar-se implica intensificar la presència de l’anglès i incloure currículums com els que ofereix l’Organització del Batxillerat Internacional (OBI). És per això que sovint s’imaginen aquestes escoles com centres que “ho fan tot en anglès”. Aquest article adopta una perspectiva etnogràfica crítica per matisar aquesta idea, partint de l’estudi de les pràctiques i els discursos sobre el multilingüisme i la llengua catalana que circulen en la comunitat educativa de Forum International School, una escola fundada a finals dels anys vuitanta i que s’ha internacionalitzat recentment. Explora com es construeix la llengua catalana en aquests espais tan poc estudiats fins ara, quines ideologies lingüístiques informen el valor del català i com els desitjos de capitalització en les diverses llengües reflecteixen processos polítics, econòmics i socials més amplis.

Paraules clau: llengua catalana; educació internacional; etnografia sociolingüística; ideologies lingüístiques.

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1 Introduction

“These schools that do everything in English”

At the beginning of September 2020, during a programme on the Catalan public radio, a talk-show guest complained that, at the start of such a complicated school year marked by the coronavirus crisis, international schools were once again doing as they pleased and skipping all the safety measures established by the government to deal with the COVID-19. She described how a group of parents waiting outside one of these schools, happily swapping tales about their holidays and failing to respect social distancing guidelines. In her opinion, it was unwise for schools to open normally in September, and the attitude of parents “of these schools that, besides, do everything in English”, provided her with the perfect example to illustrate the danger of such disobedience.

This commentary highlights anger at a distancing that is more than just physical. The social gap that continues to widen and accentuates the educational inequalities between social groups (Bonal and González, 2020) contributes to making international schools as a separate bubble, a world governed by its own rules. Hence the outraged emphasis on the fact that “they do everything in English”, that they also go their own way as far as language is concerned. This moment reflects the political and social situation in Catalonia with regard to linguistic education models, after years of “judicial siege” (Pradilla, 2017) with court judgements that attacked not only the implementation of the language combination model in public education, but also the framework of competences of the Generalitat. These judgements, and the controversy caused by the Organic Law to Improve Educational Quality (LOMCE) regarding the Generalitat’s obligations to guarantee the demand for Spanish as the main language of learning to those families – residual, it must be said – who request it, raised the issue of the right of parents to choose the language in which their children are taught (Corretja, 2013, 2016), with direct consequences for school segregation. Despite being hidden by the economic and political instability caused by the pandemic, the approval of the umpteenth new Spanish state-wide law on education (LOMLOE) has brought the language of education back into the spotlight (Del Valle, 2020).

This article aims to examine the changing role of languages, and particularly Catalan, in a private school, Forum International School (“FIS”), which, between 2008 and 2011, like many other schools in Catalonia, embarked upon an internationalisation process turning it into a trilingual school, i.e., one where the curriculum is taught in Catalan, Spanish and English. Since English and Spanish have been introduced as the language of instruction, the areas of use Catalan have been reduced. In the last thirteen years, the implementation of internationalisation programmes has changed both the identity of the school (which was to be known as a “Catalan school”) and also its demographic profile. In addition to increasing the proportion of families born neither in Catalonia nor in Spain, internationalisation has made it more elitist (Sunyol, 2019b).

Like most schools that have become internationalised in recent years in Catalonia, FIS is more expensive than the average. Exclusive pricing helps to make them elite spaces, but it is the curricula and the practices that attract parents from more affluent social groups (Maxwell, 2015). FIS is an elite school because it offers educational distinction and socialises students in social groups and practices that prepare them to occupy and exercise positions of power. It is therefore no surprise to find that such schools are located in Catalonia’s industrialised areas, where most multinational companies are concentrated and where GDP per capita is higher (Idescat). These schools traditionally educated the children of Catalonia’s upper-middle classes, and at FIS there were families that had generally made money with the property boom. After 2008, however, the sector had to change its strategy to address the fall in enrolments caused by the loss in purchasing power of the local middle class (Bonal, 2019). They therefore began to formulate new curricula to make them distinctive (Bourdieu, 1986) from other schools in their immediate surroundings. The emphasis on English and programmes allowing them to remain attractive to local elites but which also opened up the door to the global middle class (Ball, 2010), expatriate families living in Catalonia temporarily, often due to parent job postings, has led to changes in discourse and tensions with regard to the role that Catalan and Spanish should play in the new school and the fit between national and international curricula.

This article proposes an ethnographic look at the role of languages in the processes of commercialisation of education that have taken place in FIS over the last fifteen years. It shows how changes in social values and indexicalities (Silverstein, 2003) associated with each of the official languages have occurred in parallel

with changes in the types of families that send their children there. We need to examine these processes to understand the role of the education system in social stratification in Catalonia and to rethink what place minoritised languages should occupy in increasingly globalised education models. It then contextualises international education called third-generation in Catalonia and reflects on the ideologies informing the value of language as global educational capital in elite education models in late modernity. After describing the methodological approach that has informed the data collection, the results section analyses ethnographic data and excerpts from semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents and students who have come to FIS at different times, to discuss the changes in discourse and the tensions that arise around languages with the internationalisation of the school.

2 Context

International education in Catalonia in late modernity

To understand the role of Catalan in these schools, it is essential to outline the history of international education in Catalonia. At the beginning of the 20th century, international education was understood to be that which was provided by centres that implemented the national curricula from other countries abroad, such as the German, French or Italian schools, which were established in Barcelona from the end of the 19th century to the 1930s. Most of these schools were aimed at the expatriate families of these countries, but, during Franco's dictatorship, many opened their doors to the local population, entering the education market as a lay, progressive alternative to the regime's schools and thereby providing the foundations for the Catalan private education sector as we know it today. The global phenomenon of educational internationalisation has led to exponential growth in the sector in recent decades (Maxwell et al., 2018) and has changed the social meanings of international education: from being an education for peace at the start of the 20th century to becoming a model that is strongly influenced by the guiding principles of neoliberalism, that provides students with a highly valuable educational capital since, in addition to being exclusive, not accessible to everyone and thus distinctive (Bourdieu, 1986), it is designed to be exportable and exchangeable in any market (Deppe et al., 2018).

