

Language contact in Early Childhood Education: The case of French and Catalan at La Bressola school

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Abstract

Nowadays, the Catalan language is not really current in Catalunya Nord (a part of the south of France). Despite its great relevance for thousands of years, this language is not often used among locals. Thanks to the Catalan school La Bressola and the fight from many professionals and families, Catalan and its culture are reviving. This article intends to analyse the language contact between French and Catalan in the speech of some children of Early Childhood Education from the school La Bressola-El Soler and thus, to find out the sociolinguistic influences (such as borrowings and/or code-switching) they are been through in their spontaneous speech, via focus groups with the children and questionnaires to their families. In the results, we can encounter examples of calques, which would take part of the comprehension to the why there are some infants more influenced by the French language than others and how this could be related being an English teacher in a Catalan school, in Catalonia. This fact is key to know why children make mistakes and where, in order to identify and be placed on their language developmental stage, so we can help them better on learning a second language.

Key words: Early Childhood Education, Language contact, Borrowings, Code-switching, Calque.

Resum

Actualment, la llengua catalana no és gaire present a la Catalunya Nord (una part del sud de França). Malgrat la seva importància durant milers d'anys, aquesta llengua està deixant de ser parlada entre els habitants de la zona. Gràcies a l'escola catalana La Bressola i la lluita de molts professionals i famílies, el català i la seva cultura tornen a reviure. Aquest article pretén analitzar el contacte de llengües que hi ha entre el francès i el català d'uns infants d'educació infantil de l'escola La Bressola-El Soler i, d'aquesta manera, conèixer les influències sociolingüístiques que hi viuen (com préstecs que agafen d'una de les llengües i/o alternança d'aquestes mentre parlen) a través de focus grups amb els infants i qüestionaris a les famílies d'aquests. En aquestes recerques, podem trobar resultats produïts per calcs que formaran part de la comprensió cap al per què hi ha infants més influenciats pel francès que d'altres i com això es pot transmetre sent mestra d'anglès a una escola catalana, a Catalunya. Aquest punt és clau a l'hora de saber per què i on els infants fan unes equivocacions determinades a l'hora de parlar anglès, amb l'objectiu de d'identificar i situar-se en la seva etapa de desenvolupament del llenguatge i, d'aquesta manera, poder ajudar-los millor a aprendre una segona llengua.

Paraules clau: Educació Infantil, Contacte de llengües, Préstecs, Alternança de llengües, Calc.

Introduction

This article explores the language contact between French and Catalan in a Catalan school (La Bressola) in the south of France (Catalunya Nord). This study is focused on the Early Childhood Education stage, so the participants are children that go to this school and are from 2 to 5 years old and their families. The main objective is to understand "How does the French language affect the Catalan in children of the Early Childhood Education", thus it explores the influence of the first language (the predominant) on the second in a French environment. Bialystok (2005, p.2) says that "Some people live in home environments where the language of the extended family reveals an ethnic, cultural, or national background that is different from that of the community. Here the adults can function in two languages, and children born into these families may well learn some of that heritage language through familial interaction", and this sentence is the reality of some of the children of La Bressola.

This research has been done because of the curiosity of the big influence of the French language on the Catalan in Catalunya Nord. Lots of studies have been made about language contact (English-French, English-Catalan/Spanish, Spanish-Catalan...), but there are few investigations about French-Catalan. Moreover, it is found some interesting characteristics in the Catalan spoken in this region of France and how La Bressola achieves its objective about restoring the Catalan language on the people living in Catalunya Nord or, as Franquesa i Oller (n.d.) says in his article about the aim of the institution: “[...] transmetre el català i d’instal·lar-lo com a llengua d’ús quotidià entre els infants dins del centre”. Moreover, we can observe that in La Bressola there are children whose families speak French and they only are in contact with Catalan in the school, and some of them whose families speak Catalan. In the first group, mainly, it is important the school moment to learn Catalan and becoming bilingual: “If the school or the environment language is different from what they speak at home, then they will acquire it, sometimes easily and sometimes with more difficulty” (Grosjean, 2012, p.166). Between both groups of children, there exist some differences when speaking Catalan, on account of the family environment. All of this suggests the need of analysing the particular situation of La Bressola-El Soler, the school where the research was made. Every school, family and child has a different situation but they are all part of a society in Catalunya Nord.

On the whole, this article speaks about the sociolinguistic perspective and it is because is related to the children context, as it can be said by Mollà & Palanca (1987, p.14): “La sociolingüística té com a objecte d’estudi l’ús lingüístic, condicionat pel propi context social. Es centra en les persones que les fan servir, en les seues actituds lingüístiques, prejuís, etc.” Furthermore, to accomplish the study, two focus group were made with children from the Early Childhood Education of the school in order to analyse their natural speech, which is one of the aims of La Bressola, explained by Le Bihan (n.d., p.6), an important person of the institution: “La Bressola ha volgut demostrar que era possible de crear escoles en què es poguessin crear les condicions de la naturalitat del seu ús”.

In addition, a questionnaire for their families was sent to see every child context and, consequently, having a wider view about why they speak with more or less French accent or why they use specific words.

Theoretical Framework

More than a thousand years ago, the south of France was part of Catalunya, that is why it is also called “Catalunya Nord”. Nowadays, few people speak Catalan in this location of France (everyone speaks French because all the education is in this language), but we have to consider all the history and language shared with Catalans. The Catalan dialect spoken in this zone is influenced by the French language and it went through different stages, so now it is considered as a dialect.

In the table underneath, you can see the language evolution in this region:

Century	Situation
XV-XVII	Fragmentació dialectal històrica del català certament reactivada o més accentuada amb la pèrdua dels centres polítics de decisió.
XVII	Separació política de la resta de la zona catalanoparlant.
XVIII	Immigració occitana bastant important a Catalunya des de l'edat mitjana i especialment forta en aquesta zona de frontera septentrional (tot i que continuada amb menys intensitat a partir del segle).
From finals XVII, but few deep consequences before XIX.	Procés de francesització.
From finals XVII century.	Pèrdua d'un referent <estandarditzat> de la llengua.
XIX	Impacte de les lleis d'escolarització en francès.
Mitjans XX	Canvis demogràfics importants en una població poc densa a l'època contemporània que duen a la substitució lingüística.

Table 1. Information extracted from Peytaví i Deixona (2016, p.19)

This table summarizes what Peytaví i Deixona (2016, p.11) says about all the changes Catalunya Nord have been through: “La necessitat d'entendre'ns i fer-nos entendre en els intercanvis socials ens duu a moure'ns cap al pol de la unificació: com més ens dispersem més difícil serà que l'altre ens entengui”.

Furthermore, nowadays we can highlight four different groups of people in Catalunya Nord who speak Catalan (p.31):

1. “Persones locals més grans de seixanta-cinc anys: gent que parla el català en la varietat local de manera natural o no (la major part de la qual no sap escriure'l) i per transmissió generacional oral.
2. Persones de la resta dels Països Catalans que sempre han usat el català entre elles, joves o velles: migrants econòmics, exiliats del 1939, residents instal·lats recentment, etc.
3. Persones militants de la llengua: avui susciten l'admiració de bona part de la gent catalanoparlant passiva i provoquen la nostàlgia d'una edat perduda.
4. Els gitanos d'origen local o més àmpliament catalans.”

