

## Bourdieu and the economics of language in Catalonia

### *Bourdieu i l'economia de la llengua a Catalunya*

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#### ABSTRACT

This article first reviews Pierre Bourdieu's influential theory of the economics of linguistic exchanges and of the role of linguistic and symbolic capital in social reproduction. It raises questions that remain unaddressed about the theory's universality, its emphasis on schooling as the nexus for converting different forms of capital into symbolic capital, and its failure to consider the separate effects of economic and political/institutional power on linguistic capital when linguistic markets are not fully integrated. The second part of the article brings empirical evidence from Catalonia to bear on those questions. An overview of findings of economic and ethnographic/experimental research on language in autonomous Catalonia suggests that, *pace* Bourdieu, changes in language policy and individual linguistic practices appear to diminish in some concrete ways the pre-existing economic and social distinctions between ethnolinguistic groups.

**KEYWORDS:** Bourdieu, social reproduction, linguistic capital, economics of language, educational language policy, Catalonia.

#### RESUM

Aquest article revisa primer la teoria influent de Pierre Bourdieu sobre l'economia dels intercanvis lingüístics i sobre el paper del capital lingüístic i simbòlic en la reproducció social. Planteja qüestions que resten pendents sobre la universalitat de la teoria, el seu èmfasi en l'escolarització com a nexa per a convertir diferents formes de capital en capital simbòlic, i el fet de no considerar els efectes separats del poder econòmic i polític o institucional sobre el capital lingüístic quan els mercats lingüístics no estan totalment integrats. La segona part de l'article aporta proves empíriques del cas català sobre aquestes qüestions. Una visió general dels resultats de recerques econòmiques i etnogràfiques o experimentals sobre la llengua a la Catalunya autònoma suggereix que, malgrat Bourdieu, els canvis en la política lingüística i les pràctiques lingüístiques dels individus semblen disminuir d'una manera concreta les distincions econòmiques i socials preexistents entre grups etnolingüístics.

**PARAULES CLAU:** Bourdieu, reproducció social, capital lingüístic, economia de la llengua, política lingüística en l'ensenyament, Catalunya.

## INTRODUCTION

The theory of the role of language in the reproduction of social inequality that Pierre Bourdieu first set out in “The economics of linguistic exchanges” (1977) has had immeasurable influence in sociolinguistics and allied fields. The first part of the present article gives an overview of Bourdieu’s account of different forms of capital and of the relations among them, focusing on the several ways that linguistic and economic capital are linked. Despite the power of Bourdieu’s analysis, its lack of attention to the historical development of such links and the lack of clarity about how universally applicable he intended it to be make it subject to critique, albeit sympathetic.

The second part of this article brings evidence from Catalonia to bear on these questions about historical conditions and universality, and in particular on the appropriateness of Bourdieu’s account for capitalist societies where linguistic markets are, contrary to expectations, not fully integrated. Econometric, ethnographic, and experimental studies of linguistic capital in Catalonia are synthesized here with two goals: 1) to empirically test and refine Bourdieu’s model of the relations among institutions and different forms of capital, and 2) to contribute to a budding conversation across the daunting methodological divide between sociolinguistic and econometric research, which might strengthen further work on the economics of language and social inequality.

## BOURDIEU ON LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

Bourdieu distinguished three fundamental varieties of capital: economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital is that which is immediately and directly convertible into money. Social capital derives from a durable network of relationships of acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital – which he also called *informational capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) – itself takes three distinct forms: 1) embodied, as in a linguistic habitus; 2) objectified, as in texts or works of art; and 3) institutionalized, as in academic credentials (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119).

To these three fundamental forms, Bourdieu added symbolic capital, which is a derivative form that has no independent existence. It is definitionally, not just typically, the form that other capital takes “when it is grasped through categories of perception that [...] misrecognize the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119).

Bourdieu’s point was that these different forms of capital can be converted from one to another for further exploitation. He aimed to create a general science of the economy of practices to uncover laws that regulate these conversions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 118). Whether he saw such laws as universal is ambiguous, but Bourdieu’s accounts began where such conversions are already institutionalized. Craig Calhoun (1993) points out that their historical emergence and consolidation is underdeveloped in Bourdieu’s work, and that motivates this article.

