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Language Choice and Researcher's Stance in a Multilingual Ethnographic Fieldwork

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Abstract: In bilingual settings language choice represents one of the main resources individuals have to construct their identities. According to Jaffe (2009), it is also a way in which individuals position themselves towards the languages of the sociolinguistic context. However, in the context of researching multilingual settings, very little attention has been paid to how the researcher's language choice(s) interact with the participants' language choices, and how the linguistic features that s/he activates contribute to the construction of the researcher's identity and her/his stance towards the languages of the sociolinguistic matrix within which the research is embedded. This paper is based in the context of Catalonia and explores how the researcher projects and is ascribed a stance as a consequence of her own linguistic practices. First, it shows that these practices lead to the construction of relationships of (dis)affiliation between the researcher and the participants, which ultimately influence the type of data collected. Second, it suggests that language choice is an essential lens through which to look at the researcher's positionality in multilingual settings and provide more transparent accounts of multilingual ethnographic research.

Keywords: stance, language choice, Catalonia, ethnography, multilingual fieldwork

1 Introduction

Many ethnographers conceive their positionality within the field as one that moves progressively from an outsider position to an insider one (Heller 2008). However, the number of researchers who argue for a more nuanced analysis of the complexity of such relations is increasing (e.g. Blackledge and Creese 2010; Giampapa and Lamoureux 2011; Holmes et al. 2013). For example, based on Mullings (1999), Blackledge and Creese (2010) represent the relationship of trust as a "both and neither relationship" leaving the conceptualisation of the researcher as an insider or an outsider. What this paper tries to show is that the

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researcher's language choices while conducting research in a multilingual setting may contribute to the construction of such 'both and neither' relationships in the field. The idea of using language choice as a lens through which to analyse the relations in the field emerges from my PhD thesis (Gallego-Balsà 2014), an ethnographic study conducted at a Catalan university (UC, henceforth), a university located in the bilingual context of Catalonia, where the distribution of languages plays a central role in the ongoing construction of an individual's identity.

This article begins by presenting the context of Catalonia and the evolution of the connection between language and identity in this setting. It continues with the presentation of how universities in Catalonia that aim to internationalise have adapted to the new multilingual reality by passing a multilingual language policy. Next, it addresses how language choice represents a form of stance. It then presents the analysis of the data in which the language of the researcher is interpreted by the participants as a form of stance.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Language and identity in Catalonia

Similarly to other contexts with nationalist movements, language ideologies in Catalonia are based on the premise that the Catalan language is a bounded system upon which to build a Catalan national ideal. Traditionally, and until relatively recently, people in Catalonia used language as the main resource to construct their identities (Pujolar 2011) and speaking Catalan equated to an affiliation to a Catalan identity, while Spanish indexed an affiliation to a Spanish identity or the 'foreignness' of the interlocutor (Woolard 1989; Block 2007). According to Pujolar (2011), an individual who engaged with a Catalan identity could not simultaneously engage with the Spanish one and *vice versa*. This made Catalan and the Spanish identities mutually exclusive and created a dichotomised environment where language choice would constitute "the primary symbol of group affiliation" (Woolard 1989: 68).

In the wake of the restoration of democracy in Spain in 1976 and the establishment of the Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia in 1979, the Catalan government, the *Generalitat*, started a campaign in 1981 to restore Catalan in all spheres of public life. During the dictatorship, language heterogeneity was seen as a threat to the unity of Spain and repressed through censorship and the prohibition of the use of the language in public spaces, which left Catalan in a weakened situation. Through the Law of Linguistic Normalisation (1983) Catalan

was re-established as a language of instruction in schools and also the main language in the public administration. The schooling system progressively developed into an immersion system inspired by the Canadian system, with Spanish as a subject but not as a medium of instruction.