Research into international education shows that there are many different ways of understanding and "doing" internationality. The area in which internationalisation tends to be most visible, in Catalonia's primary and secondary schools, is the centre's multilingual programmes. Being an "international school" is increasingly regarded, as we have seen, as being a school in English. This comes as no surprise if we bear in mind that half of the forty or so international schools in Catalonia have English as the sole language of learning. They sell an English taught by "native" teachers in an immersion environment or where English forms part of the school's "natural" language repertoire. This alone justifies the financial investment made by upper-middle class families that could otherwise choose to enrol their children in public or publicly subsidised private schools (Bonal, 2019).

The obsession with English and, particularly, an English that is better than that of the rest (Codó, 2021; Sunyol, 2021), lies behind the educational choices made by the majority of families sending their children to this kind of international school, who have mostly been born in Catalonia or Spain. However, in recent years, schools like FIS, where more Spanish is taught than in the public or publicly subsidised private schools, are increasingly attracting a type of family—often born outside Catalonia—who want an education for their children in which Catalan does not play such a prominent role in the classroom or is even optional. These phenomena partly explain why the completely private education sector, attended by 7.4% of all students in compulsory education, has not stopped growing despite the financial crisis. The fact that internationality has been discursively constructed around English has helped create the image that international schools are schools "in English". However, in these schools' hallways, and in the classrooms, language practices are far from the imagined monolingualism. Catalan and Spanish form part of the school's everyday life because they are still the languages spoken by most students' families and because they are the majority languages of the school's immediate environment.

The period of Spain's democratic transition is important in any understanding of the development of educational models and the transformations brought about by internationalisation of completely private schools. It is no

coincidence that, at the very foundation of the new democracy, the majority of schools that did not enter into public-private partnership scheme¹ opted for the same model as publicly subsidised private schools and public schools, that is, for the Catalan school model² (Vila, 2008) established by Law 7/1983, on language normalisation, and later on, the LODE (1985). This shows that the linguistic conjunction was associated with a prestigious pedagogical and language model, which reflected social and civic values of modernity and progressivism aligned with the political and social projects that were imagined for the reconstruction a democratic Catalonia. The Catalan school was born as a project for social integration, with the mission of preventing a society segregated by language and social class (Boix, 1993, 1997; Nussbaum, 1992; Pujolar, 1995; Vila, 2005; Woolard, 1989). This educational model was progressively implemented during the 1980s and 1990s until it became the system in which 95.51% of students in Catalonia were enrolled (Vila and Galindo, 2012).

Beginning in 2000, the so-called *third wave of migration* (Ortega-Rivera and Solana, 2015) caused rapid demographic growth that changed the demo-linguistic dynamics of Catalan society. The Catalonia of Catalan and Spanish speakers became more complex, and the Catalan school model had to deal with new social challenges in a now "superdiverse" Catalonia (Newman et al., 2013; Pujolar and González, 2013; Unamuno, 2011). The new Law on Education in Catalonia (LEC, 12/2009), which aimed to provide a response to fresh social and political demands, came at a time in which reactions to the reform of Catalonia's Statute of Autonomy, in 2006, the seed of the independence process, stirred up the debates about the political future of Catalonia, and the issue of Catalan in schools became a battleground. As Flors-Mas (2017) notes, this point saw the start of a debate amongst some sectors of the population and political parties with very little parliamentary representation in Catalonia, which demanded a greater presence of Spanish as a language of learning in the education system. Arguments in support of bilingual and even trilingual (including English) models for official languages soon became part of the founding identity of the political party Ciutadans, created in 2006. Despite the political and social consensus around the need to implement linguistic conjunction policies that would guarantee all students could master Catalan and Spanish, the climate of tension and political debate around language at school that began at that time, particularly through the political support of parties such as Ciutadans to the actions of unconstitutionality against the Law on Education in Catalonia (LEC) filed by some families, opened up the way to the demand for such language models in the private education market (Mayans, 2015; Pons, 2013, 2014).

The outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008 and the atmosphere of instability prevalent in Catalonia explain the momentum gained by discourses that regarded English as an indispensable capital for overcoming the job insecurity into which the young were plunged by the crisis and the appearance of new discourses and initiatives on the need for new educational models that would meet the new social demands. Disinvestment in public education, processes of commercialisation of education that regard it as an increasingly globalised business and the situation of instability in the legal frameworks for education (Bonal and Verger, 2014; Martínez-Celorio, 2016; Pradilla, 2017; Vilalta, 2016) have helped destabilise the reputation of the Catalan school model in recent decades.

3 Theoretical framework

School markets and global educational capital

Education is a strategic space for the deployment of market mechanisms and the naturalisation of the logic of competition as an organising principle for life (Block, 2018a; Harvey, 2005; Heller, 2019; Martín Rojo and Del Percio, 2019; Piller and Cho, 2013). The private education sector has been nimbler in responding to the pressures of increasingly globalised societies and the educational needs created by the global stagnation of the economy after 2008. The growing commercialisation of education and the investment of private funds in

¹ A model established in 1985 and adopted by 90% of private schools, offering public funding to privately managed education centres so as to be able to guarantee the right of free primary and secondary education to all students.