Literal economic value is related to language in three ways of interest here. First, linguistic mastery is embodied cultural capital that brings the bearer rewards in some sectors of the labor market. Bourdieu observed that “linguistic characteristics very strongly influence employment chances and occupational success” (1977: 664). In theories associated with the economist Gary Becker (1964), linguistic skills are treated as “human capital,” which is believed to enhance economic productivity, benefiting industry and the larger economy/society as well as the individual worker. Bourdieu (1986) dismissed human capital theory as naive and narrow economism that missed the deeper processes that maintain social inequality. He saw (correctly, in my view) much of the value of linguistic capital not as directly related to productivity but rather as based in its value as an index of other forms of capital that the speaker controls. (As a secondary school student in metropolitan Barcelona put it succinctly to me in the 1980’s, “Someone who knows Catalan could know other things, too.”) Sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists, this author included, generally endorse Bourdieu’s critique. However, we should not imagine that in contrast all mainstream economists endorse the human capital theory. For example, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Kenneth Arrow posited a signaling theory of higher education in explicit contrast to human capital theory. He modeled university as a filter that screens individuals and signals information about them to “the purchasers of labor” (Arrow, 1973: 194). (See also Alarcón and Garzón [2013] for a critique of human capital theory in relation to language and immigration.)

Secondly, language has economic value as the medium of objectified cultural capital, that is, marketable commodities. Benedict Anderson’s (1991) analysis of the role of “print capitalism” in the emergence of political nationalism showed that this is not new to the late-modern period, although new late-modern commodifications of language have been proposed and debated. (See, *inter alia*, Heller, 2010; Grin, 2014; Duchêne and Heller, 2012; McGill, 2013; Block, 2018; Pujolar, 2020).

The third way in which language is closely tied to literal economics is that linguistic variation indexes (or signals, in Arrow’s and micro-economists’ term) the relative economic capital that its speakers control. For Bourdieu, “a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, i.e., the[ir] power and authority in economic and cultural power relations” (1977: 652). This correlation does not in itself constitute symbolic capital. Linguistic capital becomes symbolic capital when that indexical relation is what linguistic anthropologists call *iconized* or *rhematized* (Gal and Irvine, 2019). That is, the linguistic form is taken to share and depict the same “superior” qualities as its speakers. Then the arbitrariness of its social origins is obscured, and a language is seen as naturally superior in itself. In Bourdieu’s model, this transformation happens mainly through schooling, where institutional alchemy transforms the base metal of economic capital into semiotic gold. For Bourdieu, schools do not actually disseminate mastery of a linguistic form; instead, they establish common recognition of authorized usage and unequal skill in it (1977: 652). Those whose families cannot socialize them at home into the valued linguistic habitus simply cannot gain enough mastery secondarily to yield profit.

The conversion of economic and cultural capital to symbolic capital secures the active collaboration of the dominated in their own subordination. By Bourdieu's definition of symbolic capital, members of subordinated groups can basically never profit from it, because symbolic capital is not a primary asset. The symbolic power relation of two speakers depends on their relative capital of authority, not their linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977: 648). Fundamentally, Bourdieu's classic analysis of "linguistic exchanges" was not really about exchange at all, but rather prestidigitation: linguistic authority is a shell game.

Following an economic truism, Bourdieu asserted that the ruling class extracts cultural profit from scarcity. "[T]he power of cultural practices [...] decline[s] with the growth in the absolute number of people able to appropriate them" (1984: 230). "Better-placed groups" make efforts "to maintain the scarcity and distinctiveness of their assets" (Bourdieu, 1984: 161). However, the scarcity principle fits somewhat awkwardly with linguistic expansion (or imposition) through language policy in compulsory public schooling. Language is not consumed by use and, like currency, actually depends on wide circulation for its value, even and especially its use value. (Alarcón and Garzón [2013] make a similar observation.) In this respect, language is a network good, whose value increases with adoption by more users. This creates one challenge to Bourdieu's model; not an insurmountable one, but necessitating nuance.