Woolard and Frekko (2013: 2) suggest that in recent years the discussion about the sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia has moved beyond the polarisation between Catalonia and Spain even though it is still repeated in the media and political representations. This shift consists of a move from exclusion (i.e. one or the other relationship) to simultaneity and inclusion (i.e. both/and relationship). In this sense, Pujolar (2011) states that the monolingual ideology seems to be losing strength for two reasons. First, codeswitching has dramatically increased in Catalan society and the correlation one-speaker-one-language is disappearing following the global tendency towards multilingualism (Pujolar 2007). Second, immigration is more heterogeneous than ever in socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic terms and this has produced new roles for the local languages. Spanish has become a *lingua franca* among speakers of other languages within the job market in Catalonia (Pujolar 2010).

However, the new scenario for linguistic practices and ideologies in Catalonia contains contradictions and ambivalences. According to Pujolar (2010), there has been a shift in the official discourses from language as a national symbol to language as a means for social cohesion in the multilingual Catalan society. In this endeavour, the administration treats Catalan as a fully functioning public language, whereas large sectors of the population, particularly those from older generations, treat Catalan as a minority language not to be used with strangers. In this context, Catalan appears as a language for identification whereas Spanish is used for practical communicative purposes, which contradicts the institutional message. Therefore, immigrants and new-comers from countries such as China, Pakistan, Equador and Morocco, find themselves in a situation where they have to adjust to “different, competing, often blatantly contradictory linguistic ideologies and practices” (Pujolar 2010: 240).

In recent years, the Catalan government has adopted a more proactive approach to changing the linguistic attitudes and ideologies of both native and non-native Catalan speakers and fostering the use of Catalan as a tool for social cohesion. The 2010 report *Informe de Política Lingüística* (Generalitat de Catalunya 2010) on language policy recognised a context of increasing linguistic diversity mainly due to the immigration flows from foreign countries over the last 15 years and considered that Catalan could be a “bridge language”, a “meeting point”, and an “entrance” to Catalan society, and could favour equal opportunities (Generalitat de Catalunya 2010: 125).

In 2009 the Generalitat de Catalunya started a campaign, *Encomana el català* (roughly, ‘Spread Catalan’), to promote the use of Catalan as a language of communication between people from different origins and in situations where the switch into a majority language was made unnecessarily (Generalitat de Catalunya 2009). Unnecessary code-switching refers to, for instance, the systematic use of Spanish with foreigners without considering that they may be competent in Catalan (e.g. Block 2007). The campaign aimed at raising awareness among Catalan native speakers to initiate conversations in Catalan and among the foreigners of the large number of opportunities that daily life offered them to practice Catalan.

Within this shifting situation concerning language and identity in Catalonia, higher education (HE, henceforth) institutions are trying to become more international, which has generated an increase of cross-cultural communication among students, teachers and administrative staff. Consequently, linguistic diversity within universities has increased significantly. The new multicultural reality has led HE institutions to reconsider their language policies in order to manage the increasing multilingual situation (Cots 2008). In the following section I present the language policy of the UC.

2.2 The UC: Internationalisation and language policy

In public universities in Catalonia, as is the case of the UC, the introduction of multilingual policies is a highly sensitive issue. Through its language and internationalisation policies, the UC aims to reconcile the new multilingual reality and the demand for lingua francas, such as Spanish or English, with the efforts to revitalise the Catalan language, thereby contributing to reversing the language shift towards Spanish, the majority language. In the context of international higher education institutions, there is limited room for minority languages and it is necessary to promote widely-spoken languages that enable transnational mobility and, consequently, the recruitment of a higher number of foreign students. The introduction of widely-spoken languages for instruction would, as a result, benefit the plurilingual competence of local students and academic staff, who would have more opportunities to practice a foreign language.

At the time I collected the data discussed in this article, there were two institutional policy documents and policies in effect: (1) the internationalisation programme of the UC (reference omitted to preserve the anonymity); and (2) the language policy document (reference omitted to preserve the anonymity of the institution). The two policies were revised in 2013 in the form of two new documents. The more recent documents do not change the policies significantly

and for the purpose of this study, the two documents discussed here are the former two, valid at the time of the data collection.

