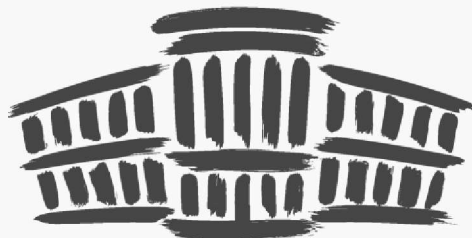


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16. Meђunarodna naučna konferencija
ПРОМЕНА ПАРАДИГМЕ
У ОБРАЗОВАЊУ И НАУЦИ

16. Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia
PARADIGMAVÁLTÁS
AZ OKTATÁSBAN ÉS A TUDOMÁNYBAN

16. Međunarodna naučna konferencija
PROMENA PARADIGME
U OBRAZOVANJU I NAUCI

16th International Scientific Conference
CHANGING PARADIGMS
IN EDUCATION AND SCIENCE



16. Међународна научна конференција

Промена парадигме у образовању и науци

Зборник радова

Датум одржавања: 3–4. новембар 2022.

Место: Учитељски факултет на мађарском наставном језику,
Суботица, ул. Штросмајерова 11., Република Србија.

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A konferencia időpontja: 2022. november 3–4.

Helyszíne: Újvidéki Egyetem Magyar Tannyelvű Tanítóképző Kar,
Szabadka, Strossmayer utca 11., Szerb Köztársaság.

16. Međunarodna naučna konferencija

Promena paradigme u obrazovanju i nauci

Zbornik radova

Datum održavanja: 3–4. novembar 2022.

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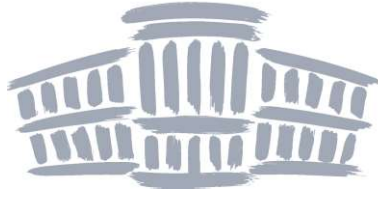
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CATALAN LANGUAGE RIGHTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION POLICY

Abstract

The protection of minority languages and cultures is an important task, as their disappearance could jeopardize Europe's cultural heritage. The situation of a group living in a minority within a given state is greatly influenced by the language policy of that country. Language policy is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can promote the use of a particular language, and the protection of the rights of language communities.

On the other hand, it can become a means of assimilation, forcing the exclusion of a language within a given state. This study focuses on the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive picture of Catalan language and education policy. The Spanish Supreme Court recently made a judgment on a policy of so-called "language immersion" that has led to an ongoing political debate. The controversial court decision that disrupts the current educational model raises a number of issues on which the study focuses.

Keywords: *language policy, education policy, Catalan minority, minority protection, language immersion*

1. Introduction

This study deals with Catalan language policy and its development over the years. The Catalan language did not cease to exist despite years of severe repression. The study also aims to provide the reader with a comprehensive picture of Catalan education policy. The Spanish Supreme Court recently made a judgment on a policy of so-called "language immersion" that has led to an ongoing political debate. The essence of the policy of "language immersion" is that all children up to the age of seven are provided with education in their mother tongue. After that, they can only study in Catalan.

The protection of minority languages and cultures is an important task, as their disappearance could jeopardize Europe's cultural heritage. The situation of a group living in a minority within a given state is greatly influenced by the language policy of that country. Language policy means the policy of the states with regard to the languages used in their territory (Cserniczkó, 2015). It defines the use of languages and the relationship between languages and language rights. One of the main goals of language policy is to avoid language conflicts but these conflicts rarely arise from the language itself. In the background there is usually a social, political or economic confrontation between groups that speak the given language or languages (Cserniczkó, 2015). Language policy is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can promote the use of a particular language and the protection of the rights of language communities. On the other hand, it can become a means of assimilation, forcing the exclusion of a language within a given state (Láncos, 2009). That is why it plays a significant role in determining the situation and the future of certain languages.