This Catalan dialect, called “rossellonès” because it is in El Rosselló zone, is not being transferred to new generations, that is why La Bressola was created in 1976: a Catalan school in the south of France, which promotes the culture and the Catalan language (its main objective is to reclaim both of them). In La Bressola, there are also two groups of families, separated by their profiles and thoughts: On one hand, the first group has a good economic level and they have their children in the school because of the good reputation of the institution, because you can not encounter immigration and children end bilinguals; on the other hand, the second brings their children to the school because of their Catalan ancestors and to continue with Catalan traditions. Education is a fundamental part of a language learning, it is the powerhouse of development. (p.33) “[...] Voldria insistir en el protagonisme de l'educació escolar en l'aprenentatge de la llengua: la demanda d'un ‘marc acadèmic orientatiu’ que inclogui de manera normal, normalitzada i normativitzada la ‘llengua que encara es parla’ a les comarques nord-catalanes és una petició reiterada de part dels docents de tot tipus, de qualsevol origen i nivell, per tal d'adequar-se a la diversitat dels alumnes que poblen les aules de les esmentades terres”.

Language contact

In this study, we speak about the language contact between French and Catalan and how it is affected to children. In La Bressola, children start speaking Catalan, but most of the families are French speakers, so they become bilinguals. As McLaughlin (1984, p.72) says in his book: “Both languages are first languages, although one usually dominates in certain situations or with certain persons. If children hear one language from their parents and another from their playmates, for example, they will tend to speak the parents’ language when in contact with them and will restrict the other language to the play situation. If contact with parents is much more extensive than contact with playmates, the language the child speaks with parents is likely to predominate”.

Speaking of interferences between both languages, (McLaughlin, 1984, p.125) “when the second language is not the language of the child’s larger social environment, interference tends to result from the imbalance in exposure and use. This seems to be the case when the second language is learned exclusively in the school and would account for the large amounts of interference observed by educators and those testing school children (e.g., Rivers, 1964; Senn, 1932; Stern, 1970; Vey, 1946)”. As Grosjean (2012, p.197) says: “Bilingual children may be dominant in one language [...], and that language has a tendency to ‘impose itself’ on the weaker language. This can take the form of interferences and also the direct use of elements of the dominant language to fill various gaps in the weaker language (words, in particular)”. In this case, the weaker language is Catalan and the dominant (in the majority of the cases) is French. Moreover, we have to consider the lexical part, where bilingual children have “to learn two words for a single meaning” (McLaughlin, 1984, p.125). These characteristics are reflected in most of the children of La Bressola.

Also, we have to take into account that “children ‘invent’ language as they develop, although various degrees and types of constraints may limit the kind of language they create” (Bialystok, 2005, p.41), so it would be a normal issue if you encounter children speaking with some words totally different from how they are normally spoken. This language changing could be named as code-switching or borrowing.

On the one hand, we contemplate code-switching, which it “refers to changing languages over phrases or sentences” (McLaughlin, 1984, p.130), but also, as Grosjean (2012, p.52)

says: “code-switching may also be done with single words”. McLaughlin (1984) quotes Imedadze (1960) who says: “awareness of bilingualism begins when the child starts to use the two languages distinctly to communicate with different people in different languages. It is this practice of ‘translating’ or using rough equivalents in interacting with different people that leads to an awareness of bilingualism, not the use of synonymous word pairs. Once the child becomes aware of and differentiates the two linguistic codes, language changing or code-switching becomes a normal aspect of behaviour with respect to certain known persons or situations” (p. 98). “Bilinguals code-switch for many reasons. One primary reason is that certain notions or concepts are simply better expressed in the other language. (Grosjean, 2012, p.53)

On the other hand, a borrowing is, literally as the word can express: “borrowing a word or short expression from that language and adapting it morphologically (and often phonologically) into the base language”. As a result of “[...] the integration of one language into another. [...] Probably the most frequent is when both the form and the content of a word are borrowed”. (p.28) “It is important to distinguish the spontaneous borrowings of bilinguals from words that have become part of a language community’s vocabulary and that monolinguals also use (called language borrowings or established loans)” (p.61), as we could see later with the Catalan dialect used in Catalunya Nord.

In addition, in this research, it is contemplated the cultural and open-minded facts as “children and bilingual individuals [...] are exposed early on to cultural and linguistic diversity, quickly come to realise that others may have a different perspective to theirs. This puts them in a unique position for developing a more inclusive democratic spirit” (Bel & Pérez Vidal, 2012, p.19). And, as it is said by Larsen- Freeman (1983) quoted in the article cited before, “from a strictly linguistic perspective, this set of social and cognitive benefits promotes an easier and more efficient acquisition of new languages”, so they are two positive points to consider with bilinguals.

In consequence, the main objective of this article is “How does the French language affect the Catalan in children of the Early Childhood Education?”. And, specifically, the aims are:

- To know the influence of the environment majority language (French) to the school language (Catalan): case study of El Soler school, in the south of France.

- To describe and to explain the linguistic phenomena in the children's talk.
- To analyse those different characteristics: to find out if it could be related to the family linguistic influence in the child context, the linguistic consequences for the child if in his/her family speak Catalan or French.
- To find out which consequences this could have the teacher for the language teaching.

This research can be relevant to all teachers and will be able to make them understand better how the foreign language influences the first one. Also, it can help us adapt our teaching with the current linguistic "mistakes", such as "I have 7 years old" instead of "I am 7 years old", where the child would be showing that he/she has language motivations behind this effort to speak a second or third language. We can talk about *mistakes* and not *errors* because the first, as well explained by Brown (2007, p.257) "refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip'". [...] "All people make mistakes in both native and second language situations. Native speakers are normally capable of recognizing and correcting such 'lapses' or mistakes, which are [...] the result of some sort of temporary breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech". On the other hand, we have *errors*, which are described as "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner".

However, we have to consider as teachers that "[...] mistakes in learners speech may be a sign of progress: The learner is aware of what he or she 'should' say and, when questioned or corrected, is cognizant of the 'right' way to say it. Teachers can help students to notice their linguistic output in class, and slowly convert systematic errors into appropriate forms" (p.258). Also, as McLaughlin (1984, p.126) rightly says: "errors in children's second-language syntax reflect first-language developmental errors". These points spoken above are really important to be accounted for teachers.

All in all, this study will be an example of the reality with foreign languages, because we all can find different languages in our class, especially in Catalonia, where we have so many immigrants and the Spanish language influence. Another point of view about languages is found in this article, which is to encounter why children make linguistic errors while speaking their second or third language, due to understand and help them learn it in a more comprehensive way.

Method

This research follows a transversal, descriptive and explanatory methodology.

The instruments used are two focus groups and a questionnaire. The sample was 11 children from the Early Childhood Education in La Bressola-El Soler and their families.

INSTRUMENTS

The instruments were based on two focus groups (each one lasted for 15 minutes approximately), whom were made with two different groups of children (5 and 6), whose results provided qualitative information and a questionnaire to their families, which provided qualitative and quantitative information.