The internationalisation programme promotes the use of widely spoken languages in the world within the academic context. Although the document does not specify which languages, it does set a goal of increasing the presence of English as a medium of instruction as well as the translation into English of the information about the course offer and the administrative procedures. This contrasts with the official language policy of the university made explicit in 2008. In its language policy, the UC sets the goal of adapting to a “multilingual reality” by becoming a multilingual institution. In this multilingual institution, different languages are assigned particular roles and the institution makes a specific commitment to each of them. Table 1 succinctly presents these roles and commitments.

Table 1: The roles of the languages and the UC commitments.

Language	Roles	Commitment(s)
Catalan	The autochthonous language in Catalonia (<i>llengua pròpia</i>)	Promote its use inside UC; Make it more international
Occitan	Co-official language in Catalonia in the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia	Spread knowledge and communication in Occitan, mainly in the Aranese variety; Become a world academic reference
Spanish	Co-official language;	Offer means to students to use it correctly;
	A language of international scope and interest	Offer means to international students to improve their knowledge during their stay
English	The most used language internationally at an academic and professional level	Introduce it as a third academic language
Other	Culturally-related foreign languages or professionally outstanding foreign languages (such as French, German, Italian)	Promote them
Currently in demand (such as Chinese, Arabic)	UC will take them into consideration	

The UC's language policy takes a rather proactive stance in favour of promoting Catalan as a teaching language in an international university. The language policy includes the 'principle of language safety', under which a lecturer needs to state explicitly the language of instruction of a course before students enrol (this decision cannot be modified later). This principle is aimed at protecting students' linguistic rights but it presents a handicap for them because the lecturers cannot choose the most adequate language before the students register, as they do not yet know the linguistic profile of the group (Gallego-Balsà 2014). During the 2010–2011 academic year, the distribution of teaching languages at the UC was as follows: Catalan represented around 65%, Spanish some 30%, and English almost 5% of oral and written use and for teaching materials (reference omitted to preserve the anonymity). These numbers show that, although Catalan is a minority language in the context of Spain and even in the context of Catalonia, it is the majority language within the institution. In contrast, English, a widely spoken *lingua franca* in the global world, is a minority language in the institution. Spanish, the common official language in Spain, is not only the majority language at the state level as well as in Catalonia, but also a global language. However, within the university, it adopts a minority or a 'medium-sized' language position. In the last 10 years, Catalan has been the dominant medium of instruction at the UC, with an average of 60% of the subjects being taught in Catalan (reference omitted to preserve the anonymity). Catalan is also the main language of instruction in public universities in Catalonia, with a presence which ranges from 60% to 85% (Cots et al. 2012). In the case of the region where the UC is located, the high presence of Catalan clearly reflects its dominant presence outside university. However, this situation is not the same across Catalonia. Cots et al. (2012) show that Catalan constitutes an unmarked language choice both at the UC and in the surrounding area, but is not as widely used in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, where Catalan is the declared habitual language for only 27.7% of the population (Idescat 2013).

The incoming mobility students at the UC in the 2010–2011 academic year were 292 from 31 different countries. Whereas the university puts special emphasis on the promotion of Catalan through its language policy and its staff, the incoming international students arrive in Catalonia having some knowledge of Spanish but none of Catalan and feel much more interested in learning the former rather than the latter (Llurda 2013).

When developing a research project in such a multilingual field, the language(s) that the researcher chooses to communicate with the participants may be interpreted by these ones as an attempt to sympathise and construct a relationship of trust with them. The following section presents how language choice in bilingual settings can represent a form of stance.

2.3 Language choice as a form of stance

Following Jaffe (2009), the theoretical point of departure of this paper is that in bilingual territories the significance of languages is determined by the particularities of the sociolinguistic context and that language choice represents a form of stance. That is, when individuals in a bilingual context choose to communicate in a language over another, they are showing their affiliation with that language and are manifesting that they want to be identified as speakers of that language (and not the other one). In the context of Catalan universities, the language that an individual selects to communicate with others can be interpreted as an attempt to adopt a position towards the multilingual environment in which they develop their academic or professional activities and to affiliate with a specific language and identity. Therefore, language choice represents an added resource for stance-taking.