Another difficulty arises from Bourdieu's assumption that the linguistic form that accrues as symbolic capital will also be the one that garners economic rewards both on the labor market and in the market for mediated commodities. A ruling class uses cultural institutions to legitimate its own linguistic capital: "the dominant usage is the usage of the dominant class, the one which presupposes appropriation of the means of acquisition which that class monopolizes" (Bourdieu, 1977: 659). Certainly, Bourdieu explicitly acknowledged that the convertibility of capital depended on the historical consolidation of economic and labor markets and the control of access to such markets through the schools. He saw that profit can only be extracted from cultural and linguistic distinctiveness if different forms are hierarchically ranked in all legitimate markets (1977: 654). For him the state holds "the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence" (1992:112), and holders of various forms of capital struggle for power over the state that can grant power over the different kinds of capital (1992: 114-115).

Despite this recognition, Bourdieu generally took a national linguistic market that was already fully integrated under capitalism as his premise, rather than as a historical problem to explain. How the different forms of capital come to be aligned with symbolic capital, and to stay aligned despite centrifugal sociolinguistic forces and economic and political conflicts and transformations, are questions of concern for socio-historical analysis, not to mention in advocacy for social justice. Calhoun (1993: 82) critiques Bourdieu's work for assuming, rather than empirically demonstrating, a high level of homology among fields, an absence of systemic contradictions, and a tendency towards social integration and stable reproduction of power. Bourdieu did not explore the social conditions and histories that make particular strategies of reproduction possible much less advantageous (Calhoun, 1993: 70). Nor

did he attend to the possibility of economically well-placed class fractions that have not secured the worth of their own distinctive linguistic capital on the literal markets. But there are such historical cases. Catalonia is one of them.

### CATALONIA AS A TEST CASE

Economic and political power have not been aligned for modern Catalonia within Spain. Readers of this journal know this history well, so I will summarize it sweepingly. Catalonia led Spain in 19th-century industrial development and the establishment of a bourgeois social order. It was and continues to be one of the wealthiest areas of Spain. Yet in the centralized Spanish state and under Franco in particular, the Catalan language was marginalized from public spheres and educational institutions, and the Castilian language held monopoly power in both the labor and the mediated commodities markets. In the latter half of the 20th century, Catalan did not have direct economic value as embodied, objectified, or credentialed capital. Nonetheless, Catalan speakers were well represented in the middle and upper middle classes, as credentialed professionals as well as owners in commerce and light industry. In contrast, immigrant-origin Castilian speakers from other parts of Spain were concentrated in the industrial working class. Because of the institutional marginalization of Catalan, access to it was restricted to those with Catalan-speaking social networks.

The historical separation of political and economic dominance in Catalonia creates an opportunity to consider a question that Bourdieu did not: the relative effect of these two kinds of power on the cultural, social, and symbolic value of linguistic capital. By the late 20th century, the case generally did not fit Bourdieu's expected pattern. For example, culture industries of Spain such as publishing and the dubbing of foreign films into Castilian (mandated by Franco) were largely based in Catalonia (and Catalan speakers provided the Castilian-speaking avatars of some Hollywood stars). Many Catalan speakers succeeded in obligatorily Castilian-medium schools and in the professions to which credentialing gave entry. Correspondingly, language attitudes tests shortly after the return to democracy found that Catalan was perceived by young people from both linguistic backgrounds as enhancing a speaker's social distinction (Woolard, 1989). This fits Bourdieu's assertion that the (social) worth of a language derives from the "worth" of its speakers, but it contradicted his identification of schools as the site that produces this conversion. School language use was neither necessary nor sufficient to produce the effect. The Catalan case suggested that the social and symbolic worth of a language can derive directly from a typified association with economically well-off speakers, even if it is devalued in economic markets and credentialing institutions (Woolard, 1985, 1989).