² A model that picks up the educational tradition of the Spanish Republic and aims to break with the education models of the period of Franco's dictatorship by implementing a linguistic conjunction model in Catalan to foster its learning and use, with the goal of achieving greater social cohesion between Catalan and Spanish speakers.

education show how, in recent years, it has become a highly profitable sector, and it has been instrumentalised to improve the competitiveness of national economies —and of individuals— in global markets. Against this backdrop, international education has succeeded in positioning itself as the educational capital that “prepares [students] for life in the 21st century” (International Baccalaureate Organization).³ We are living in a social moment marked by uncertainty, which pushes people to act increasingly in accordance with anticipatory logics of “prevention” and “preparation”, to live oriented towards the future (Ahmed, 2010; Lemke, 2020). An international education, with English as its highlight, is presented as a vital element in individual capitalisation projects, a safe educational choice as it provides a range of skills that will maximise the return on educational investment. For families, choosing international educational capitals is, as Gao and Park (2015) note, increasingly a way of acting responsibly and anticipating to the needs of an uncertain future. The ideologies of globalism that underlie this type of education (Beck, 2000) converge with the necessary local insertion of these schools in the situated design of the internationality of each school; the implementation of School language policy at FIS is an example of this. Exploring the ideologies informing multilingual policies and practices —beyond English—and the social categories that emerge in these newly created international schools allows us to explain market logics, families’ educational choices and how the value of “local” languages has been changing in recent years.

Language, multilingualism and ideologies of authenticity and anonymity

The school is a fundamental tool in the nation-building project within nation-states and has traditionally played a central role in the processes of language standardisation and regulation. It provides a space where some languages, repertoires and practices are valued, legitimised, while others are devalued and delegitimised (Bauman and Briggs, 2003; Heller, 2007; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). We can see that, when social actors and members of the education community speak of internationalisation and how the school has changed, and when they take a position with regard to changes that they regard as essentially language-related, a complex web of language-related ideologies appear, which Woolard’s (2016) concepts of *anonymity* and *authenticity* help to illustrate. Woolard understands them as interdependent categories. Anonymity is a reflection of universalism, whilst authenticity values a language for its uniqueness, for its ability to become a “cultural artifact” in a specific space (Heller, 2010), which evokes an identity, a sense of belonging to a community, a nation, a government entity or to a citizenry.

Critical sociolinguistics regards languages as resources that are produced, controlled, distributed, taxed and limited (Heller, 2010), that acquire value in specific markets (Block, 2010; Heller et al., 2014; Park and Wee, 2012). The value of specific linguistic capitals fluctuates and changes as societies change, and in some cases, it can be exchanged for economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), as processes of language commodification taking place at FIS illustrate. Schools make use of marketisation to construct some languages as distinctive capitals (Codó and Sunyol, 2019) and to influence the educational choices of the most privileged social groups, who try to maintain or improve their social status. The Bourdieusian notion of *distinction* is key to understanding the linguistic and educational capitalisation of the dominant classes as a socio-cultural practice of class construction or maintenance. As Block (2018a) notes, the ways in which value is distributed in the fields of power (Bourdieu, 1986) are unstable. When capital becomes too common, too widely distributed, it is devalued and is of no use in being distinctive. With the democratisation of access to English and the implementation of programmes such as CLIL (Codó and Patiño-Santos, 2018) in public education, international programmes and the offer of exclusive multilingual programmes constitute a plus for students at FIS, which should place them in more “secure” social positions.

Language resources acquire value through semiotic processes, informed by linguistic ideologies that are subject to the regimentation of spaces and linguistic practices. As we shall see, an international school is a space where, through discursive constructions and semiotic practices, social actors define *authenticity* and *anonymity*. Internationalisation, at FIS, is a process of the resemiotisation of spaces which assigns new social, cultural and historical meanings to the signs and activities that take place there —including linguistic practices. Through discourse, new regimes of value and indexicalities are established (Silverstein, 2003)

³ IBO.

for the (linguistic) resources that are distributed (Urciuoli and LaDousa, 2013). Heller and Duchêne (2012) describe this journey as a shift from a romantic to an economic view of language.

Within the situated context of FIS, though, we can see how these ideological paradigms coexist and allow us to consider the very nature of language, which exists as a web of communicative resources that circulate and interrelate in complex ways, although in the school they are conceptualised as a sum of parallel monolingualisms —the trilingual policy which delimits the spaces for each language is only one example. In the internationalised space we are focusing on, framed within the context of Catalonia, where language is a highly relevant social and political symbol, these discursive regimes — of *authenticity* and *anonymity*, of national and post-national paradigms— exist in great tension with one another. On the one hand, great efforts are being made to establish a new discursive regime, that of internationality: everything related thereto — cosmopolitanism, English, multilingualism, diversity, mobility, etc. — is glorified and positivised, constructed as something modern, progressive and necessary for individual and collective development. These visions coexist with other, less visible, intricate and highly nuanced discourses, which social actors mobilise with regard to English (Sunyol, 2019a), Spanish and, above all, Catalan, depending on the context in question. In this shift from the paradigm of a Catalan school to an international one, the ideologies that link a language to a territory, a community and a social and political identity are transformed.

4 Method

An ethnographic look at schools' language policy

The arguments set forth in this article arise from a broader socio-linguistic ethnography⁴ (Heller, 2008; Pérez-Milans, 2013) on contemporary processes of internationalisation of education that focuses on multilingual policies and practices and how they contribute to the (re)production of inequalities in the Catalan education system. The study is based on a corpus created over the course of two years (2015-2017) of ethnographic fieldwork in two schools undergoing internationalisation. This article looks at just one of these schools, Forum International School (FIS), where I conducted fieldwork between the spring of 2015 and July 2017, at the primary and secondary school, and within the national baccalaureate and the International Baccalaureate programme (IBDP). After a general period of classroom observations and more general observations in a range of school spaces, I identified key participants and interviewed its Head Teacher, department coordinators (6), teachers (9), language teaching assistants (1), former teachers (1), parents (3), students (20) and policy-makers (4), both individually and in focus groups.⁵ In addition to these data, I documented the school's linguistic landscapes and collected institutional texts and promotional materials produced by the school.⁶ This article contains data from observations, linguistic landscapes and promotional materials, but is based on five excerpts from interviews with participants with different backgrounds: founding teachers, a mother and a student who have been in the school since the early noughties, and local and 'international' parents and students who have become part of the FIS community more recently, after it became international. The participants' narratives allow us to explore ideologies, attitudes and values regarding the Catalan language in the school, which shed light on existing logics and tensions.