The issue of language choice as a form of stance in educational settings has been previously researched by Jaffe (2009b) in a bilingual Corsican school. She explores how the teaching staff position the two languages of their bilingual repertoire within the classroom, projecting ideal models of bilingual practices and attributing stances to their students according to the institution's proposed models. Jaffe states that the use of Corsican as a language of instruction is related to an ideological agenda that wants to empower Corsican and promote and legitimise the minority language. The teachers' role as models and agents of evaluation means that when they choose a language, they ascribe it with authority and preferential status. Teachers set the context where the students later transmit their stance using language choice, and they set the rules for the interpretation of those stances. The analysis of the data shows that although the teachers propose ideal models of bilingualism, they challenge the dominant language ideologies based on one-language-one-culture principle. The structures for participation that they build up over time enable students with different levels of competence in the minority language to be included as legitimate participants. This stance is reinforced by the display of a positive attitude towards code-switching.

In my study, the selection of a language was not premeditated and no reflection was done before entering the field, as I ignored that it would turn to be a salient issue in the collection of the data. However, as a native Catalan and Spanish bilingual speaker who uses both languages at home, at the workplace and with friends and having lived in the area where the UC is located for the majority of my life, I was aware of the tensions and ambiguities present in Catalonia as regards the local languages. Yet, I was not aware of how these would interrelate with the languages brought by the international students.

3 Analysis

Following the example of other ethnographers who have conducted research in multilingual educational settings (Jaffe 1999; Jaffe 2009b; Blackledge and Creese 2010), in this section I analyse the subject positions and the stances that I, as a researcher, adopted vis-à-vis the participants during the fieldwork as result of language choice. My intention is to move away from the ‘insider’/‘outsider’ dichotomy in which the researcher’s positionality has been often understood in ethnographic research (Heller 2008) and show that these relations can be ambiguous and dynamic and, as reported by Jaffe (1999), they can cause tensions between the researcher and the participants.

3.1 Between Catalan and Spanish: tensions between research and teaching goals

One of the first questions that students asked me when I began my fieldwork in a Catalan language course was if I was a Catalan native speaker. From the first moment, this marked a difference between the students and myself (i.e. native/non-native or ‘Catalan-speaking’/‘non-Catalan-speaking’) but, at the same time, it gave me something in common with the other two collectives that were participating in the research, the teachers and the administrative staff: we were all Catalan native-speakers. The Catalan language teachers and the language volunteering officer (LVO, henceforth) in charge of the welcome activities for international students were employed by the university Language Service, originally designed to promote Catalan language and culture. Following the role that they were assigned by the institution, the LVO and the Catalan language teachers asked me to speak with the international students exclusively in Catalan during the cultural activities. I found it difficult and even negative because the students had limited or no understanding of Catalan and the majority of them preferred to communicate in Spanish. In this context, I was afraid that if I spoke to them in Catalan, the students would distance themselves from me. On the other hand, if I spoke Spanish, the instructors would be disappointed. In the end, I explained to the teachers and the LVO that I needed to recruit participants and could not communicate very well with them in Catalan. Although they understood this, I always felt that I was somehow delegitimising them in front of the students.

The following extract of my field notes shows how Maite, one of the Catalan language teachers, asked me to speak in Catalan with the international students in one of the welcome cultural activities.

Extract 1. “Lidia, speak Catalan” (City bus tour, 2 September 2010)

1 This afternoon I went on the tourist bus with the international students of the
2 intensive Catalan course. During the tour, I chatted with some students and
3 Maite, one of the Catalan teachers. (...) Some students initiated a conversation
4 with me in Spanish. While I was replying in Spanish, the teacher interrupted
5 me and said “Lidia, speak Catalan”. I said we couldn’t hold a fluent con-
6 versation in Catalan and that’s why we were speaking Spanish. Then she told
7 me off because it had to be in Catalan, it was a must. I told her that I was
8 interested in their experience and that they expressed themselves better in
9 Spanish. Then she left.