Language policy and language planning play a particularly important role in Spain, as the country is characterized by regional diversity. Despite hundreds of years of assimilation, Spain is still one of the most colorful countries in Europe in terms of language. Among the minority languages, Catalan,

Galician and Basque have the largest number of speakers. This study focuses on the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

2. Language rights in Catalonia

2.1. The development of the Catalan language

Catalan belongs to the group of Neo-Latin languages, it evolved from vulgar Latin during the ninth century. Today, it is one of the 100 most common languages in the world. The number of Catalan speakers is nearly ten million and another three million people understand this language (Xarxa, 2011). The population of the Catalan region in 2021 is 7.716 million (www.idescat.cat).

Catalan identity dates back many years as Charles the Great established the Marca Hispanica as a buffer zone in the 9th century, during the Moorish wars in the Frankish Empire. The County of Barcelona where today's Catalan territory is located, was also part of the Marca Hispanica. The territory merged with the new Spanish state with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1469 but remained a territorial, legal and political entity with its own identity (Nagy, 2018).

2.2 The weakening of the Catalan language

The weakening of the Catalan language can be attributed to several reasons. On the one hand, the loss of its official status two and a half centuries ago as a result of the regulations of Nueva Planta which made Spanish the only official language. The twelve-year long War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) was an important milestone in the history of Catalonia, as the newly conquered Philip V abolished Catalan institutions and the use of the official Catalan language, which dates back several centuries (Lénárt, 2017). The Catalan people remember the fateful day of September 11, 1714 when Barcelona fell and they lost their prerogatives.

The Catalan Cultural Renaissance (Renaixença), which started as a cultural, historical and literary movement in the 19th century, played a major role in their awakening to national consciousness. As a result, the Catalan language and culture began to regain its role as a social organizer. Later, the rebirth became increasingly political, with the movement now aiming to achieve self-government within the Spanish state (Berkics, 2010). As an achievement of political Catalanism, the Commonwealth of Catalonia (Mancomunitat de Catalunya) was established in 1914, an organization over four Catalan provinces that played an important role in administration, culture and health. This attempt at self-government was ended in 1925 by General Primo de Rivera's policy of autonomy.

The dictatorship of Francisco Franco was another misfortune to the Catalans, in which he favored a policy of assimilation. He established a centralized, officially monolingual state, ignoring the language, culture, and identity of different nationalities. Franco believed that Castilian culture and language should play a central role in economic, political and social institutions in all regions of the country. However, the Spanish state's policy of assimilation over the centuries has failed to achieve its goal, as the country still retains its multilingual nature today.

3. A new chapter in Catalan language rights

After Franco's death, a period of democratic transition began. The first free elections were held in 1977, and a new Spanish constitution was born in 1978, which divided Spain into seventeen autonomous communities with equal rights. Also following the 1978 constitution, the co-official language system was established, as a result of which different language regulations can be found in each of the multilingual autonomous provinces. Six of the country's seventeen autonomous regions have regional co-official languages. Basque is the official language in the Basque Country and Navarre, Catalan is the official language in the Balearic Islands and Catalonia, but in Catalonia Occitan (Aran) it is also official. Galician is the official language in Galicia and Valencian in Valencia. Catalan is also spoken within Spain and outside Catalonia, in the Balearic Islands, Valencia, and in some parts of Aragon and Murcia. The use of Catalan in public administration, education, culture and the media is guaranteed by the Catalan Government, the Generalitat.

Article 3 of the 1979 Statute of Autonomy states that the Catalan language is official in Catalonia as also is Spanish, which is official throughout the Spanish State. According to the Statute, Aranese, a dialect of Occitan spoken in the Aran Valley, is also a co-official language (Ley Orgánica 6/2006). The Aran Valley is a high mountainous region bordering France. It is located on the northern slope of the central Pyrenees, in the province of Lleida. Although it has gained official status in Catalonia, most

of its speakers live in France. It was a kind of gesture on behalf of the Catalan government, signaling that it is striving for linguistic equality despite the fact that the Catalan language has been under severe repression for decades (Estatuto de autonomía de Cataluña 1978).