Forum International School: from a Catalan to an international school

Forum International School (FIS) is a paradigmatic case of newly created international schools. A private centre founded at the end of the 1980s as a Catalan school, it offers everything from pre-school education

⁴This work was part of the research for the R+D APINGLO-CAT project, financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (FFI2014-54179-C2-1-P; IP Dra. Eva Codó). I would like to thank the participants and the school for allowing me to form part of their lives over the course of these years, and to Eva Codó, Adriana Patiño, Elisabet Pladevall, Maria Rosa Garrido, Emilee Moore and Jessica McDaid for sharing their expertise and experience so generously. I would also like to thank Iris Milán and Daniel Pujol for transcribing the data.

⁵These semi-structured interviews lasting between half an hour and an hour were carried out in Catalan, Spanish or English according to the interviewees' preferences. Most of the interviews were in Catalan, except for some with British teachers, who preferred them in English, or with students from the "international" category, who preferred Spanish if they came from Latin American countries or English if that was their home language or there was no other shared language with the interviewer. All "local" teachers and students wished to carry out the interviews in Catalan.

⁶This study was approved by the Autonomous University of Barcelona's Ethics Committee.

to baccalaureate, and has recently added vocational training programmes. In 2008, it was bought by an education group with schools around the world, financed by one of the investment funds that invests most in education projects on a global scale, and embarked upon a process of internationalisation. Changes in school management led to structural changes in the teaching workforce and in the profile of teachers the school was looking for: an international one, i.e., well-travelled, with good English and, if possible, teaching experience abroad. One of the most important impacts was the transformation of the school's language policy, which became trilingual, and the inclusion of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) programmes into the educational offer. The International Baccalaureate (IB) is implemented in parallel with the Catalan curriculum (LOMCE) and is offered as an extra to the national curriculum (for a more detailed study, see Sunyol and Codó, 2019). Students can opt to follow it if they have a good academic record. Most FIS families (85%) come from the immediate surroundings. However, with internationalisation, there has been an increase in "international" families, from 8% in 2008 to 15% in 2018. Monthly fees at FIS range from €280 (primary) to €700 (secondary), but once account is taken of extras such as lunches, school trips, consumables, after-school activities and IB programmes, families can pay up to €900 per month per student.

The school's multilingual programme is its distinctive element par excellence and contemplates the precise and exact division of the curriculum into each language —33% for English, Catalan and Spanish at both primary and secondary levels. For the "national" baccalaureate, the classes are in Catalan or Spanish, depending on the preference of the teacher in question, and for the "international" one, officially, in Spanish. The unofficial practice is, however, that they tend to be in Catalan. Additionally, FIS offers the chance to learn other languages such as French, German and Mandarin Chinese, which is compulsory from P4 (second year of pre-school) to 5th year of primary school (Sunyol and Codó, 2019). In recent years, the kind of family sending their children there has changed: before, the FIS proposal was attractive to families from the immediate environment who wanted the Catalan school model for their children and access to the social enclosure provided by a private education; today, the school is also attractive to families who, for a variety of reasons, want more Spanish in their children's educational model.

5 Results

From a Catalan to an international school

FIS's progressive shift towards internationalisation since 2008 has brought with it changes in many areas, but in particular in that of languages. When entering the school, the new trilingual policy is obvious in every sign: "Sala de professors. Staff room. Sala de profesores". Messages to parents, students and teachers may appear in English, Catalan or Spanish, the school's official languages, and, in some cases, also in the foreign languages taught there. Multilingual messages, maps of the world, flags and drawings depicting the school's supposed racial and linguistic diversity dot the walls of every corner of the school and are the semiotic depiction of the coveted international identity. Roser, one of the FIS's founding teachers, who has worked there since 1989, is responsible for showing me round the school, and directs us towards towards the dining hall because she wants me to see something. Circling the huge room, above some big windows, are paintings of the flags of all the countries represented in the school. "And you'll notice that there is also a Catalan flag, even though it's not an independent country".⁷ "There's no politics at this school. That's because everyone feels they are represented", says Roser. Over the years, she has become the primary school coordinator and, since 2008, has worked with the new senior management team in implementing the internationalisation project. FIS is "an 'international Catalan' school", she says, and both she and Ermengol, the headteacher, who the new owners appointed in 2008, make sure that this is made clear to me from the very beginning. In our first conversation in her office, she stresses the point: "I always define it as a Catalan, international school". And Ermengol immediately corrects her "Catalan Spanish with an international outlook" (18/02/15, field notes).

At FIS, internationalisation is linked to the trilingual policy that has changed both the school's walls and its *frontstage* practices (Goffman, 1974), which are now painstakingly divided into identical percentages —if such a thing is possible— of the school's three official languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. Trilingualism is the formula for making internationality "highly experiential" (Ermengol, 17/07/17, interview data).

⁷All the excerpts in this section appear in the language in which the conversation or interview took place.