The aim of the questionnaire (with open-ended and multiple choice questions) is to know better the children's language environment and the one of the focus group is to record the children speaking in their most natural way, so the questions might be easy and make them comfortable. That is the reason why there were common words for them and common because they lived the situations before. For example: "What is your favourite food?". Additionally, it was considered the place to conduct the focus groups because of the recording sound. "Los fonetistas recogen sus datos en habitaciones insonorizadas, en las mejores condiciones posibles" (Labov, 1983, p.243). Hence, as the fact of having a soundproofed area was a little bit complicated (because we were in a school and sound is an important characteristic of this institution), making a pilot test was the best option to see if the conversations were understood correctly.

PARTICIPANTS

In this table, you will encounter the participants of the study. Also, their families (parents) took part in the questionnaires.

2-3 years old	3-4 years old	4-5 years old	5-6 years old
Child 1 & 2	Child 3, 4 & 5	Child 6 & 7	Child 8, 9, 10 & 11

Table 2. Participants distributed for ages

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

After having finished the Research Design Plan and the items for the questionnaire and the focus groups, a meeting with my TFG tutor from the university was scheduled in order to have corrected and confirmed the Research Design Plan and all the questions.

Having a tutor in La Bressola helped to create the instruments because she knew perfectly the children who were participating in the study and could help to choose them. This was very useful because 10 children in the classroom needed to be selected to do the focus groups. However, one more child was selected by the teacher, in case of a family absence when answering the questionnaire.

Once the first part was confirmed, the school principal had to be informed about this study and her consent was needed before giving to the children's families the questionnaire and before doing the focus groups with the 11 chosen children. This process lasted for almost two days because she had to speak with La Bressola coordinator. Luckily, the answer was affirmative for both of them hence, my school tutor had to be informed about that due to her approval about all of it.

So, 11 children were chosen and were separated into two groups (5 and 6) in order to do the two focus groups. After that, a pilot study with the groups was agreed with the University (to do before the definitive focus groups), due to be more orientated in the situation and with the place, not only for me but also for the children. Finally, one focus group was carried out one day and the other group, the next day.

After that, a Google Questionnaire was created with 13 short questions, as clear as possible, because not all the families speak Catalan in the classroom. The school principal sent a formal E-mail to all the families, to inform about the study and what they will do to help with it. The E-mail was sent with the questionnaire link. Also, the E-mail was written in two languages: Catalan and French, for future possibles misunderstandings.

To analyse each child's speech, on the one hand, a transcription was created for both focus groups and then each infant was identified with a different code and all the categories had a different colour (colour coding), which is called combined approach.

On the other hand, thanks to questionnaires, an Excel document was created in order to organize all the answers collected and to be able to compare every child situation.

ETHICAL CONDITIONS

Speaking of ethical conditions, during this study they were always considered. Working with children is not easy because you have to be more responsible than working with adults. And, while doing the focus groups, saying children's names was unavoidable because sometimes they were waiting to speak before saying their names.

As written in the article *Research with children* (n.d.), "The ethics of research with children is a balance. [...] the focus is on ways of preventing and reducing harms in research and ensuring adequate protection of children and young people". Whereas a "fully informed consent and the right to withdraw from research participation" are given to adults, it "applies equally to children, but there are four additional provisos specific to research involving children", such as "the age, children's perceptions, children's potential vulnerability to exploitation in interaction with adults, and adults' specific responsibilities towards children or the role of adult gatekeepers in mediating access to children, with concomitant ethical implications in relation to informed consent". All of these questions were considered and accomplished while doing the focus groups.

Moreover, as it is said before, it is very important that as a researcher "you have to get initial consent from parents [...] with a duty of care for the child – and you need to consider who you have to get permission from. This permission does not mean the child has consented to participate, but it allows you to seek consent from the child". That is why before sending the questionnaires to the children's families, University provided a consent for each individual child, which content spoke about some main information about this final work, that the data collected for it would be exclusive to the University and, also, it had some questions for the families about the information given before (if they agree and authorize this conditions).

Another consideration to take into account while working with children is being known for them. If they have a previous relationship with you (as a teacher or, as in my case, a teacher-to-be), their behaviour will be different because they already had a bond with you (stronger or not, it depends on the child, but anyway, they already know you). As it is said in the dissertation *Translanguaging in the additional language classroom* (Corcoll López, 2013,

p.246), if “children this age is conducted by someone they know well (as, in this case, their teacher) so that more information can be obtained from observation and from linking comments and attitudes to particular children”, so having more details about them made the study more real, whereas it is important to have in mind objectivity and subjectivity “following Allwright & Bailey (1991), both may be needed and have a role to play in research of human learning, especially in naturalistic enquiry and action research”.

Results and discussion

This section will deal with the analysis of the data collection gathered for this study and it will be organized following the study aims.

As regarding of the objective 1 “To know the influence of the environment majority language (French) to the school language (Catalan)” and the objective 2 “To describe and to explain the linguistic phenomena in the children’s talk”, we can see through the two focus groups realized that most of the children were influenced by French while speaking Catalan¹, and this is to be expected for the theoretical framework as Grosjean (2012, p.197) says: “Bilingual children may be dominant in one language [...], and that language has a tendency to ‘impose itself’ on the weaker language. This can take the form of interferences and also the direct use of elements of the dominant language to fill various gaps in the weaker language (words, in particular)”.

Due to the conversations, it is possible to see the most significant sound in the French language: the “r” made with the throat, whereas in Catalan it is used the tongue with the palate; so they tend to do the first position. For example, we can see in the first focus group, sentence 4 that the participant C8 says “llibre” with a French “r” (“El llibre del (?)<minó minó>”); or in the second focus group, sentence 19 that the participant C5 says “carn” with a French “r” (“Formatge amb, amb carn”). However, we can also encounter with some words that are used in Catalunya Nord, such as “rouge” (“Rouge rouge”) in the sentence 27 for the participant C6, which means “red” in French, but the Catalan dialect in there acquired it as a Catalan word for them, only changing the pronunciation of the “r” for the Catalan sound. In this case, some of the children said it with the French “r”. Apart from this, we can see the

¹ During all the analysis, the Catalan considered as an example of comparison is the Central Catalan or Eastern Catalan, which has the highest number of speakers in Catalonia.

word “d’acord” in the sentence 54 for the C8 (“Ah ah d’acord! Entenc”), which is the same both in Catalan and French, but the children said it with the French “r”.

Another characteristic that can be identified is the words “de fet”, mostly at the start of a sentence, we can see it in the sentence 101 for the C7 (“De fet els rouge amb els rouge”). This element is being produced because of the French “en fait”, they translate the word literally from Catalan, which it is correct in this language but this expression is overused for these infants, because they say it most of the time and, in Catalonia, it is not the most expression used. Moreover, in the sentence 92 for C9, we can see the words “és bonic” (it is nice), which mean literally “il est beau” from the French (“És bonic. Parlem en català.”). This word and the expression denominated before are established in the current Catalan from Catalunya Nord. Despite these words, we can observe another literal translation from French, but it is not in the dialect, which is in line 109 for the C9, and are the words “n’importa què”, they mean “whatever” and in Catalan would be “qualsevol cosa”, so they are really different than in French (“Amb el rouge. N’importa què. N’importa què”).