3.1. Law on Linguistic Normalization in the Catalan Region

Linguistic normalization laws aim to eliminate the disadvantages of regional languages and to create a level playing field with the state language in both the public and private sectors. In Catalonia, the Law of Linguistic Normalization (Ley 7/1983) came into force in 1983, which is actually based on the language provisions of the Statute of Autonomy (Act No. 1, of 7th January 1998, on linguistic policy).

In 1998, another law was passed to strengthen language normalization. The law expresses the political will of the Catalan Autonomous Government (Generalitat) to continue to encourage the process of prosperity and the presence of Catalans in all areas of social life. The law states that citizens can use Catalan and Castilian in all private and public activities without exception. Legal proceedings in any of the two official languages are valid and enforceable. The law reinforces the Generalitat's policy on the authorities, education and institutional media under the 1983 law, improves regulation in the various areas of official use of Catalan and recognizes the linguistic rights of citizens. It provides a Catalan presence in many areas of social and cultural life.

3.2. Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2006

Another change in the field of language rights was the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy of 2006 (Decret 306/2006), which includes a separate chapter on language rights and obligations. The Statute of Autonomy identifies Catalan as the primary language of public institutions and public service media. The language of instruction is obligatory Catalan, the Generalitat and the municipalities are obliged to use Catalan in internal and public communication. As a result of this language and education policy, the use of the Catalan language has become commonplace in everyday life, in the mass media, and has significant literature and book publishing.

One of the most controversial points in the 2006 Statute of Autonomy has been the national issue. The preamble states that the Catalan Parliament views the people living there as a nation, referring to historical and cultural traditions. It is worth interpreting the terms nation and nationality, as these words are often used interchangeably, incorrectly. According to the Hungarian interpretive dictionary: "A nation is a historically formed lasting community held together by a common language, territory, economic life, a common spiritual peculiarity expressed in culture, and usually by a state organization." The difference lies in the fact that a nation is a historically formed and enduring unit, whereas nationality is a narrower conceptual designation, although it possesses a linguistic and cultural factor but lacks the criterion of unity (Mikó, 1981). The preamble to the 2006 Statute of Autonomy states: "The Catalan Parliament, relying on the emotions and will of the people of Catalonia, declares by an overwhelming majority that Catalonia is a nation." By contrast, the first article states that it recognizes Spain's 1978 constitution, which refers to the country as a "unified Spanish nation" and defines Catalonia as a nationality (Decret 306/2006).

In 2010, the Constitutional Court ruled unconstitutional those parts of the statute that invoke Catalonia as a nation. It reaffirmed the unity and indivisibility of the Spanish state and repealed the article on "Catalonia as a nation" (BOE núm. 172, de 16 de juliol de 2010).

The decision provoked outrage among Catalans, with more than a million protesters marching in Barcelona on 10 July 2010 (Nagy és Szabó, 2015). Although the Catalan national definition has survived, it has become clear that it has no legal effect as the constitution does not allow it.

3.3. A positive turn in the field of language rights

Spain has implemented a well-functioning, decentralized system of state power. With regard to the Catalan region, the development of language rights has taken a positive direction since the years following the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, as the Catalan language has managed to survive despite prolonged repression. The language policy of recent years has been effective. Catalan has become the language of the institutions, the media and a successful model in education policy, despite the current controversial situation.

It is also an indisputable merit of Spain's success in joining the European Union and, at the time, the European Community without conflicts of nationality. It is also positive that in 2005, at the initiative of the government, the European Union granted Catalan, Basque and Galician languages quasi-official language status, so that citizens have the opportunity to address the EU institutions in these languages as well. A similar agreement is in place with the UK government on the use of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic (Celtic). If required, the government of the Member State concerned shall provide the translation at its own expense.

Although the constitution emphasizes the unity and indivisibility of the Spanish state, it nevertheless guarantees the cultural and political rights of different nationalities, recognizing the special historical, linguistic and cultural specificities. The degree of autonomy varies from region to region, with the most extensive being in Catalonia and the Basque Country. This is justified by their historical independence, their significant economic development, and the fact that political, linguistic and cultural nationalism, national and linguistic self-awareness are by far the strongest here. The regional autonomy of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia is exemplary and can provide important lessons for other national minorities (Domonkos, 2011). Despite the successful constitutional arrangement, there may, of course, be problems with the territorial nature of minority autonomies and the incomplete homogeneity of its population.