Political autonomy was restored to Catalonia in 1979. Policies aimed at what is called *normalization* of the Catalan language came to require increasing amounts of Catalan in compulsory schooling. A 1983 law set minimum requirements for both languages to be used as a medium of instruction, i.e., bilingual education. At that same time,

immersion in Catalan was also introduced in early education for schools with high concentrations (70 %) of Castilian speakers, characteristic of the immigrant-origin working class cities of metropolitan Barcelona. By 1993, Catalan-medium instruction, usually if not entirely accurately known as *immersion*, was formally generalized throughout the majority of schools in Catalonia. In 1998 Catalan was officially designated the normal medium of instruction throughout compulsory education. Although it is increasingly clear this has not always held in practice (Vila i Moreno, 2004*b*; Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2021), it was a remarkable policy change made within just decades. Although it was broadly accepted for years, the Catalan education model is currently the subject of heated political controversy and multiple negative judicial rulings at the highest level of Spanish courts. Some of the studies discussed below obviously bear on this controversy, but it is more than this article can address. (See the monographic issue of *Revista de Llengua i Dret*, 2021.)

Catalonia also established language policies that affected the labor market directly, particularly by requiring Catalan linguistic credentials to work in the Catalan public sector. For younger generations, this requirement is satisfied simply by completing compulsory schooling in Catalonia, with no further test of language proficiency.

## CATALAN IN THE MATERIAL ECONOMY

What happens to the value of linguistic capital when control over institutional language changes hands, at least in major sectors? *Cui bono*? The developments in Catalan linguistic policy and specifically educational linguistic policy under autonomy create new opportunities to test and refine Bourdieu's theory of linguistic value. This section will summarize some econometric, ethnographic and experimental studies that evaluate the effects of policy changes on the economic, social, and symbolic value of Catalan and the social distribution of such value.

In a survey of economic research on language in Catalonia, Amado Alarcón (2011) found the field to be very limited. Studies of the economic consequences of language policies and proficiencies in Catalonia have appeared since then, but the number I've found is still strikingly small. As Alarcón observed, such research may be avoided because of its conflictive potential, and it is also challenging because good longitudinal data is scarce. Moreover, educational policy changes generally applied – at least formally – across all schools, making controlled comparison difficult. The knotty covariance of language and socio-economic status in Catalonia cannot be disentangled without advanced techniques to address endogeneity. This makes it hard for readers who do not have considerable statistical sophistication to evaluate the assumptions made in the analytic models. Thus a caveat: in the following sections, I summarize econometric studies well beyond my expertise to fully critique or endorse. My goal is to bring such work to a wider sociolinguistic audience in the hope of developing critical awareness and a mutually-informing cross-disciplinary conversation about work that remains to be done. (See also Caminal, Cappellari, and Di Paolo, 2021, for an accessible summary.)

### ***Mediated cultural commodities***

Catalan governmental policies and subsidies have had effects on media markets, but given Spanish state constraints and global market forces, they fall far short of equalizing the market for Catalan-medium cultural products compared to Castilian. Young people, who are the most exposed to institutionalized Catalan through schooling, are generally found to tilt more strongly than ever toward popular culture and social media consumption in Castilian. For the impacts of linguistic and cultural policies on the media and objectified cultural capital see, *inter alia*, Crameri (2008), Fernández (2008), Solé and Alarcón (2001), and Gifreu (2011). This essay will focus on the impacts on the economic and social value of the language for individuals.

### ***Catalan as linguistic capital in the labor market***

Self-reports and educational testing consistently suggest that the institutionalization of Catalan actually *has* extended knowledge of the language compared to the baseline at autonomy, although the linguistic adequacy of such change is debated. There is general agreement that it has done far less to increase habitual use of the language (Direcció General de Política Lingüística, 2015; Vila, 2004a, 2020). Bourdieu might have predicted just such a contrast. Our interest is whether those who acquire some proficiency in Catalan as a second language are rewarded economically and socially for it. Obviously the ultimate test of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory would be intergenerational occupational and social mobility, but we do not yet have studies of that. However, we can look for preliminary evidence of a language premium in more limited economic measures such as employment, wages, and occupational fit/mobility. Since the relation between the Catalan and Castilian first-language (L1) communities in Catalonia has been the long-term concern, this discussion will focus primarily on them rather than the transnational immigration that became significant in the early 2000's.