Speaking about the objective 3 “To analyse those different characteristics: to find out if it could be related to the family linguistic influence in the child context, the linguistic consequences for the child if in his/her family speak Catalan or French”:

First of all, a table (Table 3) is presented in the Appendix 1 showing some characteristics of each child who participated in the two focus group (their age, their first word, when it started listening and speaking in Catalan, the language used at home, in what language they watch the TV and read books, and relevant comments about the children, if necessary).

Apart from Table 3, there are some graphics created in order to have clearer every question from the questionnaire to the children families. In these are seen the percentages of each answer option, such in Figure 1, where it is represented question number 2 of the questionnaire “Per què vau decidir posar el vostre fill/a a La Bressola?”. In this graphic, we can see 4 type of answers. As we can see represented below, blue is the predominant colour, so the option *Per la llengua catalana* is most of these families case.

Other graphics are possible to be observed in Appendix 2.

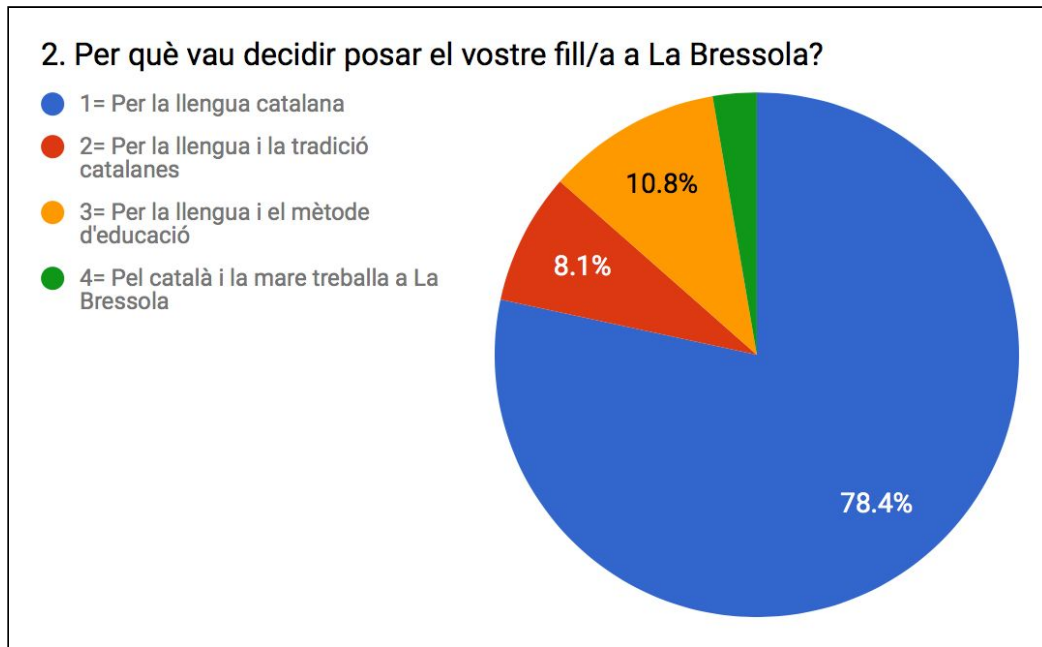


Figure 1

Each child is unique due to her/his life context, that is why an analysis of every infant who participates in the focus group and questionnaire is relevant. Some of them are grouped according to their language similarities in their families.

- Child **1 & 2**: Their cases are similar: they are the same age, it is their first year in La Bressola, their mothers are teachers in La Bressola (Catalans), so they are in constant contact with Catalan. However, the first has more French language influence as his father is from Catalunya Nord and he speaks French with the child. Nevertheless, this influence from Child 1 cannot be noticed while speaking, but having the knowledge about his first word which was in French, makes the situation a little bit different. Grosjean (2012, p.183) says that “In order to clearly differentiate each language, children rely on different factors: the phonetic and prosodic cues (for example, the rhythm) of each language, other structural aspects, the context the language is used in, and, most importantly, the language spoken by a given person. [...] In the eyes of the child, a person is associated with one particular language, and if that person addresses the child in the other language, the child may refuse to answer or may be distressed”. The age of both children is important in this case because of the lack of vocabulary and being in the same conversation with 3, 4 and 5-year-old children could be a

little bit complicated. It is considered that in the focus group they spoke, but the oldest ones spoke much more.

For the analysis, the ideal situation would have been to have the chance to talk more with the children in order to have more examples of their speech, but only a few of them were able to analyse, such as with two sentences with the Child 1: “137 C1: Jo, jo, ah, jo, ah, del Pare Nadal pam, ha fet a cap a cap, fet pam pam” or “170 C1: Aquest? No puc pas...”, which is an example of a semantic calque where it is seen the Catalan dialect from Catalunya Nord because of the “pas”, a correct pronunciation of the “r” sound from the word “Pare” and a natural speech. Besides these examples, it is also seen in Child 2 this “r” sound in “23 C2: Mm, pa(s)ta amb carn” from the last word. His language development is appreciated in the sentence “113 C2: Fa bombolla el pé”, where the last word would be “peix”, for instance.

- Child 3 & 4: They are the same age, their languages at home are Spanish, French and Child 4 adds Catalan (speaking and in books). In spite of having different characteristics with Catalan, both of them have the same Spanish influence while speaking Catalan. “69 C3: A mi m’agrada les patates”, for instance. Here, the last word “patates” is pronounced like in Spanish /patatas/. Or “77 C3: La Chloé va venir a la meva casa i la Chloé va venir a la a la casa de la iaia”, where the word “casa” is pronounced with the strong Spanish “s” and “iaia” is totally Spanish (used for “grandma”). However, French is also present with the word “bracelet” in “27 C3: Un bracelet”, where the first “e” is pronounced like in the French word, which is the same (“bracelet”). With Child 4 we can encounter the “r” strong sound in “6 C4: Rouge” and in “ràpid” on the sentence “118 C4: I jo, vaig també perquè vaig molt ràpid amb el patinet”. However, a code-switching is found while child 4 is speaking because it changes the language, making it natural in “62 C4: J’adore les hamburguers i(-)” when asked for their favourite meal.

They both create a particular profile because they are learning 3 languages at the same time (adding Catalan in the school in the case of number 3). Their speech has some “r” really strong and “s” thick, for this reason, their Catalan is influenced by Spanish. “The home language can be used as a linguistic base for acquiring aspects of the other language. It also gives children a known language to communicate in (with parents, caretakers, and, perhaps, teachers) while acquiring the other” (Grosjean, 2012, p.176). Moreover, child 3 & 4 are very good friends and, between them, they speak Catalan.

- Child 5: Having both parents from Catalunya Nord but a grandfather who speaks Catalan is a very positive context for this child. In addition, his father speaks a little bit of Catalan because of his past in La Bressola. Listening to Catalan further than in the school helps in the pronunciation and the learning of this language. The fact of asking his grandfather to speak in French rather than Catalan could be for the habit the child has with his family (could be related to the French language and it could be more comfortable for the infant). It has a clearly French pronunciation, but not as much as Child 8 (whose only Catalan source is the school). For example, in “78 C5: (pronounced with French phonetics) <Multigroc>”. Furthermore, this child has a natural speech in Catalan, so you can notice his ease.