4. The model of linguistic immersion (*inmersión lingüística*) in education policy

In 1980, the Spanish Government transferred much of its powers in the field of education to the Catalan Government, pursuant to Royal Decree 2809/1980 (Real Decreto 2809/1980). The changes opened new territories for the Catalan language. The right of Spanish children to education in their mother tongue has been retained, but full Catalan education has become the primary goal. The aim of the language policy was to increase the weight of the Catalan over the Castilians through education (Miley, 2006).

In short, the method of so-called "language immersion" means that from 1993 the language of education and school communication in Catalonia became Catalan instead of Castilian (Spanish). Although there are only Spanish-language educational institutions, they are mostly private institutions, as the Generalitat supports Catalan language institutions. The method of linguistic immersion has been the subject of debate in the political climate for years. In disputes over the regulation of language use, native Spanish speakers complain about the violation of their rights and the oppression of the Castilian language. This is contradicted by surveys of students, which showed that the Spanish language competencies of learners using the immersion method are as good as those of their peers in the traditional curriculum.

4.1. Historical background of the method

The method was first applied in 1965 in Quebec, Canada. The initiative can be linked to the names of three parents who are dissatisfied with the education system. The children of Olga Melikoff, Valerie Neale and Murielle Parkes were students at the Saint-Lambert School, where education was conducted in English. Parents expressed concern about their children's lack of French language skills and wanted to improve the situation. A new pedagogical approach has been developed, based in part on the model outlined in the 1963 UNESCO report (Stern, H.H., 1969). Thus, the school conducted the first worldwide test of this method, teaching English-speaking children in French, a minority language. The program has produced good results. Teaching in a minority language has been shown to help students learn French from the first grade of school without being an obstacle to their academic success (Sargera, 2021).

4.2. Application of the method of linguistic immersion in Catalonia

The method of language immersion was first introduced in 1983 in nineteen public schools, where the majority of students were native Spanish speakers. Thanks to the positive results, the method was already present in seven hundred schools in Catalonia in 1989-1990, and from 1992 it was extended to public education throughout the Autonomous Community.

Pupils become acquainted with the minority language on the first day of teaching, and teachers speak only this language as soon as they cross the threshold of the classroom. Spanish is gradually being introduced in primary school for children between five and eight years old. From then on, the

Spanish and Catalan classes are included in the curriculum as two separate subjects, while the other subjects are taught in Catalan. According to Ley Orgánica 1/1990, this method applies to the organization of pre-school education (0-5 years), primary education (6-12 years) and compulsory secondary education (13-16 years) in Catalonia.

4.3. The aim and efficiency of the method

The aim of the method is to improve the knowledge and use of the Catalan language, to prevent social segregation resulting from the language, and to create a bilingual society in the Catalan region (Plataforma per la Llengua). Some believe that teaching children in a language other than their mother tongue can have a detrimental effect on their learning processes. However, researchers have used the method of linguistic immersion to prove that this belief is wrong. Scientific results confirm that this education system is just as effective as other Spanish education systems. One of the arguments of researchers studying the method in favor of language immersion education is that it is the only system that guarantees that Catalan children are fluent in both Catalan and Spanish. Ferrer et al (2011), for example, refer to the 2009 PISA study (OECD 2010) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The organization periodically tests the science, math, and reading competencies of fifteen-year-old students in sixty-five countries. In this test, Spanish-speaking students in Catalonia who studied using the immersion method scored similar scores in science, math and reading as other Spanish students who studied in their mother tongue.

Catalonia participated in the PISA survey for several years, including 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012, all of which reported similar results. The Spanish language proficiency of the students participating in the model is equal to or higher than the average of the rest of the Spanish state. The same can be said for the other subjects. An additional benefit of the model is that students have a better chance of learning a third language, such as English.