This extract from the field notes shows how Maite, one of the Catalan language teachers, asks me to speak in Catalan (lines 5) with the international students during an interaction that the students had initiated in Spanish (line 3). I chose to justify my choice of adapting to the students saying that our conversation was more fluent in Spanish (lines 5–6). The instructor shows signs of being upset and insists that Catalan is the mandatory language choice (lines 6–7). With my implicit refusal to speak Catalan, I disalign again thus establishing a difference between the teacher’s expectations from this activity and my expectations in doing fieldwork (lines 8). The instructor leaves the conversation (line 9), which could be interpreted as a signal of disappointment with the researcher’s answer. This give-and-take between the researcher and the instructor, together with the latter’s leaving the scene, shows that affiliating to both collectives at the same time was complicated, if not impossible. The attempt to fulfil simultaneously the students’ interest in practicing Spanish, the Catalan language teacher’s goal of promoting Catalan, and the researcher’s objective of recruiting participants and being able to communicate with them, required skills that I may have not developed yet.

The role of language choice as a way of creating (dis)affiliations with the teacher also appeared in the Spanish language classroom. In the following extract Maria, the Spanish language teacher, asks students to talk to the researcher in Spanish instead of in English.

Extract 2. “She can also speak Spanish” (Spanish language class A2; fieldnotes, 28 October 2010)

1 In the Spanish A2 level class, some students from the Czech Republic are
2 talking about the ‘Agrocastanyada’ (an annual celebration in the Faculty of
3 Agriculture). They turn to me and ask me in English whether the bus to go
4 there is free and the time it is leaving. Maria, the teacher, interrupts the
5 conversation saying “*she can also speak Spanish*”. The Czech students start

6 laughing. Then I switch to Spanish and tell them that I think the bus leaves
7 every hour. The students continue the conversation with me in Spanish.

Italics: Spanish language

This extract shows that the Spanish language teacher tries to use the researcher as an opportunity for international students to practice Spanish and, therefore, contribute to her teaching goals of exposing them to and forcing them to use the language. As in the previous extract with the Catalan language teacher, Maria interrupts the conversation to indicate that Spanish should be the code of communication (line 5). The interruptions could be interpreted as a signal of the teacher's position of authority over the students and the researcher, who are expected to accept the teacher's instructions. However, in contrast with the previous extract, the students laugh, as if they were ashamed of not using the language of the classroom, and they, as well as the researcher, switch into Spanish. This could have caused a strengthening of the affiliation between the researcher and the Spanish language teacher.

The possible outcomes in the negotiation of a code can appear to be influenced by two factors: (1) the level of competence of the students in the language required by the teachers and (2) the setting where the negotiation occurs. In the first instance (extract 1), the negotiation 'from Spanish into Catalan' means switching into a language in which the students have scarce competence (the course was A1 level of the CEFR) and they had just arrived at the UC, whereas in the negotiation from 'English into Spanish' (extract 2), the students had enough competence in Spanish to ask what time the bus was leaving (the course was A2 level of the CEFR). In connection with the setting, the first negotiation occurred during an activity outside the regular classroom context, with the goal of introducing students to the local cultural heritage, and as a leisure activity. The second negotiation occurred inside the classroom and the weight of the academic institution may have reinforced the teacher's requirements. If the Catalan language teacher had made the same demand inside the classroom, the negotiation would have probably led to a result in her favour. However, the low level of proficiency of the students in Catalan may have represented an obstacle to exchange of information.

To sum up my relation with the teachers, the fact that I was a Spanish/Catalan native bilingual speaker may have meant that the instructors expected some level of affiliation and accommodation with their teaching goals. Following Jaffe (2009), I suggest that the teachers' role is embedded within the institutional order that ascribes them a role and the Catalan and Spanish language instructors in this research were performing their roles. These extracts

also show that language is a constant object of negotiation, involving the ethnographer and affecting the kinds of data that s/he may obtain and the relationships in the field.