- Child 6: His parents put the child into La Bressola to keep Catalan traditions in their family, and that helps his language learning. It is obvious that if the family cooperates (watching TV and reading books in Catalan) with the school, the learning increases. “[...] parents and caretakers should be aware of what their children are going through as they are acquiring [...] a language. [...] Input from extended family members and friends who use the language is precious and shows children that using that language is quite natural” (Grosjean, 2012, p.174). His French influence is seen in his speech, but, at the same time, his fluency speaking Catalan is significant. He uses a French borrowing in a sentence: “49 C6: Si, a une!”, where “une” is French, but it talks naturally with this word because it seems Catalan. Another borrowing is used in “67 C6: Amm.. un camió on porta le cotxe de corsa”, with “le” and “corsa”, both influenced by the French language. In addition, a word used by the Catalan dialect in Catalunya Nord is visible: “39 C6: (de fons) ATURAA’T”. “Atura’t” is commonly used in the dialect, but this infant pronounces it with the French “r”.

- Child 7: As Child 1 & 2, having your mother working as a teacher in La Bressola helps him learn Catalan more easily. This child is already 5 years old, so the speech is clearer than the others two cases. Her father speaks only French so the context at home is made by Catalan and French. Her “r” sound is strong but not as the Catalan/Spanish speakers named before, because you can hear a little sound of the French “r”. Between her parents speak French, as it could be that: “The language first used by a couple with different mother tongues to speak to each other is most likely to be taught to their children, even though other pressures may lead it to play a minor role in family life” (Newmeyer, 1993, p.113). Her Catalan fluency is very

natural due to the fact of having her grandmother living in Barcelona who is a good source of learning the language. This influence is seen in her “r” pronunciation because it is particular. The sound is quite strong, not as a French “r”, but neither as a natural “r”. We can see this in many examples, but two of them are found in “37 C7: Perquè m’agrada” and in “47 C7: Perquè va arribar l’hivern”. Moreover, the infant uses the Catalan dialect in Catalunya Nord, shown by the word “pas” at the end of a sentence it says: “71 C7: Jo no ho sé pas”.

- Child 8: This child is totally French. It does not have any Catalan or Spanish language at home, it only uses Catalan in the school. Her accent is a really strong one, making French the clearly the dominant language. Having an accent could be because “one has acquired a particular dialect of the language [...] or for the influence of one’s first language on the second” (Grosjean, 2012, p.78), which is this case. As a matter of fact, “having an accent when you know and use two or more languages is a fact of life; it doesn’t make you any less bilingual, and it rarely impedes communication. It is something bilinguals get used to, as do others they interact with” (p.84). Also, considering about what Grosjean says about being embarrassed while speaking, “[...] as applied linguist Barry McLaughlin reminds us, children do not have fewer inhibitions and are not less embarrassed when they make mistakes; in fact, they may well be shy and self-conscious in front of their peers” (p.185), but Catalan is a big part of the school and children are always respected about their accents, due to the fact that they went to the same group of students since the very beginning and they already know each other.

Furthermore, this child was most of the time laughing and speaking French during the focus group, as “they may jokingly speak to a person in the wrong language. [...] to amuse them” (p.203), such as “18 C8: Oui, i en plus un bisou c’est de multicolore (laughs)”. The French influence is clearly distinguishable in her speech, mostly for the French “r” and for the constant French accent in every word. Moreover, it also uses Catalan as a natural way and we can see sentences like “35 C8: Oh una abella ací!”, where the word “ací” is a mixture of Catalan “aquí” and French “ici”.

- Child 9: This infant spoke a lot so lots of examples are visible. Her situation is relevant and very interesting because her parents are from Catalunya Nord and they speak French with their child. However, having her grandparents living in Barcelona makes the situation like

Child 7. This opportunity has a big influence on her speech, mostly pronouncing the “r” because it has a really strong sound when pronounces the letter. As seen in table 3, the child only has contact with Catalan in the school and when it speaks with her grandparents. With this example, we can see how big is the contact when the infant is with her grandparents. This child is able to make great sentences like “4 C9: Amb, amb, amb, no sé com se diu en català” or “86 C9: Puc anar-me a mocar?”, both of them have a good structure which makes the infant a good Catalan speaker. However, it has some French borrowings, as it is used to speak it at home. We can see it in “17 C9: Sans fromatge” or in “109 C9: Amb el rouge. N’importa què. N’importa què”, for the word “n’importe quoi”. Additionally, her “r” sound is similar to Chil 7, because is not the French “r”, but neither the natural one: “45 C9: “Perquè ha de ploure”. A word typically used in Catalunya Nord is used for this infant: “92 C9: (?)<Posar el mateix color>. És boniic. Parlem en català”, “bonic” is always used for their speakers (as in English with the word “nice” or “beautiful”), it is also used in Catalonia but here it is not that common.

Underneath, it is appreciated a table which summarizes the main characteristics from children.

Children	Main characteristics
Child 1, 2 & 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mothers → teachers in La Bressola <input type="checkbox"/> Catalan and French at home <input type="checkbox"/> Strong “r” <input type="checkbox"/> Catalan fluency
Child 3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish and French at home <input type="checkbox"/> Strong “r” <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish influences: “s”, “a” when it is at the end of the word (“/patatas/”)
Child 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> French at home, but Catalan traditions <input type="checkbox"/> TV and books in Catalan <input type="checkbox"/> Small French “r”

	<input type="checkbox"/> Borrowings (“une”, “corsa”) <input type="checkbox"/> Catalan dialect from Catalunya Nord (“atura’t”)
Child 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Totally French. Only Catalan in the school <input type="checkbox"/> Strong French accent and influence <input type="checkbox"/> Catalan fluency <input type="checkbox"/> Borrowing “ací”
Child 9	<input type="checkbox"/> French at home, but Catalan with grandmother <input type="checkbox"/> Not French “r”, but either strong <input type="checkbox"/> Catalan fluency <input type="checkbox"/> Calque (“pas”)

Table 4. Children’s main characteristics

Related to the objective 4 “To find out which consequences could have the teacher for the language teaching”, it is probably a result of all this study. Making the two focus groups with children helped to know them. Moreover, knowing what are their characteristics and their contexts are very important to comprehend better these infants. Knowing about the context where they live (language and culturally) is also relevant for the teacher because considering all of the facts they could be influenced by, is a big advantage for you and, consequently, for them, as making some basic questions to children families are important to recognize the children family characteristics. Indeed, learning a new language is both simple and complex, but having good information helps it, as you will know why they say some words or they make structures from another language, etc. For example, we could find some *semantic calques*, that “Occur when a speaker borrows the meaning of a word or expression in the L2 and applies it to its counterpart in the L1.” Corcoll López (1999) or borrowings, code-switching, etc. All the influences a language can make to another are possible, apart from considering *errors* and *mistakes* explained above. All in all, as it is said by Grosjean (2012, p.177) “it is crucial that parents, and also professionals who are involved with bilingual children, learn about bilingualism. It will allow them to understand what the children are going through, and help them offer the support that bilingual children need” and

that relevant comment about education: “[...] education should help children and adolescents acquire a second or third language while retaining their first language (or languages). [...] education should encourage the active use of those languages” (p.229).