In 2006, the European Commission set up a High Level Group of Independent Experts on Multilingualism. The task of the group is to analyze the progress made by the Member States in promoting multilingualism, to provide support and advice, to provide up-to-date ideas in the field of multilingualism, and to make recommendations to the Commission for action in this area. The group published a report in 2007 praising, among other things, the bilingual education model used in Catalonia as a good example to promote language learning (European Commission, 2007).

4.4. Attacks on the method

In recent years, some families have gone to court to have their children taught in Spanish. Despite its many advantages, the judiciary questions the method of linguistic immersion. In 2014, the Supreme Court of Catalonia (TSJC) ruled that the Ministry of Education must provide at least twenty-five percent of Castilian lessons. At the time, the judgment applied to only eight students, but the court ruled that this rule should be followed if at least one student or his family requested lessons in Spanish. The 2014 decision was the first to set this percentage.

Later, in December 2020, the TSJC passed another resolution requiring the entire Catalan education system to teach twenty-five percent of the lessons in Spanish. The Catalan government appealed, but this was rejected by the Supreme Court. Catalan Education Minister, Josep González-Cambray said that since 2005, only eighty families in the school system, which has one and a half million students, have requested education in Spanish. In his view, there is no language conflict in Catalan schools (Josep, 2021). The Catalan government sent a letter to 5,108 school principals advising them not to change their language program despite the court's decision. According to the government, the Spanish National Education Law guarantees Catalonia the right to continue to hold most classes in Catalan. In practice, each school has some leeway to develop its own regulations. Depending on the stage of education, there is education in Spanish between three and four hours a week. The Supreme Court's decision would raise this to just over six hours a week in elementary school, seven and a half hours a week in high school and the bachillerato, a pre-university program. The President of the Generalitat, Pere Aragonès, described the decision of the Supreme Court as a "very serious attack" and a "lack of respect for teachers".

4.5. The current situation

On 24 March, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Socialist Republican Left), the Socialistes Units per Avançar (The Socialists move forward), the Junts per Catalunya (Together for Catalonia) and the En Comú Podem to amend the Law on Language Policy after the Catalan Supreme Court ordered the provision of a minimum of 25% of education in Castilian in Catalan schools.

Parliament has not yet voted in favor of a bill that says "Som Escola is raising concerns and uncertainty in the community" about the effectiveness of promoting Catalan in schools following the court's ruling. Som Escola is a Catalan civic, cultural and educational organization set up to strengthen its support for the model of social cohesion represented by Catalan education. It aims to bring together all the people, entities and institutions that are committed to actively advocating for the Catalan education model (somescola.cat). In its statement, it called on the courts to put an end to interference in the Catalan education system and language policy (Lavanguardia.com).

At the end of last year, participants called for a unified demonstration to defend the model of linguistic immersion at the Triumphal Arch in Barcelona. This year, on the second of April, another demonstration took place on the streets of Barcelona. The proposal to amend the law on language policy is scheduled to be voted on in plenary after the Easter holidays (Elpais.com).

5. Education policy in higher education institutions

In the case of higher education institutions, Article 35 of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy states: *"Everyone has the right to education in the Catalan language in accordance with the provisions of this Statute. In university and non-university education, Catalan should generally be used as a medium of communication and learning"* (Ley Orgánica 6/2006).

Thus, students can express themselves orally and in writing in the official language of their choice. Teachers also have this right. In terms of administrative activities, Catalan is undoubtedly the main working language of higher education institutions in the region. This includes, for example, signs on buildings, registration forms or the websites of various university bodies. In some specific cases, Catalan is the only working language. In terms of educational activity, the use of Catalan is very extensive, although it varies from university to university. In general, the proportion of classes taught in Catalan at Catalan universities ranges from sixty to eighty percent. In postgraduate, master's and doctoral studies, the proportion of Catalan is declining, to the benefit of Spanish, but sometimes English. The fact that a teacher teaches a class in Catalan does not mean that students are required to use that language. Under the law, students can express themselves orally and in writing in the official language of their choice, so all students can speak Catalan and Spanish in their class and write their exams in either of the two languages. There are teachers who provide the possibility to use other languages as well, but of course Catalan and Castilian are the main languages of communication.