3.2 Plurilingualism as a resource to sympathize with students

As for the students, I always accommodated to their language choice, which was mostly Spanish. Even with those students who were not competent in Spanish, I switched into a *lingua franca*, mainly English, and on some occasions I even used Italian and German. I expected that the accommodation to the students' preferred language would lead me to a closer relationship with them, and later on I found signs that corroborated my expectations, as shown in extract 4. My decision to adapt to the students' preferred language of communication always contrasted with the choice of the majority of the university staff to keep Catalan as a vehicular language, even if students had problems understanding it. The lack of accommodation was interpreted as a lack of empathy on the part of the university as an institution (see Gallego-Balsà 2014: 224). This fact may have helped me to earn the sympathy of the international students and position myself as having a similar stance towards the local languages as the international student community.

Speaking different languages was also useful for recruiting participants who lacked competence in the local languages. Those students who were not competent in Spanish or Catalan still attended the focus groups and interviews and invited me to observe their classes. At the same time, knowing Catalan and Spanish also appeared attractive to some students. For instance, Christina was a British student who was studying Catalan, Spanish and Italian at her home university. Most of the time, international students would talk to her in English, which did not allow her to practice one of her three foreign languages. In this situation, Christina required me to talk to her in Spanish and Catalan so that she could improve her competence in these languages during her stay at the UC. The fact that she could benefit from participating in the project in terms of language learning presents linguistic capital as a valuable tradeable currency in an environment where language learning is one of the main goals of the people under research.

Besides the use of a specific code for communication, accent emerged as an index of ethnicity in a context where Catalan and Spanish coexist. In the following extract, Jeroen, a Belgian student, positions the researcher as 'less Catalan' than the rest of the local people because he considers her accent to be more neutral when she speaks Spanish.

Extract 3. “You don’t have that accent”.

1	Jeroen	cuando escucho a la gente↗ (.)	when I listen to the people↗ (.) I
2		se nota (.) creo	notice (.) I think
3	Lidia	mhm↗	mhm↗
4	Jeroen	cuando uno es muy catalán	when one is very Catalan or
5		o no↘ (.) se bueno	not↘ (.) well
6	Lidia	en qué-	how-
7	Jeroen	se nota en el acent[ɾo]	it’s evident in the ac[cent]
8		porque:	becau:se
9	Lidia	[mhm↘]	[mhm↘]
10	Jeroen	amigos↗ donde se nota que están	friends↗ that is obvious that they
11		poco acostumbrados para hablar	are little used to speaking Spanish
12		castellano y en casa los	and at home their parents are
13		padres son catalanes	Catalan
14	Lidia	mhm↗	mhm↗
15	Jeroen	em: como tú (.) tú no tienes ese	em: like you (.) you don’t have that
16		acento↘	accent↘
17	Lidia	porque mi padre es hijo de	it’s because my father is the son of
18		inmigrantes del sur de	immigrants from the south of
19		España	Spain
20	Jeroen	es por eso↗	is that the reason why↗
21	Lidia	y yo suelo hablar catalán y	and I usually speak Catalan and
22		castellano	Castilian
23	Jeroen	en mi clase y amigos sí que tiene	in my class and friends do have
24		ese acento y a la calle también	that accent and also on the
25		o a la tele: se nota	streets or on TV: it’s evident

In this extract, Jeroen states that he can tell people who are “very Catalan – *muy catalán*” from those who are not (line 4) based on the “accent - *acento*” (line 7) that some Catalan speakers display when they speak Spanish. Next, Jeroen explains that when somebody has “that accent” her/his family is Catalan (lines 9–12). In the following turn (lines 14–5), Jeroen positions the researcher outside the ‘very Catalan’ group of people saying “you don’t have that accent – *tú no tienes ese acento*”. Next, I explain to him that two of my grandparents immigrated to Catalonia and that I usually speak both Catalan and Spanish (lines 21–22), which corroborates his assumption that the family background has something to do with the way local people speak (lines 21–22). Next, Jeroen adds that he can hear people with that accent in class, among his friends, in the streets, and on television (lines 23–25).