### **Employment and occupational selection**

Rendon (2007) analyzed 1991 and 1996 census data to evaluate the contribution of (self-reported) Catalan knowledge to the probability of being employed in Catalonia. (Rendon was aware of bias in self-reports but unable to control it because of lack of other data.) Using statistical techniques to take into account confounding variables such as community of residence and level of schooling, Rendon found that knowing Catalan brought a modest premium to the probability of being employed, between 3 and 5 percentage points for knowing how to read and speak Catalan, and between 2 and 6 percentage points for being able to write Catalan. Importantly for the questions

Bourdieu inspired, knowledge of Catalan was equally or more beneficial for those born in other parts of Spain as for the Catalonia-born, *ceteris paribus*. The premium was generally greater for women than men. Further, for men the reward was greater for reading and speaking Catalan, while for women ability to write Catalan brought the highest premium. This difference corresponds to the gendering of so-called blue collar versus pink collar work that was still characteristic of the period (perhaps diminished now with the growth of the white-collar information economy).

Quella and Rendon (2012) further looked specifically at immigrants from other parts of Spain (the majority from Andalusia and the great wave of the 1960's) in the same data set. They also give us an idea of whether the premium for knowledge of Catalan extended beyond the Catalan public sector where opportunities obviously had been directly created by official policy. They found that knowledge of Catalan was not only significantly associated with permanent employment, it also contributed significantly to the probability of employment in white-collar occupations and trade, services, government, and education activities. These effects were stronger for women than for men, who saw greater effects for entrepreneurial and self-employed positions. The direction of any causal relation between employment and Catalan proficiency remains unclear; these authors carefully write of probabilities and not causality. It may even be that people in higher status occupations are simply more likely to claim knowledge of Catalan. Several ethnographic and interview studies have found that Castilian speakers often report they began using Catalan once in a workplace, particularly in more highly qualified work, rather than that they invested in Catalan in order to find work (Pujolar *et al.*, 2010; Pujolar, 2019; Woolard, 2016).

## Earnings

Using survey data from 2006 on earnings among first- and second-generation immigrants to Catalonia (both from within Spain and transnational), Di Paolo and Raymond (2012) estimated that Catalan proficiency brought 18% higher monthly earnings, once potentially confounding factors were taken into account statistically. This premium held only for more highly educated individuals, which on its face might seem to confirm just what Bourdieu would predict. However, to try to compensate for over-reporting in self-assessments, the study counted as proficient only those who claimed the ability to write as well as speak and read Catalan. If the ability to *write* Catalan had increased earnings for workers with an eighth-grade education or less, we might well take that as evidence of socially discriminatory signaling, given that the occupations for which limited education is viewed as qualifying are less likely to necessitate writing skills.

What about the earnings effects of Catalan educational linguistic policy specifically? To evaluate the economic effects of the 1983 introduction of Catalan as a medium of compulsory education alongside Castilian, Cappellari and Di Paolo (2018) used survey data from 2006 and 2011 to compare earnings across generational cohorts

born 1961-1982 who had been fully educated in Catalonia. These cohorts had different numbers of years of exposure to Catalan-medium instruction within the bilingual schooling model introduced in 1983, from none for those born before 1966 to full schooling in the new model for those born in or after 1977.

Cappellari and Di Paolo found what they term *substantial positive effects of bilingual schooling on earnings*. One additional year of bilingual Catalan and Castilian education increased earnings by 1,4%. Compared to the baseline return of a year of schooling of 6,5%, this represents a proportional increase of “about 20% due to exposure to bilingual education” (2018: 95). This premium for exposure to Catalan instruction did not benefit only those of Catalan and Catalan-speaking origins. In fact, individuals from low-status families (as measured by parental education) from non-Catalan geographical and/or linguistic background were among those who gained the most benefits (2018: 91, 98). Catalan-origin individuals from low-status families also benefited from the new educational policy, but there was no earnings premium for individuals who came from higher status Catalan-origin families. Moreover, it was exposure to Catalan in compulsory education, not optional secondary education, that drove the effect, so it was not dependent on class-influenced ability to attain higher education levels.