Bearing in mind that Catalan was previously the *de facto* language, the new trilingual policy ushered in by internationalisation has particularly intensified the presence of English, but also of Spanish. Catalan and Spanish are seen as key languages for building the school's new identity. Although the role of local languages, and Catalan in particular, is blurred in the school's sales discourses, probably because they are not seen as providing a sales edge, there is a discursive effort to construct a non-reactive internationality, that is to say, one that responds only to globalising pressures. The preference is for a model (including a linguistic one) that reflects the complex interaction of forces that originate on multiple scales: global, national and local (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002). This is doubtless the reason why the centre offers the International Baccalaureate as a complement to the LOMCE, i.e., the national one. Students who are admitted to the IB Diploma Programme follow, in a separate space from their "LOMCE classmates", a hybrid programme that merges the contents of both programmes, and allows them to maximise the time they spend in school to be able to take both the university entrance exam (*selectivitat*) and the IB. National credentials are essential for accessing any university in Catalonia and the IB is merely a complement, even if the school allocates to it its best resources – the newest equipment and the most highly qualified and charismatic teachers. Mercè is FIS's "Merlí"⁸ – the philosophy teacher who bedazzles students. She joined FIS at the end of the eighties, like Roser, and over the years has become the IB coordinator and a member of the management team. She also views internationalisation as a reciprocal process that must have local (linguistic) realities as its starting point:

Excerpt 1. *Andrea (researcher); Mercè (IB coordinator)*

- 1 M: a vegades a l'equip directiu es parla d'escoles internacionals de:/ tercera generació que
2 diu la Kate no/ (.) és a dir que és valor de lo local/ (.) però amb projecció internacional\
3 (.) o sigui [internacionalització no vol dir/
4 A: [ah això m'ha agradat molt\
5 M: sí\ i internacionalització no vol dir/ (.) la invasió de l'anglès\ (.) i una cosa molt
6 interessant que té el BI és que això t'ho respecta molt\ (.) no/ per exemple el BI quan
7 tu agafes la llengua/ com és el català/ nosaltres farem català castellà/ també ara
8 l'anglès/ e:./ clar el BI et diu/ tu faràs/ fas tantes hores de català com fas de
9 matemàtiques\ mentres que al currículum de la LOMCE per exemple fas dos hores de
10 català\
11 A: ja\
12 M: =és a dir que en aquest sentit és una internacionalització molt ben-/ jo entenc que molt
13 ben entesa\ és a dir\ tu no pots internacionalitzar si encara no coneixes el teu món\ i
14 els nens que et venen de fora/ els nens internacionals que diem/ han de conèixer també
15 què passa en aquí\ (.) perquè sinó és internacional només d'una banda no/ i ha de ser
16 suposo que de dues bandes\ i jo crec que el currículum del BI justament/ (.) és/ (.)
17 internacional/(.) en un sentit generós\ és a dir/ NO EXCLOENT\
18 A: vale/
19 M: =sinó inclusiu no/ i trobo que això està molt bé\ (.) o sigui el fet que qualsevol
20 LENGUA LOCAL/ pugui estar reconeguda/ (.) per examinar-se/ i per obtenir el
21 diploma del BI/ això és això és molt gran\ (.) no i els pares a vegades que diuen/ bueno
22 feu-ho en anglès\ no no bueno nosaltres ho fem en espanyol/ ((perquè)) el bi em diu
23 puc fer-ho/ en anglès en francès o en espanyol\ (.) i algunes assignatures ja es poden
24 fer en xinès/ o es poden fer en alemany/

[FIS, 13/07/17]

During one of the very first conversations that I had with Mercè in preparation for my classroom observations for her IB philosophy course, she let me in on a secret: even though the syllabus was officially in Spanish, everyone often ended up speaking in Catalan in class – obviously, “because most students at the school have been here for ages”. She argued in favour of internationality at the school being defined as a programme that goes beyond just English: it complements the “national” education, which is the non-negotiable foundation upon which it must be built. In her eyes, internationalisation is only “well-understood” if it is reciprocal: in

⁸The main character of a TV series initially produced by Catalan public television and telling the tale of a philosophy teacher with an original style, who is both highly charismatic and regarded by his students.

other words, when it “respects” and “fosters” locality. Mercè’s discourse shows how national and post-national paradigms are seen as in opposition to one another, but things in practice are not so clear. She associates languages with these universes following ideologies of authenticity and anonymity (Woolard, 2008, 2016). Catalan and Spanish are local languages (lines 7, 20), and then there are other languages, such as English and the anonymous languages with a future suggested by the “already” (*ja*) of line 23.

When teachers who have been at the school for years glorify international programmes and the school’s reciprocal internationality (lines 8-10), they often claim that, paradoxically, the IB allows them to give more hours of teaching in Catalan than the LOMCE curriculum, as it has two Catalan subjects: Language A (Catalan) and Catalan literature, whilst in the baccalaureate there is simply one: Catalan language and literature. They do not, however, explain that not all students have to study Catalan as Language A, which counts as a “local” language subject. FIS also offers Language A (Spanish) and Spanish literature. In Mercè’s discourse, insisting on how Catalan is taught, and in the place Catalan occupies in the IB, forms part of a defensive attitude towards the “English invasion”, which reveals the tensions arising from the new identity amongst “long-standing” teachers and students. However, this version often finds itself on shaky ground. In lines 19-24, including Catalan and Spanish in the “local language” category muddles the image of the roles and spaces occupied by each. Using Catalan as the language of learning in the IB is a transgression. Lines 23 and 24 show that only languages with anonymous value can be languages of instruction, and the multifunctional value of Spanish, which is at once both local and global, allows Mercè to play with the “local languages” label in an ambiguous way.

Trilingual policies and the construction of political neutrality

Attempts are often made to conciliate the complex web of ideologies, values and affects informing how members of the education community position themselves with regard to languages, with discourses of equality between the school’s three official languages. Many families who traditionally sent their children to FIS were looking for the model of the Catalan school like those in the surrounding area, but in a socially enclosed place —i.e., with very little socioeconomic diversity. However, FIS has always offered a little more Spanish and more English than other neighbouring schools, and there have always been parents like Gema, who, although seeking a school where their children could acquire a high level of Catalan, as it was not the language spoken at home, appreciated the school’s “plural” appearance:

Excerpt 2. *Andrea (researcher); Gema (parent of LOMCE students)*

- 1 A: o sea que parte de la decisión:/ eh:: o de la:: de escoger esta escuela/(.) es- viene
2 motivada por las lenguas imagino\
3 G: una parte si/ (.) o sea lo que nos gustaba por ejemplo/ es:/ (2.0) fijate a mi me gustó
4 mucho que era un proyecto/ (.) que era muy:/ (1.0) muy plural no/ que tenia-/ te
5 hablaba de:/ formación en valores:/ (.) te hablaba de:/ método de estudio::/ de:: de:/
6 de hábito/ (.) te hablaba de idiomas/ de- de- de construir mentes abiertas/ mentes
7 críticas no/ (.) entonces esto me:/ nos gustó mucho\ (.) y también nos gustó/(.) que no
8 era un proyecto::/ (.) a diferencia de otras escuelas\ (3.0) muy nacionalista no/ o sea
9 nos pareció que era/ realmente muy abierto/ muy plural/ muy global\ (.)