This interaction shows how accent is a criterion that in this case positions the researcher as a member of the local community who is not “very Catalan” and with a Spanish background. Therefore, in a context in which the main institutional message is that of speaking Catalan as much as possible and those Catalan speakers who switch into Spanish have a strong Catalan accent, the researcher who is a local person speaking Spanish without a Catalan accent is interpreted to be performing a stance of distance with the Catalan language and the institutional interests. Moreover, in Jeroen’s intervention we can see that it is not only the researcher who analyses in ethnographic research; participants can also analyse the researcher.

Furthermore, my former experience as an international student probably helped me to develop intercultural sensitivity (Anderson et al. 2006), which was frequently expressed by switching between languages. The following extract from the focus group held at the end of the fieldwork period shows how the students complain that local students avoid socialising with them and lack interest in new cultures. Wei, one of the Chinese participants, excludes me from them.

Extract 4. “Catalans are narrow-minded”.

1	Wei	ellos [Spanish students] no quieren	they [Spanish students] don't
2		juntarse con los	want to get together with the
3		alumnos	international
4		internacionales	students
5	Lidia	mhm vale≈	mhm right≈
6	Wei	≈ellos (.) de una parte [moves his	≈they (.) on one side [moves his
7		hands towards his left] y nosotros	hands towards his left] and we
8		de otra parte [moves his hands	on another side [moves his hands
9		towards his right]	towards his right]
10	Shu	[≈sí:]	[≈ye:s]
11	Kim	[[assents]] sí	[[assents]] yes
12	Yin	ya:	I know
13	Shu	ellos no tienen [looks at the	they don't feel [looks at the
14		others] muchas ganas sobre las	others] like doing
15		cosas nuevas	new things
16	Lidia	va:le	ri:ght
17	Wei	sobre todo los catalanes	especially Catalan people
18		[[laughs]]	[[laughs]]
19	Shu	[laughs]	[[laughs]]
20	Wei	no no no hablo de- [looks at the	no no no I don't talk about- [looks
21		researcher] a mí me gustan	at the researcher] I like Catalan girls

22	mucho las catalanas	very much
23 All	[laugh loud]	[laugh loud]
24 Wei	pero los catalanes son un poco	but Catalan students are a bit
25	cerrados eso sí es ver[dad] que:	narrow-minded that's tr[ue]
26 Lidia	[sí:↘]	[ye:s↘]
27 Shu	[assents] sí:	[assents] ye:s

In this extract, Wei states that Spanish students avoid meeting international students (lines 1–3) and that local and international students move in separate circles (lines 5–8). Shu, Kim and Yin align with Wei in the following turns (lines 9–11) and Shu adds that Spanish students do not feel like doing new things (lines 12–14) which, by contrast, emerges as a distinctive feature of international students. Wei adds that among the Spanish students, Catalans are especially distant and laughs (lines 16–17). Shu laughs as well (line 18), which indexes affiliation with Wei. The rest, however, do not intervene and then Wei makes an attempt to rectify by taking the turn and initiating an attempt to exclude me from the Catalan students who are distant with the international students. He says “*no no no hablo de-/no no no I don’t talk about-*” looking at me (lines 19–20) and adds that he ‘likes Catalan girls very much’ (lines 20–21), which excludes me from the negative evaluation he has just made about Catalan students. In the following turn everybody laughs, which indicates that everybody has understood Wei’s attempt to repair his previous negative evaluation of all the Catalan students (line 22). Next, Wei reiterates his impression, and presents his evaluation of Catalan students as narrow-minded as a fact (lines 23–24). I align with him (line 25), taking the same position, which is also that of rest of the students in the group (their alignment appears in lines 9,10,11 and 26). In this way, I show affiliation with the international students and take a position that includes me within their group.