How can the authors be confident that educational language policy rather than other major socio-economic changes in the same period created these effects? Sociolinguists, sociologists of language, and anthropologists like myself have reason to be more skeptical than Cappellari and Di Paolo of the human capital theory that views increased earnings as a reward for increased productivity resulting from the benefits (e.g., cognitive) of bilingualism (Alarcón and Garzón, 2013). However, their study included diligent falsification experiments to reduce the possibility of identifying a spurious relationship. In the first they ran the same analysis on Spanish cohorts born in the same period (and presumably exposed to these same major changes) but not residing in Catalonia or another bilingual region. In the second they ran an analysis on cohorts born in Catalonia 1945-1965, to whom they attributed a fictive “placebo” exposure to bilingual education (well beyond my comprehension and critical faculty) to see if they had captured pre-existing earnings trends independent of language policy. In neither exercise did they find effects that falsified their attribution of the effects on earnings to exposure to Catalan in schooling.

Because the reform in educational linguistic policy appears to have reduced the pre-existing wage gap across individuals of different social backgrounds, the authors conclude that the reform helped “level the playing field” and promote the integration of non-Catalans, which were among its main goals (2018: 98). It should be noted that because of limitations in available data, Cappellari and Di Paolo could not investigate whether effects differed between individuals who experienced bilingual education and those in Catalan-medium immersion programs, a most contentious issue now.

## Educational achievement

In keeping with Bourdieu's perspective on schooling, we can also ask about effects of Catalan-medium instruction on the educational achievement of second-language (L2) speakers as a pre-condition to economic rewards. Catalan policymakers emphasize that standard measures repeatedly show that Catalan-medium instruction has not diminished mastery of the Castilian language by students in Catalonia compared to their peers in monolingual Spain (Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2021; Strubell i Trueta, Barrachina, and Sintes Pascual, 2013). (Critics suggest that as a wealthy region, Catalonia should be expected not just to match but to outperform the Spanish average.) A recent study, however, has asked whether Catalan-medium schooling disadvantages Castilian speakers in other subjects and has proposed a more negative conclusion.

Analyzing 2015 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results among a sample of 15-year-olds in Catalonia, Calero and Choi (2019) found a penalty in science and reading scores (but not mathematics) for L1 Castilian speakers educated in Catalan-medium schools, compared to L1 Catalan speakers, even after controlling for potentially confounding socio-economic factors. The authors characterize this provocatively as a contrast between "winners" and "losers" under Catalan immersion education policy. They only focus on "losers", even though the penalty only appears among some subgroups of Castilian speakers in the sample. The penalty is found for males but not females, and for the highest SES tercile of L1 Castilian speakers but not for the lowest SES tercile.<sup>1</sup> This latter finding is particularly surprising since it runs counter to theoretically-informed predictions and to the pattern of social and educational inequality found around the world. It is usually lower SES groups, if any, that are disadvantaged academically when the language of instruction is not the child's first (and presumably stronger) language. Higher SES students' achievement is more often unaffected or enhanced by bilingual or immersion instruction (MacSwan and Rolstad, 2010). For example, Anghel, Cabrales, and Carro (2016) examined the effects of Spanish-English bilingual programs in primary schools in Madrid. They found that it was the children of parents with lower education levels whose test results were negatively affected in school subjects taught in English. An educational penalty specific only to higher-status males suggests this is a very different phenomenon than the possible educational disadvantage found in Madrid and other contexts. (For a fuller assessment of a number of weaknesses in the Calero and Choi study, see Flors Mas and Vila, 2019.)

Susan Frekko's (2013) ethnographic study of Catalan education for adults is relevant to this question of the interaction effect of language background and socio-

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1. Numbers of girls and boys were about equal in the PISA sample, but the SES distribution does not seem to be reported in the article. Since the selection was by school rather than individual social characteristics, it is not clear that the SES subsamples were of equal size. Were they to be substantially different, it would be misleading to interpret an effect found to be significant in only one tercile as generalizable to the full sample, despite the *prima facie* finding.

economic status in relation to educational success. The majority of the students she observed were taking a relatively advanced Catalan class to meet the language requirement for Catalan civil service positions. Even native Catalan speakers who had been schooled before normalization were required to show evidence of this level of Catalan proficiency, and their home language did not necessarily advantage them in the classroom. Frekko found that the highest final grades were earned not by the L1 Catalan speakers, all of whom held working-class jobs, but rather by middle class and professional Castilian speakers, some of whom had little oral proficiency in Catalan. Frekko argues that their class background gave them knowledge of language and literacy skills valued in schooling, which the working-class Catalan speakers lacked. Her finding fits with Bourdieu's predictions when we bear in mind that it is not simply a first language as code, but rather deep experience with particular practices with language (regardless of the code) that confer educational advantage.