[16/06/17]

Gema’s discourse neatly illustrates the tensions that have been appearing around the Catalan school model, known as *language immersion in Catalan*, since the beginning of the 21st century, when it became identified with a politically influenced model, associated with pro-independence political and social identities that surfaced after the judgement on the Statute (Soler and Erdocia, 2020). In 2003, when she and her partner, who were both born outside Catalonia and worked in the technology sector, enrolled their daughters at FIS, the couple wished to provide them with the linguistic capital Catalan entails, because they did not want to restrict the social spaces to which they could have access in the future. Catalan, for them, was a key language for social integration, and “at school, people mostly spoke Catalan” (*en la escuela hablaban sobretudo en*

catalán), she says. In other words, FIS was seen as a place in which the goals of the linguistic conjunction system were achieved. However, its linguistic model, which included a little more Spanish and a little more English, marked this emphasis that was important to her even then: it did away with any “very nationalist” appearance (line 8). Gema constructs FIS programmes as “open, plural and global”, unlike other alternatives that hinged on the learning and use of Catalan.

FIS has been adapting to the circumstances and the need to sell a product that is well received on the education market, and, as we have seen, internationalisation has marked a turning point for it. When implementing the linguistic model and the language learning programmes, the school focuses on explaining its trilingual policy in terms of what it means for learning English and other foreign languages. *Immersion* is mentioned, but the meaning has changed: now the term is used with regard to the early learning of English and to the creation of real learning contexts in the classroom. No explanation is provided with regard to the imagined role of Catalan and Spanish. The fact that they are taken for granted might indicate, as we shall see, that they form a “natural” part of the school’s linguistic ecosystem, but also that the trilingual policy represents the cornerstone for the school’s political neutrality, which, with the increasing political tensions in Catalonia since 2011, has helped it appeal to a broader public. With its internationalisation and the implementation of trilingual policies, there are more and more parents at the school who, unlike Gema, eschew the linguistic conjunction model because of the political connotations they ascribe to it.

David and Josep, both with children in the primary school, chose FIS, like Gema, because “it had no Catalan nationalist bias”. David was born in Madrid and Josep in Catalonia, and both have foreign partners, work in a multinational company not far from the school and changed schools after a period working abroad. During a conversation we had at their workplace cafeteria, Josep said that he was annoyed by the “very very Catalan” mentality of the publicly subsidised private school to which he previously sent his children. In his words: “I’m very Catalan, but if someone’s even more Catalan than me, I think, *yeesh!*” [Jo sóc molt català, però quan algú és més català que jo, penso, ui!] FIS was an “apolitical” and “agnostic” option, “probably more pro-Spanish language than pro-Catalan, I don’t know, I mean, very neutral” [probablement més castellanòfila que catalanòfila, no ho sé, o sigui, molt neutra], according to David, who previously sent his daughters to a public school in the city. Josep switched to FIS to give his daughters more exposure to English than at the public school, where it was “practically non-existent”, and so that they would not forget it after spending a year in Israel. David also noted that, “they also had very little exposure to Spanish, and this got on my tits a bit, as a Spanish speaker and all” [l’exposició que tenien al castellà també era molt baixa, i això a mi em tocava una mica les pilotes també, com a castellanoparlant i tal] (interview data, 28/03/17), even though he stressed how the first thing he did when coming to Catalonia was to speak Catalan, that he is not reluctant, that, for him, Catalan is an asset.

In Catalan, English or Spanish? One policy, many perspectives

Trilingualism is an ideological construct that serves to construct the idea of proportion and the value of each language and, by extension, the school’s political neutrality. Equality between languages is only discursive and does not reflect on-the-ground practice. Most students coming from elsewhere, who Mercè called “international”, —that is, students that had been to school in other countries before coming to Catalonia— have the impression that, even though they had assumed they would be taught in English, at school, teachers and students speak Catalan most of the time.

When we examine the students’ discourses on the Catalan language, we see the “respect” Mercè spoke of in Excerpt 1 is understood and materialised in several ways. Astrid, a 2nd-year baccalaureate student who was born in the Netherlands and who has studied in international schools in Asia, Europe and also in Catalonia, never speaks Catalan, even though she says she understands a little and has chosen to learn it so as to better understand what is going on around her. She would otherwise miss the nuances of her surrounding realities: “Independence in Catalonia is a huge thing, I have a few friends who choose not to learn Catalan and choose only to learn Spanish\ they don’t understand that to the extent that I do” (17/01/17, interview data). When she arrived in Catalonia, for 4th year of compulsory secondary education (ESO), she went to an international school where she could do everything in English, because her Spanish was not good enough to follow the classes, but she wanted to learn it in-depth. So, a year later, she changed to FIS to study in Spanish rather than

having to do it as an after-school activity. Even though she had not learned the local languages of the Asian countries in which she had lived, because they were not needed to live there, for her, Spanish is essential, especially in Catalonia, to understand and form part of the local culture and to enter into the local ecosystem (interview data, 17/01/17). Now that her parents want to settle there, they have chosen to send her younger siblings to a public school so that they can learn Spanish and Catalan. However, for Astrid, "the important thing was to learn the Spanish because the IB I either have to take my exams in English or in Spanish so the Spanish was the most important" (17/01/17, interview data) Although she can follow a conversation in Catalan, if she had to speak it, she would not be able to, except for "a few small things". The dual value of Spanish's anonymity and authenticity creates an attraction towards "local" languages, but also ends up devaluing and limiting access to Catalan. "International" students like Astrid see the fact that life at school takes place mainly in Catalan as limiting their possibilities of accessing spaces, resources and social groups at the centre (Sunyol, 2019b), but do not regard it as a capital in which they need to invest anything beyond their "respect" and acknowledgement.