In short, the stances that I constructed in the field were ambiguous. Each of the participants expected some level of affiliation and engagement from me and fulfilling their expectations sometimes seemed somewhat complicated and even contradictory. My language choice towards one of the groups were likely to be interpreted and evaluated differently by the other two groups and may have produced disaffiliations with those participants whose interests were not fulfilled.

The following table is an attempt to summarise the perception of the researcher’s stances that appear in the extracts analysed and the anecdotes provided. This list is actually a limited selection of all the stances that I may have actually performed in the field and is only aimed at supporting the argument I am developing in this paper.

Table 2: Researcher's stances in the field.

Whose perspective	Researcher's stance and identity	Characteristic
Catalan language teacher	A Catalan individual who is not affiliating with the institution's interest of promoting Catalan and is not participating in the campaign to reverse the language shift into Spanish	Speaking Spanish during a Catalan-speaking activity
Spanish language teacher	Affiliation with English and Spanish as international lingua francas	Speaking Spanish and English with international students
Jeroen (an international student competent in Spanish and Catalan)	Spanish identity	Neutral accent when speaking Spanish
Wei, Shu, Kim, Yin (the four international students who think Catalans are narrow-minded)	Catalan identity	Being a local student
Christina (British international student)	Local bilingual	Being fluent both in Spanish and Catalan and willing to speak these languages with her

4 Conclusion

This paper has taken the context of an international university in Catalonia as a case in point to explore how the researcher projects and is ascribed a stance as a consequence of her own linguistic practices and how these stances position the researcher in the field. The analysis of the data shows that the ways in which a researcher uses language(s) in Catalonia to interact with the participants, contributes to the construction of relationships of affiliation and disaffiliation. These linguistic practices (and choices) may also lead to performing a hybrid stance with the ultimate aim of carrying out the research project. For instance, in extract 1, the lack of interest and proficiency that the majority of students have with regard to Catalan implies that if the researcher chooses Catalan over Spanish, she may put them in an uncomfortable situation, which may lead to their further rejection of Catalan as well as the researcher. Yet knowing Catalan may have added value for the researcher in her contacts with those students who see their stay in Catalonia as an opportunity to learn Catalan.

Heller (2008) presents the evolution of the relationships between researcher and participants in the field as a linear process: the researcher moves from an outsider to an insider position. In contrast to what Heller says, the previous analysis has shown that the relations between the researcher and the participants do not evolve in the same direction and there may be fluctuations. The initial petition of the instructor who asked me to switch into Catalan indicates that the instructors may have considered me a supporter of the campaign to promote the everyday use of Catalan from the beginning. However, I may have been seen to have changed my position when I decided that affiliating to the students was more important for the research interests. Besides, the position of a researcher may never become that of an insider because participants know that s/he is not actually a member of their community, although s/he may have things in common and they may like her/him.

In line with Mullings (1999), we could say that the analysis of the relations in the field suggests that the insider and outsider dichotomy is too limited, especially in this case where different typologies of participants coexist. The boundary between insider/outsider “is not only highly unstable but also one that ignores the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space” (ibid: 340). Mullings believes that positions are dynamic and transitory and, therefore, cannot be exclusively based on taken-for-granted attributes (such as race, gender, ethnicity or class) but are under constant negotiation. This study shows that language is an important lens through which to become aware of the positions that the researcher takes in the field. Speaking different languages does not immediately position the researcher as an insider or an outsider. Rather, it depends on whose perspective the language choice is evaluated from.

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Transcription conventions

- : long sound
- ↑ shift to high pitch
- ↓ shift to low pitch

↗	rise
↘	fall
≈	latching
≡	uptake
┌	top begin overlap
┐	top end overlap
└	bottom begin overlap
┘	bottom end overlap
Δ	faster
∇	slower
◦	softer
⊙	louder
☺	smile voice
[word]	missing word
[...]	text omitted
[laughs]	description of communicative features that accompany language
[text]	explanation of the researcher
(.)	pause of less than one second
(1.5)	pause of one second and a half