Conclusions

The aim of the study was to know how the French language affects the Catalan in children of the Early Childhood Education of La Bressola. We could observe the findings from different articles about the language contact between languages and about distinct families characteristics. Moreover, the 13 questions from the questionnaire and a linguistic profile of every child who participated in the focus groups were really helpful to extract the results and, consequently, the conclusions. Bialystok (2005, p.3) “Indeed, it is an impressive sight to observe a young child, perhaps four or five years old, engaged in conversation in different languages, controlling both, and not struggling at the first sign that the language needs to change to accommodate some benighted monolingual in the group”.

On the one hand, having a good communication between school and families is crucial for children. “The role of the school and the larger community is also crucial for the child’s development of a language. [...] I should stress here how important schools and communities are in the acquisition of a language, or in its loss. If the minority language is not given support in the school or in the community, there is a good chance that it will lessen in importance, if not simply be put aside, especially if the majority language is present in every aspect of the child’s life (Grosjean, 2012, p.174).

It is able to see the big influence from the French language to the Catalan in the children’s talk. It also depends on the language used at home, because the children who are in contact with Catalan only in the school has a stronger French accent and they use more borrowings from French. In contrast, we can see a very good Catalan pronunciation and fluency on the children who are constantly in contact with Catalan, they might use some calques when speaking (only the ones who speak both languages at home), but are only a few.

In addition, related to one of the aims of La Bressola quoted above (Le Bihan, n.d., p.6) “La Bressola ha volgut demostrar que era possible de crear escoles en què es poguessin crear les condicions de la naturalitat del seu ús”, this study could have shown that this is a reality

because both focus groups reflect the great fluency all the children have while speaking Catalan, whether they speak Catalan at home or not.

On the other hand, speaking about limitations, I had to do the practical part before the methodological class at University, so I had to search on my own and with my tutor's help how to manage both instruments: the focus groups and the questionnaire for the families. Additionally, time flew in the school so I did not have so much time to do the pilot test before the final focus groups and only I had the chance to do it with one group. Moreover, I could not have had the answers of the questionnaire before leaving, so I could have spoken before about the questionnaire and the consent to the children's families, so they could have had more time to answer them and to ask me some questions (in case they had some).

Also, while doing the focus groups I had to dispense my questions script because children wanted to speak about other things, so listening to them, making questions about the issues they were speaking about and letting them speak about that were essential. This is the teacher role: letting students be their own because you have to be guided for their interests, if you want to achieve your aims, that is how they learn: being followed by their motivations. A teacher must be a flexible person and also while doing a research. Being just a teacher and leaving the researcher mind was important to take into account while doing both focus groups.

When considering a further research it is important to think about continuing with the analysis Catalan-French in Catalunya Nord. As said before, few studies are based on this zone and in these two languages. Time is an essential point to take into account because as every study (and more if you work with children), you need a lot of time to have good results. Moreover, to insist to families is also a key for it because they have to respond to you as best as they can, so they need you to be there due to answer all of their doubts. Furthermore, having a very good knowledge of the Catalan dialect in Catalunya Nord is also important to consider because you can have a better comparison and comprehension with their speakers and the language, in general.

Finally, having this experience could be considered positive and open-minded, just living the moment with the children. For this type of studies, enjoying and listening to the children

would be the best option to do. Working and learning with them is incredible and enjoying the moment is the best thing you can do. There are lots of things to do, yet. Children are always surprising you.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

In this section of the study, you will encounter some materials from the *Results and discussion* point above.

Here, you can find a legend to help you understand more the table below.

<u>Legend</u>
F: French
C: Catalan
S: Spanish
TV: Watching the TV
Books: Reading books

Square 1. Legend of Table 3 (below)

	Age (years old)	First Word	Listening (*L) And Speaking (*S) In Catalan	Language Used At Home	How Languages Are Used At Home	Relevant Comments
Child 1	2	18 months (F) But, from the beginning mixes C & F	- *L: Since birth - *S: Beginning of speaking	Catalan (mom) & French (dad)	- TV: C&F - Books: C&F	His mother is a teacher of La Bressola.
Child 2	2	18 months (C)	- L: Since birth - S: Beginning of speaking	Catalan	- TV: C, F&S - Books: C	His mother is a teacher of La Bressola.
Child 3	3	1,5 years old (F)	- L: 2 years old - S: 2 years old	Spanish (mom) & French (dad)	- TV: It doesn't watch TV, but listens to Spanish songs. - Books: F	
Child	3	1,5 years old	- L: 2 years old	Catalan/Spanish	- TV: F	

4		(F)	- S: 4 years old	(dad) & French (mom)	- Books: C, F&S	
Child 5	4	1 year old or a little bit more (F)	- L: Before he was born - S: 2 years and a half aprox. (When starting in La Bressola)	French	- TV: F&E - Books: F (most of the time) & C (sometimes)	His father went to La Bressola. He also speaks Catalan with his grandfather. Sometimes, his father talks to him in Catalan, but the child asks him to speak in French, instead.
Child 6	5	NO ANSWER	- L: 2 and a half - S: 2 and a half	French	- TV: C&F - Books: C&F	His father went to La Bressola.
Child 7	5	1,5 years old (F)	- L: Since birth - S: 2 (making short sentences)	Catalan/French (mom) & French (dad)	- TV: F - Books: C&F	Her mother is a teacher in the school. Her grandmother is Catalan and lives in Barcelona.
Child 8	5	18 months (F)	- L: 2 years old - S: 3 years old	French	- TV: F - Books: C&F	She has two siblings in the school (one bigger, one younger). Between them speak Catalan in the school.
Child 9	5	17 months (F)	- L: 2 and a half - S: 3 years old	French	- TV: F&S - Books: F	Her parents are divorced. Her grandparents live in Barcelona and she speaks Catalan with them.

Table 3. Linguistic profile of each child/participant based on the questionnaire for their families