The logics of capital accumulation within the IB are similar to those of Astrid for the majority of "international" students. Clara, who was born in the El Maresme region of Catalonia but who has spent most of her life in Central America with her family, says that what most surprised her on arriving at FIS was that the classes were not in English, despite it being an international school: "Here, although they say it's an international... um, bilingual / ah, well, trilingual / school, we don't really speak it here (.) the percentage that they say of each language \ I only do - I mean, last year I only did English in the English class". The remainder of classes were in Catalan, and she found this difficult at times, because she only spoke Catalan with her family, and a "very Spanish influenced Catalan. This year, she says, she only has two hours of Catalan per week, because she has chosen Spanish as her Language A for the IB:

Excerpt 3. *Andrea (research); Clara (student)*

- 1 C: és que em fa una mica de llàstima perquè clar el català és la meua llengua
2 llavors m'agradaria saber-la parlar i escriure (.) ehm:: però clar com m'he anat
3 doncs se'm fa molt difícil i clar és trist com dir prefereixo parlar en castellà o
4 prefereixo no sé què en castellà perquè no és realment la- ara ho és però abans
5 no ho era i-
6 A: però i- o sigui ho fas per les notes no bàsicament/ per tenir més oportunitats
7 C: sí clar\ puc redactar millor en castellà\ clar\ en tot\

[FIS, 17/03/18]

The feeling of pity and an emotional attachment to Catalan described by Clara reinforces the view that it is a language that is perceived only as a language of authenticity (Woolard, 2016). This excerpt shows that behind the language capitalisation choices made there is an instrumentalist vision that leads to the abandoning of Catalan as a subject in favour of Spanish. Clara says that she feels ignorant because she only knows three languages and is always telling her family that she would like to know more, because, of the three she knows, "one is only spoken here in Catalonia, and Spanish is quite big and English too", but she would need to know more to ensure a better standing in the future. The above excerpts show how Catalan is not perceived of as educational capital of sufficient value: neither Astrid nor Clara are sure what they can obtain in exchange, or if it would penalise them when it comes to sitting exams.

It is also a language: Catalan, a language for internationality?

Amongst teachers and students who have spent a long time at the school, i.e., the "non-international" ones, there is a shared perception of a decline in the use of Catalan:

Excerpt 4. *Andrea (researcher); Guillem (IB student)*

- 1 G: és que ara assignatures en català en fem una\ català\ i lu demás és en castellà\
2 (...)
3 lu demás com hi ha gent de fora hi ha gent que parla castellà a casa seva doncs
4 automàticament passes al castellà\
5 A: i això a tu què et sembla\
6 F: a mi em sembla malament perquè diuen::n sí que diuen que tot s'ensenya per igual\ les
7 mateixes llengües aquí a aquesta escola que tot é::s anglès tant català tant i castellà
8 tant però no és així en el fons perquè s'adapta a que tothom ho pugui entendre i com
9 els catalans parlem castellà quasi tots o tots doncs tothom ho entén i es fa en castellà\
10 A: i creus que potser no hauria de ser així\
11 F: sí\ si estan aquí si és internacional se suposa que s'han de dominar bastants idiomes
12 no/ i el català també és un idioma\ o sigui que en certa manera també els aportarà
13 alguna cosa aprendre'l\ no adaptar-se només al castellà i tancar-se allà\ sí que és cert
14 que el català estan obligats a fer-lo
15 A: i el fan\
16 F: sí (.) però crec que no suficient\

[FIS, 21/06/17]

Guillem's discourse is linked with the idea of additive internationality as a model for the internationalisation "well-understood" advocated by Mercè, to criticise the fact that the implementation of trilingualism has taken no account of the socially disadvantaged position of the Catalan language. This point lies at the heart of the dispute between the "old" and the "new" school, as Guillem rightly puts it, and is an issue that members of the education community in positions of responsibility tend to tiptoe around (Excerpt 1). As Lluïsa, a teacher of English at FIS for 18 years and a school mother herself, puts it, "the rule before was Catalan, and now it's 'on demand'" (interview data 24/05/17). Within the framework of an increasingly commercialised relationship with families, FIS is now very different to the school to which Guillem's parents, Gemma and Lluïsa sent their children. In the conversation between David and Josep, tensions appeared with regard to the language model:

Excerpt 5. *David, Josep (parents); Andrea (researcher)*

- 1 D: a Madrid per exemple/ hi havia molt aquest debat\ (...) no/ (.) a la pública/ (.) això per
2 exemple/ em toca bastant les pilotes\ (.) Madrid que és Esperanza Aguirre/ PP/ no sé-
3 tal tal/ (.) però tota l'educació pública/ (.) tenen programes bilingües/ als col·legis
4 públics\ (.) i aquí/(.) a l'escola pública/ (.) no hi ha ni castellà\ (.) i això em toca les
5 pilotes/ perquè al final el català/ és una riquesa (.) tens un: tercer idioma (.) i- i no és
6 com l'anglès/ que l'anglès tens el debat de (.) clar però es que si tinc profes que donen
7 mates en anglès/ (1.0) o parlen bé anglès/ (.) o saben mates\ (.) necessites un
8 perfil/ que ja és més complicat de trobar/ (.) algú/ que sapigui de la matèria/ (.) i que
9 sapigui anglès\ (.) però castellà tothom p-/ (.) és igual
10 J: =aquí es fa per balancejar el bias/ que té:/ (.) els mitjans de comunicació/ i tot [això el
11 castellà respecte el català/ (.) vull dir-
12 D: [estic d'acord/ si estic d'acord estic d'acord/ (.)
13 però al final/
14 J: =no és tan per no tenir professors/ que [((parlen)) altres coses es fa perquè/(.)
15 D: [CORRECTE\ (.) CORRECTE\ (.) sí sí/ es fa
16 pel tema polític/ (.) però a mi/
17 J: =com que està molt desbalancejat/ (.) [la magnitud de l'idioma s'ha de compensar
18 d'alguna manera\
19 D: [però al final/ (.) però al final/ (.) pateix/ (.)
20 pateix el castellà/ (.) però també pateix molt el anglès\ (.) i [pateixen els altres idiomes\
21 J: [sí/ (.) jo el que trobo
22 malament es que pateixi [l'anglès/
23 D: [clar\
24 J: = jo crec que això no/ (.) una cosa no treu l'altra\
25 D correcte\
26 J: =tu pots fer l'educació en català/ i algunes assignatures fer-les en anglès/ (.) i anar
27 variant d'assignatures/ (.) perquè tinguin [el vocabulari de totes les assignatures\
28 D: [sí\ (.) sí\ (.) sí\ (.)
29 A: bueno perquè al final/ el model/ (.) de trilingüisme s'ha entès com una:/ (.) retallada
30 del català [/ i no com una:/
31 J: [no clar\ (.) és que no hauria de ser això
32 D: sí sí\

[28/03/17]

Despite agreeing with the “importance” of and “richness” that Catalan represents, and the discourse of “the more languages the better”, which Clara alluded to, David interprets that the linguistic conjunction is detrimental for Spanish, and that, in the context of Catalonia, it is not a matter of a lack of resources, but rather a political will to promote Catalan (line 9), which forces Josep to explain—and defend—the logics of the linguistic conjunction (lines 10-11). The increasing tension finds an escape valve in the “suffering of English”, which both regard as unacceptable. This excerpt clearly shows that English is the ground of neutrality that allows the reaching of agreements. Nobody questions its importance and nobody wants to do without it, and it is the element that allows people to dodge the issue of Catalan and Spanish, which has become taboo, in that it is regarded as a reflection of conflicting ideological positions and political agendas.

6 Conclusions

Several voices show that third-generation international schools like FIS, which offer both national and international curricula, are not just “schools in English”. Language policies were created and implemented there, at the beginning, with regard to the public and publicly subsidised private system, either to follow them—as in the 1980s—or to offer complementary education products—as today—with the aim of providing families with the capitals that at any given time are considered distinctive for the dominant classes. The above trilingual model is not constructed as a substitute for the linguistic conjunction model, but rather as an addition to the model already taught. At FIS, Catalan has continued to be the language habitually used in most areas, but the change in the identity of the school has brought with it a new discursive regime that changes the roles and value assigned to languages: there has been a shift from a language policy that responded to a political and social project in which many still believe, as we have seen, to a market language policy that seeks to satisfy the consumer.

Trilingualism offers a normative framework in which all kinds of practices and discourses find a fit and that can satisfy everybody, provided that they can find the right discursive clothing. This is possible because a variety of regimes of value coexist in this new discursive space and there are therefore competing meanings and indexicalities for the different languages spoken and learned there. The data show how Catalan is understood as a linguistic resource of authenticity and is valued because it is “their” language, that of the community, the country. It must be “respected” and “acknowledged”; however, despite claiming it as a language for internationality (Excerpt 4), it is not perceived of as capital that is possible to “exchange in other fields”, as Bourdieu would put it. It is not exportable. Astrid and Clara make this clear, but in all the other discourses —particularly those of Josep and David— it is implicit and represents a change with regard to the linguistic capitals that had value at the time when Gema sent her daughters to the school. Although Catalan is not optional, and everyone has to learn it to some degree and is exposed to it, it is not officially a language of instruction in international programmes. Neither is it a valid language for being examined in, for all students. Those not sitting Catalan university entrance exams have no need to master it, and often do not even learn it. In this respect, it has lost status. In the new school, English and Spanish are “anonymous” languages, which can be commercialised; they are tools, indispensable skills for competing in late modern labour markets.

However, Spanish has an ambivalent role: it is claimed as a local language, and this is the key to selling FIS’s internationality as third-generation. In other words, FIS is a place where Spanish is a language with the value of anonymity (Woolard, 1989), but has the added value of being an “authentic” resource. That is why it is an attractive place for people like Astrid, Clara and David, although these discourses do not circulate widely throughout the school, because they are perceived as controversial. The “local languages” label often conceals a loss of domains of use for Catalan and, as Roser notes, comes into conflict with Catalan’s legitimacy and authenticity. The school’s obsession for neutrality and for avoiding conflicts forms part of the process of commercialisation of languages in education (Sunyol, 2021). This also explains why discourses calling for more room for Catalan and criticising that internationalisation has devalued the language, that no measures are taken to protect and legitimise it, always come from either long-standing students, like Guillem, or veteran teachers, like those we have seen, who have no administrative responsibilities at the school. These dissident voices also come up against the same contradictions as Josep (Excerpt 5) when it comes to signing up to the future value of all those capitals that are international and cosmopolitan. The way of escaping from the dodgy terrain between Spanish and Catalan is English: nobody questions its importance and it is indispensable for the cosmopolitan, transnational lives they imagine for their children. And all of them have the financial resources to allow them to sidestep public policies and take charge of their children’s linguistic capitalisation.

These practices and discourses must be understood within the broader context of socially circulating discourses on trilingualism as an ideology that exists in opposition to language immersion in Catalan. Empty discourses on Catalan as an “asset” and the (decreasing) predominance of Catalan in classroom practices are not enough to give the language equal value within an educational context in which what counts is capitalisation, certification and educational and job competitiveness on a global scale. However, the market logic under which FIS operates and the muddled communication with regard to local languages make it clear that the school still needs Catalan, even if it cannot allow itself to take sides in the matter.

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