## CATALAN IN THE SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC ECONOMY

### *Language and social capital: Econometric evidence*

One study has been done using econometric methods on the effects of secondary acquisition of Catalan on social capital in Bourdieu's sense. Using survey data from 2008 and 2013, Caminal and Di Paolo (2019) found that Catalan linguistic proficiency increased L1 Castilian speakers' propensity to find Catalan domestic partners and to speak Catalan with them. That is, to the extent that relatively closed Catalan-speaking social networks can be considered to constitute social capital, then that social capital has been extended to Castilian speakers who become proficient in Catalan. This result does not show that entry into Catalan-speaking domestic relations translates into upward socio-economic mobility for the L1 Castilian speakers. Nonetheless, it does show that dissemination of Catalan as a second language reduces its ingroup social gate-keeping effect, which has been one of the explicit goals of Catalan language policy.

### *School language and the symbolic value of Catalan: Ethnographic and experimental evidence*

A final question is the effects of institutional normalization on the perceived social and symbolic worth of Catalan among young people educated in the system. This is not a topic explored by economists, but I have addressed it in ethnographic case studies and experimental research over the decades of autonomy.<sup>2</sup> This work has

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2. Ethnographic methods can make no claim to the representative sampling and statistical rigor that the economic work discussed above can, but they have the alternative strength of providing contextual depth and nuance.

been fully reported and will be familiar to many readers; I repeat some relevant points here (Woolard, 1989, 2016; Woolard and Gahng, 1990).

A language attitudes experiment that I first conducted in several public and private secondary schools in 1980 showed that Catalan already had prestige value even before it became a medium of school instruction (see Woolard, 1989 for methods and data). Students' evaluations of recorded speakers in relation to a statistically-extracted factor weighted primarily on traits such as intelligence, leadership, and cultivation were significantly higher for an individual speaking Catalan than when the same person spoke Castilian, regardless of either the speaker's or the listener's L1. I repeated the experiment in 1987 and finally with a smaller sample in 2007. The higher prestige value of Catalan was found consistently across all years. Not surprisingly the results suggested that the prestige premium for Catalan had increased by 2007.

An ethnographic classroom study in one public secondary school in 1987 and again in 2007 yielded further data on social and symbolic linguistic value in relation to changing language practices. In 2007, a higher proportion of the L1 Castilian students were observably proficient in Catalan (having been educated entirely under the Catalan-medium policy) than in the same school in 1987, when instruction was bilingual. In 1987, only middle-class L1 Castilian students functioned in spoken Catalan. In 2007 in contrast, some (not all) students from poor neighborhoods and working-class families had also become fluent Catalan speakers. Among these were the social leaders as well as highest achievers in the Catalan-medium classroom.

In interviews and discussions, similar linguistic stereotypes emerged in 1987 and 2007, but there were subtle yet important differences. Almost all students in 2007 described Catalan as "refined" or "elegant" in contrast to Castilian as "coarse" or "vulgar", as many had done in 1987. However, in 1987, such stereotypes were linked directly to speakers ("Castilians are less cultured", "Catalans are more refined"). In 2007, more students located refinement and vulgarity in the languages themselves ("Catalan sounds very refined always – always", "Castilian sounds cruder"). This may be an early sign that Catalan-medium schooling is beginning to obscure the social origins and encourage misrecognition of the social source of imputed linguistic value, as Bourdieu expected.