Appendix 2. Graphics

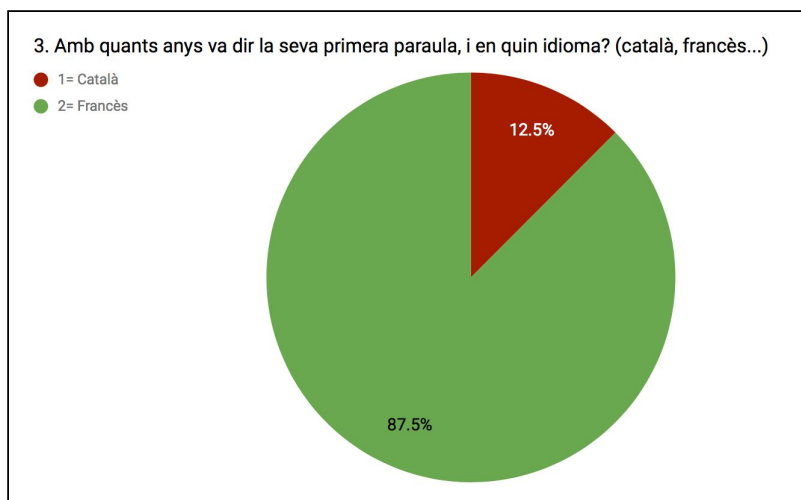


Figure 2

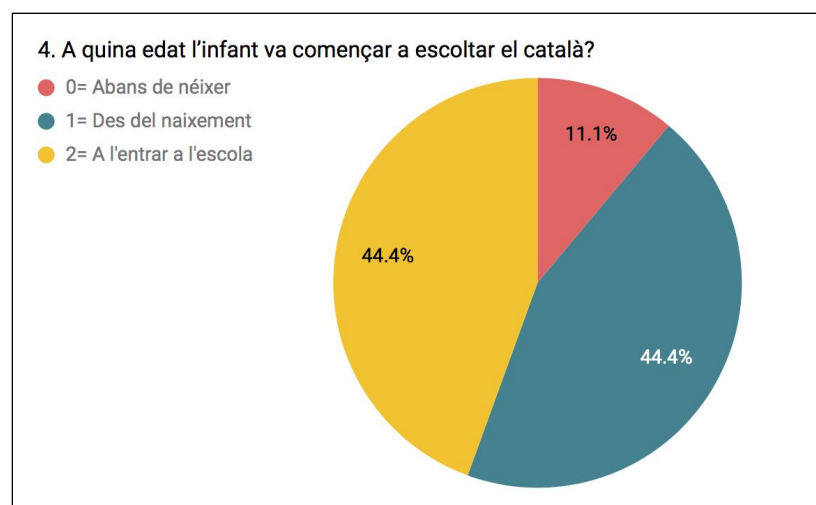


Figure 3

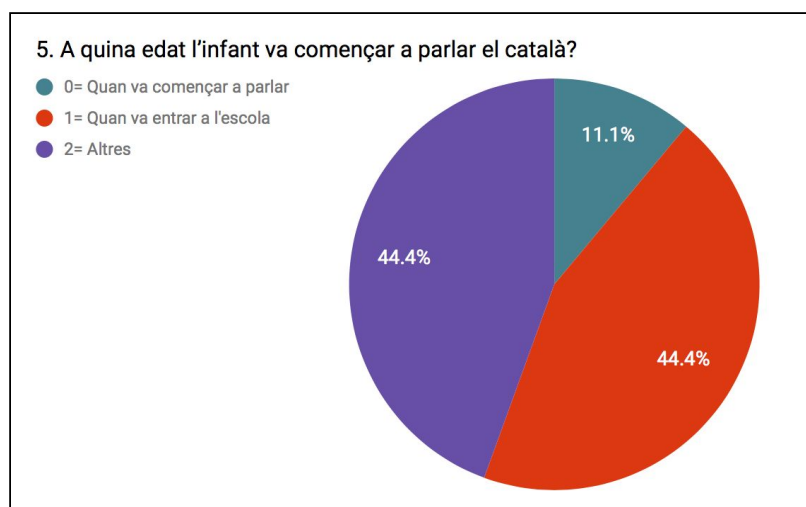


Figure 4

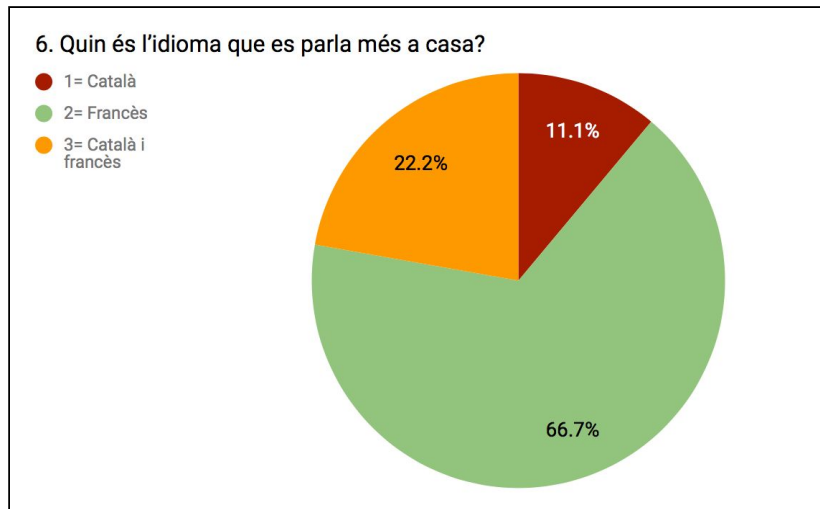


Figure 5

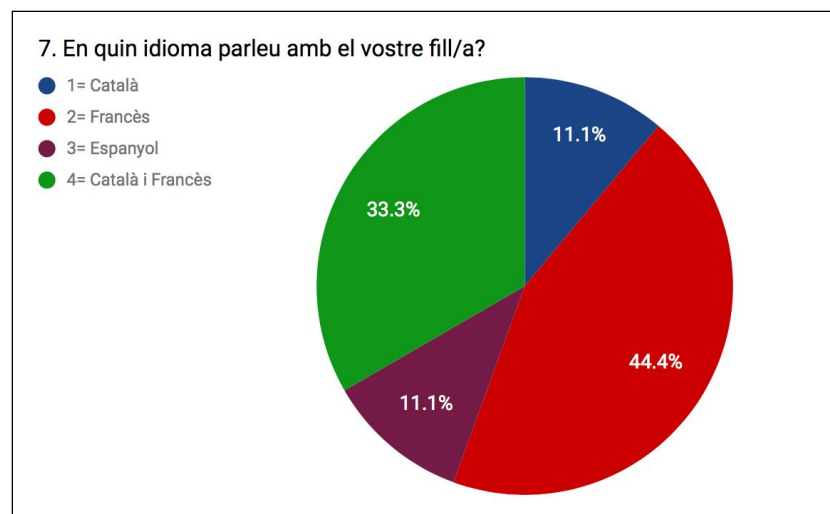


Figure 6