The case of Jordi Juanico Sabaté, a professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), sparked a debate over the presence of Catalan in universities. The teacher gave up teaching last November because he was forced to teach Spanish. In a statement, faculty members working at the university were informed that education in Spanish was mandatory without the possibility of an answer. The decision was justified by the high number of foreign students. Juanico announced his resignation and then immediately published his case on social media. The case triggered a flood of complaints, with a number of similar cases coming to light. In response, the institution allowed the teacher to return to work, teaching in Catalan (Elnacional.cat).

The Generalitat agreed in September this year with twelve Catalan public universities to oversee language use in university education for the first time. The government will check every six months whether subjects are taught in the language of the curriculum (Miquel, 2021). Universities are required to produce a semi-annual report, which is sent to the ministry, where all incidents related to language changes in education are collected. The Generalitat wants university classes to be conducted in the language planned.

Catalan universities plan to prescribe 80% of their education in Catalan, thus extending language immersion to university centers. Member of Parliament Gemma Geis announced the new plan at a conference organized by her department, which was attended by representatives of the rectors, research, linguistics, culture, politics and students. The joint work on the plan is expected to take place in February and March so that the plan can be presented in April for the next school year, 2022-2023 (Elperiodico.com).

According to university language use data published in the academic year, 73.9% of subjects in Catalan public universities are taught in Catalan, 23.1% in Spanish and 21.2% in a third language, which is mainly English. However, there is a significant difference between public and private universities, in the case of the latter only 15.2% of masters courses are taught in Catalan, compared with 35.3% in Spanish and 52.8% in English. In the case of theses, only 10.3% are presented in Catalan, compared to 54% in third languages, especially English.

According to Isabel Fernández, a professor of communication at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, teachers change the language of instruction due to unforeseen circumstances, such as the number of foreign students or the presence of non-Catalan guest teachers. She believes that restricting the right to education in the language of one's choice is contrary to the Basic Law, which includes the right of teachers and students to express themselves in the language of their choice. Fernández also warns that the plan to offer 80% of masters and postgraduate courses in Catalan is unworkable because the majority of students, at least in her faculty, are foreign and non-EU nationals, they want to study in Spanish or in English. According to the ministry, 50% of undergraduate courses at Catalan universities are in Catalan.

In conclusion, there is no complete consensus on language use in university education either. There is a kind of effort to promote the Catalan language, but this is hampered by the need to take into account the needs of foreign students. It is certainly positive that both students and teachers can express their thoughts in Spanish and Catalan, but as the example above shows, this right is not fully realized in all cases.

6. Conclusions

In the debate over linguistic immersion, language has become a tool of political struggle. The model has successfully compensated for the dominance of the Spanish language in language use and promoted equal opportunities for children and adolescents. This is supported by data from surveys on language use and the success of the language immersion model has been recognized by international organizations. Those who disagree with the policy of language immersion, refer to the rights of parents to freely choose the language of education for their children from the two official languages. Part of society speaks of positive discrimination, saying the model of linguistic immersion violates the rights of native Castilian speakers.

Despite the fact that 48.6% of the Catalan population over the age of 15 consider themselves to be native Spanish, compared to 36.1% who are Catalan, both groups have adequate knowledge of both languages. According to science, the model of language immersion has no negative effect on students' language skills or other competencies.

Until now, the goal of education policy has been to balance what is unbalanced in society. Education centers can improve asymmetry by making Spanish a mediating language in places with a strong Catalan predominance, and Catalan where Spanish is more prevalent. Language immersion should be flexible enough to adapt to the language needs of students, depending on whether or not their school is located in a predominantly Spanish-speaking area. In terms of education policy, the secret for the time being is the future of the language immersion model, with the plenary sitting still to be on the agenda. In any case, the issue of Catalan divides public opinion and raises a number of other exciting questions.

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