The immediate mechanism by which symbolic violence silences speakers according to Bourdieu is linguistic shame and consequent self-censorship. In 1987, L1 Castilian students in private interviews repeatedly reported feeling shame (*vergüenza*) about speaking Catalan because they spoke it poorly. In 2007, there was no mention at all of linguistic shame. By then, young people had grown up hearing L2 forms of Catalan, from teachers as well as peers. Many could not even distinguish L1 from L2 speakers. Even the Catalan language teacher for this class could no longer say with confidence whether her younger colleagues were L1 or L2 Catalan speakers. Arguably, the massive infusion of L2 Catalan speakers through the education system has faded what Bourdieu called the linguistic memory of origins. One functionally

monolingual, working-class Castilian speaker explained to me why she felt comfortable when her school friends addressed her in Catalan. “Since it’s a language I’ve been taught since I was little”, she said, “it’s as if it were Castilian, too”.

While the language attitudes experiment showed no fundamental change in the relative prestige value of Catalan and Castilian over the decades, it in contrast showed a progressive dilution of the identity-marking and solidarity value of being a native speaker of Catalan. In 1980, Catalans gave significantly higher scores on a summary factor I interpreted as stressing social “solidarity” (in contrast to “prestige”) when they heard Catalan spoken, but only by L1 speakers (the same pattern held for Castilian speakers). In contrast, in 1987, *all* speakers got higher solidarity scores from Catalan listeners when they spoke Catalan, regardless of whether they were L1 or L2 speakers. By 2007, there was no longer any solidarity premium at all to any speaker for using one language or the other. That social difference had washed out. Newman, Trenchs-Parera and Ng (2008) found in a similar experiment a further effect they call “linguistic cosmopolitanism”: a positive preference among some respondents for L2 speech over L1 forms.

In sum, there are signs in this qualitative and experimental research of the enhancement and possibly budding misrecognition of the authority or symbolic distinction of Catalan in Bourdieu’s sense. However, there is also evidence that this hierarchical distinction is actually extended horizontally to the wider pool of speakers who acquire Catalan secondarily, even those from lower SES backgrounds. The good news is that speaking Catalan is no longer an ethnolinguistic marker distinguishing Catalans from Castilians within Catalonia. More concerning is its possibly exacerbated condensation as a class marker, indexing the left behind: those who do *not* use Catalan to any meaningful degree are more likely than ever to be from working and marginalized classes (and transnational labor migration).<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In one of the most influential theories in the social sciences of the reproduction of social inequality, Pierre Bourdieu identified language as a form of embodied cultural capital that through indirect processes can be converted to and from economic and symbolic capital. Bourdieu assumed that because of the crucial significance of early childhood socialization, the drive chain between class privilege and linguistic privilege is not broken by school language policy and practice; it is only lengthened so that the connection is disguised. The rewards of institutional access to a standard or second language through compulsory education thus may be more illusory than real.

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3. These patterns continued to develop through the early 2000’s at least, but very recent surveys suggest some of them may be changing, to the disadvantage of Catalan (Consell Superior d’Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2021).

However, Bourdieu did not analyze how these relationships among forms of capital emerge and are consolidated historically, whether different strategies of reproduction might be advantageous in different historical contexts, or how these relations might be realigned at specific junctures of social and political change. In particular, he did not consider cases where linguistic markets are not fully integrated, where different forms of capital are not aligned and where there are competing sources of value for linguistic capital. Catalonia offers an unusual opportunity to fill gaps in Bourdieu's model and to address more concretely its implications for strategies to diminish inequality.

Census and survey data show that Catalonia's notable changes in language policy have extended proficiencies in Catalan to a considerably larger proportion of the population than at the onset of autonomy. Moreover, all but one of the studies reviewed in this article suggest that, *pace* Bourdieu, changes in language policies and institutional practices have gone some measurable distance toward diminishing pre-existing economic and social distinctions between ethnolinguistic groups in Catalonia. This is not a claim that Catalan educational language policy has been a panacea. Dissatisfactions with linguistic as well as educational outcomes persist. Educational inequalities remain marked in Catalonia as elsewhere, and the burden of school failure falls especially heavily on working-class students of transnational immigrant origins (Bayona and Domingo, 2018). The econometric studies surveyed in this article are only the first words on the literal economics of linguistic exchange and of educational linguistic policies in Catalonia. Considerable questions remain that will demand combined expertise in linguistic, social, and economic research to answer.

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