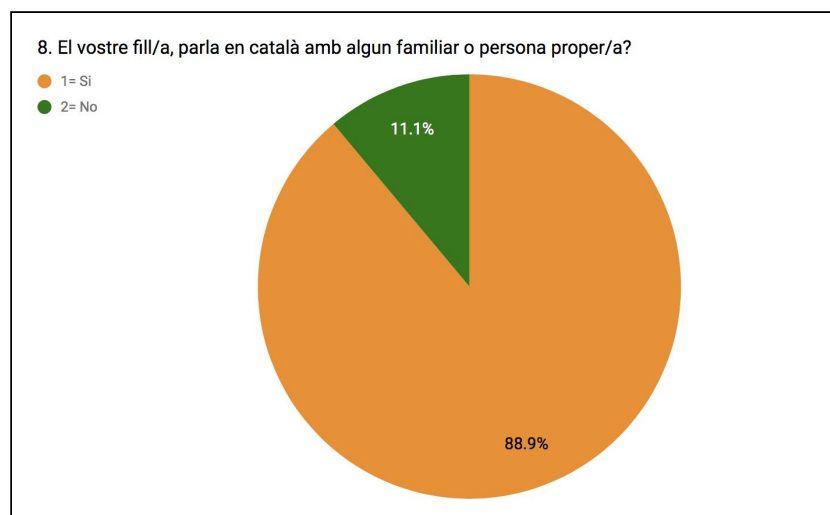


Figure 7

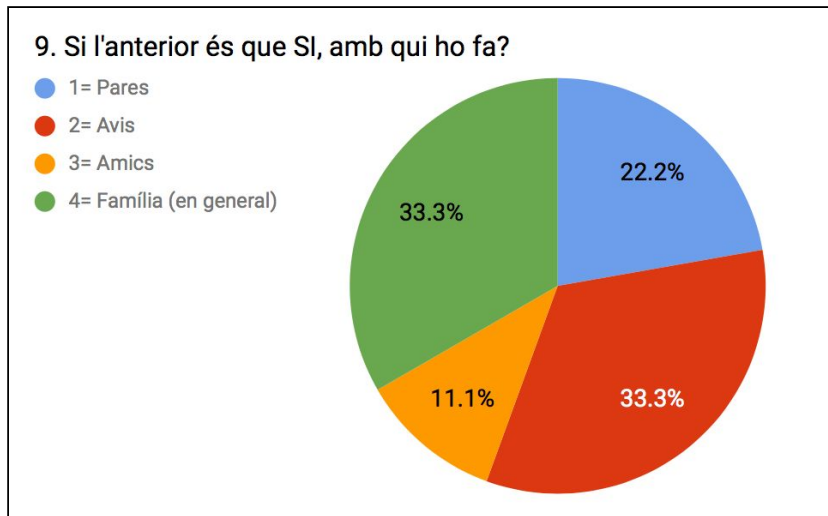


Figure 8

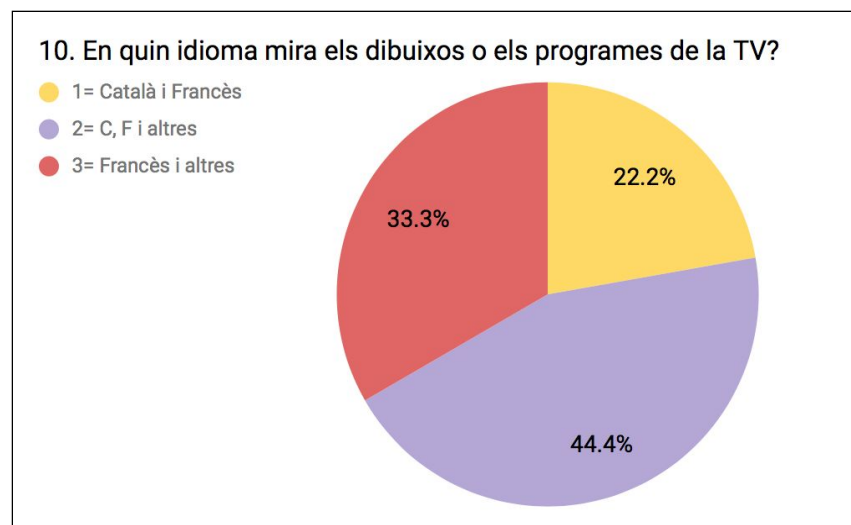


Figure 9

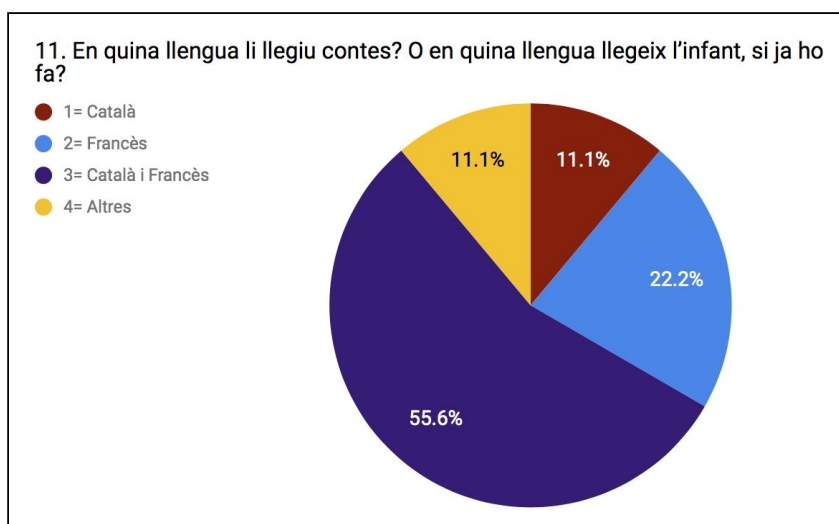


Figure 10

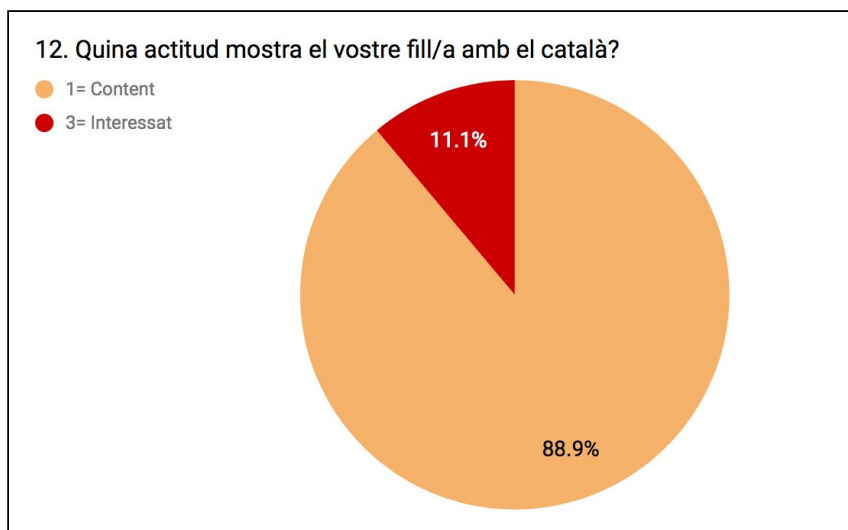


Figure 11

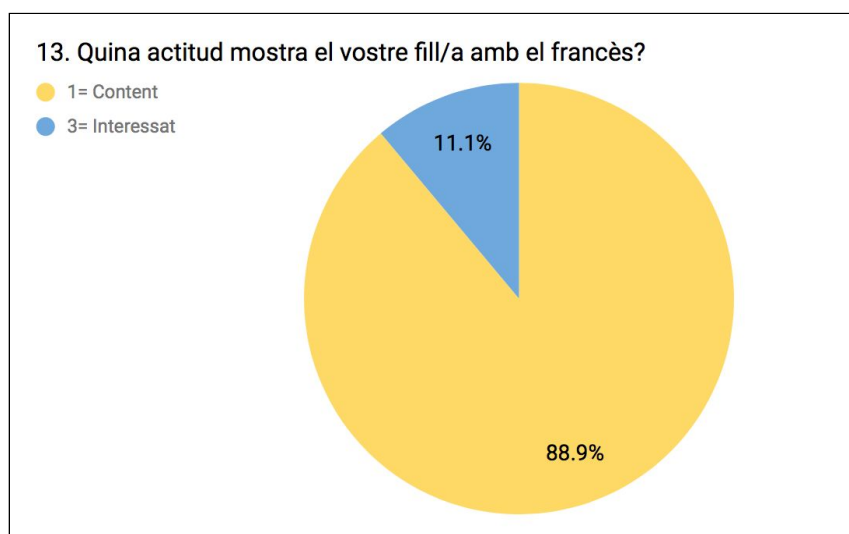


Figure 12