

**CURRICULAR HERITAGE LANGUAGES:  
DUAL-LANGUAGE IMMERSION SCHOOLING AS A SOLUTION  
FOR CATALONIA'S ENGLISH-KNOWING SCHOOL-AGE  
POPULATION**

**LLENGUA D'ORIGEN, LLENGUA CURRICULAR:  
LA PROBLEMÀTICA DELS ALUMNES D'ARREL ANGLÒFONA  
A LES ESCOLES CATALANES I LA IMMERSIÓ  
BIDIRECCIONAL COM A POSSIBLE SOLUCIÓ**

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**Paraules clau:** l'ensenyament de les llengües d'origen; la mobilitat de la població activa a la Unió Europea; la immersió bidireccional com a model d'ensenyament

**1. Point of departure and objective**

This paper addresses aspects of Catalan education policy from the point of view of a newly founded educational advocacy group, the English-speaking Children's Parents' and Guardians' Association of Catalonia (in Catalan, *Associació Catalana de Mares, Pares i Tutors d'Infants Anglòfons*). Most of our members are among Catalonia's 33,800 English-speaking residents; others are Catalans who formerly lived in an English-speaking country where their children were schooled in English. We believe that publicly funded schools in Catalonia should make some provision for the language

skills of children who are native or near-native speakers of English. We believe that programs tailored to the English skills these children already possess will better enable them to use written and spoken English with the same depth and breadth of skills and purposes for which they are being educated to use Catalan. We believe that fostering a dual-language, cosmopolitan identity in these children, both as learners and as future citizens, will be of incalculable benefit to Catalan society as it meets the challenges of a knowledge-based, globalized economy whose lingua franca is English.

## **2. Context**

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed remarkable growth in the number of Catalan residents who are classed, statistically, as citizens of Germany, the UK, or France. From the 2000 to 2010, Catalonia's German population increased by nearly 145% to 24,032, its French population by over 268% to 35,940, and its population of UK nationals by 270% to 21,775 (Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya, 2000-2010)<sup>8</sup>. In comparison to the general population, these communities reside disproportionately in the capital and nearby municipalities – for example, some 37% of French residents live in Barcelona, and the population of Sant Cugat del Vallès is over 1.25% French. While the Statistical Institute of Catalonia data sets do not feature an exact break-down for school-age children, they do provide figures for the French, German, and UK resident populations aged 0-14: 3882, 2067, and 2189 respectively, as of 1 July 2011 (Direcció General per a la Immigració, 2011). In the absence of a detailed linguistic census data for residents who have not attained the age of majority, this data gives us our most reliable estimate of the number of children who are home speakers of three of the four curricular foreign languages of the Catalan education system. Here I must add two caveats. If native-born children holding Spanish nationality who speak one of these languages to one or both parents were factored in, the figures would no doubt be considerably higher; and French-, English-, and German-knowing newcomers from other states for which detailed data have not been published – such as Canada, Switzerland, and Australia – the figures would again be revised upwards.

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<sup>8</sup> Dual nationals are not counted among the foreign population.

Thus, Catalonia is home to thousands of school-aged children for whom the taught foreign languages of schooling are not foreign. In terms of policy, the Catalan educational system makes no specific, concerted accommodation of such children, nor of those whose skills in these languages, acquired in other circumstances (such as some schooling abroad in an English-speaking country), make them ill-suited to an EFL classroom. There is anecdotal evidence that the presence of English-knowing children in Catalan EFL classrooms leads to conflicts over points of pronunciation, or grammar, or pragmatics; that such children find that English class can be a frustrating experience; that they are neglected inasmuch as their teachers request that they sit out lessons and use the time to complete other assignments; and that English as a school subject often holds little or no interest.

As such, standing policy may stand in contravention of EU law. EU Council Directive 77/486/EEC of 25 July 1977 on the education of the children of migrant workers states, in Article 1, that

This Directive shall apply to children for whom school attendance is compulsory under the laws of the host State, who are dependants of any worker who is a national of another Member State, where such children are resident in the territory of the Member State in which that national carries on or has carried on an activity as an employed person (Council of the European Communities, 1977: 32).

The directive further requires that member states undertake the teaching of such migrant children's mother tongue and culture, "in coordination with normal education", yet Tarrés Vives notes that these stipulations have never been transposed into Spanish law, nor implemented by policy makers (Tarrés Vives, 2006: 137-138).

English is likewise excluded from the policy rubric of heritage language teaching (in Catalan, a *llengua d'origen*), under which it is possible to sponsor after-school mother-tongue classes in Catalan schools, beginning at age 6. Ten other languages are currently recognised as *llengües d'origen*. English is excluded on the grounds that additional instruction in English would be discriminatory. The only policy which schools may use to adapt their English-language instruction to these children is a special curriculum agreement (known as a *Pla Intensiu Individualitzat* or *PII*).

However, as *PIIs* are resource dependent, resources are finite, and public finances are less than robust, the *PII* is at best a patchwork response.

### **3. National and international references**

Many other jurisdictions have well-developed, robust policy responses to the arrival of linguistically diverse populations whose L1s are linguistic assets. Dual-language schooling is a well-established option in publicly funded primary and secondary education in many U.S. cities, notably New York and San Francisco (Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary & Rogers, 2005), as well as the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, three Canadian provinces, Vienna (Hüttner & Rieder-Bünemann, 2010: 66-69), and some German Länder. It often involves quotas of native speakers to ensure the viability of both languages as languages of socialization, and graduates fully bilingual individuals who academically out-perform students from other schools. Of particular interest in a European policy context is the Vienna Bilingual Schooling programme, whose detailed protocols for staffing and admission will provide a useful model for Catalan policy makers.

### **4. Implementation**

Implementation of a dual-language model presupposes that data from a linguistic census of school-age population in Catalonia will show such a model to be feasible. Should that be the case, policy makers will need to build on their experience of CLIL in Catalan schools by developing protocols for dual-language admission, staff selection, team-teaching, assessment, accountability, and balanced attention to both language groups in the classroom, as well as community and parental involvement.

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