

# “My grandparents would speak the language between themselves, but not with their children:”

## Documenting and revitalizing Catalan as a heritage language in Argentina

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### Introduction

#### Catalan language (approx., 9.7 mill speakers (2021))

- Western Romance language spoken in: Spain, Andorra, France, Italy
- Affiliation within Romance: Gallo-Romance (cf. French, Occitan) vs. Ibero-Romance (cf. Spanish, Portuguese)
- Originally vs. in modern times (language contact) Terminological controversy (linguistically unsustainable), political inference: “Valencian”, “Majorcan,” “Menorcan,” etc.

#### Community under study: San Pedro, 105 miles NW of Buenos Aires, Argentina

- Colonial language encounter” → Spanish-Catalan bilingualism
- Population: 47,452 (2010 census); No current census of San Pedroans of Catalan-speaking descent
- Anecdotal, inaccurate data: 141 *male* Majorcans (1918, 1929 (Montoya, 2017b: 14; Miralles & Jofre, 2009: 454-))
- Local historian Américo Piccagli: c. 10,000 residents in 1910—10% Majorcan descent
- Most of Catalan speakers are of Majorcan descent, but also: Girona’s Costa Brava, rural Lleida, Ibizan, Hybrid Majorcan (Majorca-Catalonian)



### Methodology (cont.)

#### Performative Language Competency (PLC), socre, 1-5:

Performative language competency (observed)	Participant number (total N=49)
[L1] Bilinguals. Active command of the heritage language: Can speak and understand Catalan fluently	13
[L2] Receptive bilinguals. Passive knowledge of the heritage language: Can <i>fully</i> understand Catalan, but cannot speak it	5
[L3] Knows <i>some</i> words or phrases in the heritage language	18
[L4] No knowledge of Catalan	9
[L5] Unclear	4
TOTAL	N=49

#### Task 1: Exploratory group meeting

- Impromptu experiment
- 60-min Zoom meeting (Summer 2021)

#### Task 2: Sociolinguistic interviews (RQ #1-2)

- 60-min sociolinguistic interviews
- Battery of guided questions (life trajectory, daily life, heritage language and culture)
- Use of Catalana prioritized

### Analysis of tasks

- Task 1:
  - Mainly for experimental purposes
  - Aimed at enhancing participant recruitment and/or potential involvement in the study
- Task 2:
  - Fully transcribed
  - Qualitative analysis:
    - Thematic analysis

### Goals and implications & Research Questions

- Delving into the understudied presence of Catalan as a colonial language
- Shedding light on how minority or minoritized languages tend to operate in a diglossic context
- The community of San Pedro Catalan-Spanish bilinguals has largely flown under the radar for the community of researchers, with only a few—relatively recent—exceptions
- Scholarly interest in the field of minority languages has increased in recent times

- Is San Pedro Catalan an **endangered language variety**? If so, what is the level of endangerment?
- What are the emergent **anthropological and sociolinguistic emergent categories** relevant to the community under study?

### Findings

#### RQ #1: Endangerment of San Pedro Catalan

Wurm endangerment scale (Bradley & Bradley, 2019: 17)

Term	Description
[1] <i>Potentially endangered</i>	“Not all children learn the language”
[2] <i>Endangered</i>	“No children learn the language”
[3] <i>Seriously endangered</i>	“The youngest speakers are in the parent generation”
[4] <i>Moribund</i>	“The youngest speakers are in the grandparent generation”
[5] <i>Extinct</i>	“No speakers of the language remain”

#### RQ #2: 9 anthropological emergent categories:

- History of the San Pedro Majorcan community (including local institutions dedicated to the preservation of such heritage)
- Argentinian-Majorcan biculturalism
- Professions
- Naming peculiarities
- Gastronomy
- Heritage celebrations
- Traditional dances
- Games and entertainment
- Revival attempts of the Majorcan heritage

#### RQ #2: 8 sociolinguistic emergent categories:

- Catalan-Spanish diglossic bilingualism in the community
- Status of the heritage language in terms of cross-generational transmission
- Current use of Majorcan Catalan in the community
- Perceived future of the heritage language
- Attitudes towards Majorcan Catalan as a heritage language in the community
- Popular preservation of the heritage language (e.g., idiomatic expressions, lexicalized phrases, swearwords, riddles, nursery rhymes, popular songs)
- Linguistic self-identification
- Public and institutional presence of Majorcan Catalan at the local level (i.e., media, education, literary and non-literary documentation)

### Methodology

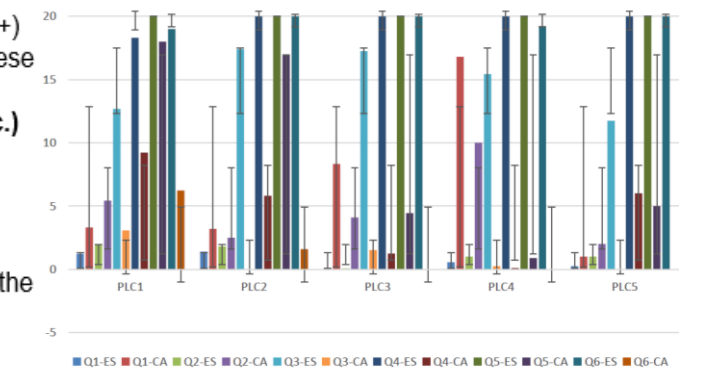
#### Participant recruitment:

- Early reference: Dr. Brauli Montoya, Universitat d’Alacant (cf. Montoya, 2017)
- Agrupación Mallorca de San Pedro
- Snowball recruitment (Tagliamonte, 2006). N=49.
- Catalan-Spanish bilinguals from the community completed a demographic and sociolinguistic background questionnaire (Bilingual Language Profile [BLP], University of Texas at Austin).

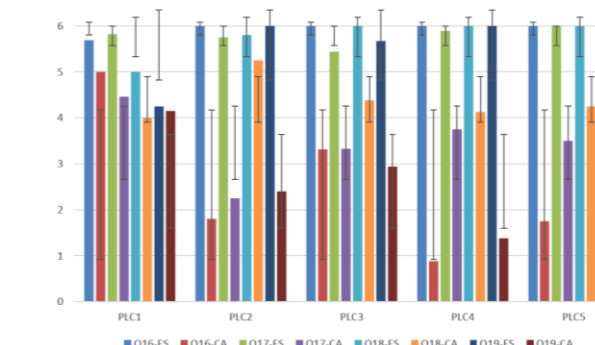
#### Bilingual Language Profile (BLP):

- Basic demographic information
- Language background in terms of the Spanish-Catalan bilingualism
- Use of either language in different settings
- Self-perceived competency in Spanish and Catalan
- Sociolinguistic attitudes towards either language

Q1: How old were you when you **started to learn** these languages? (0-20+)  
Q2: How old were you when you **started to feel confident** about using these languages? (0-20+)  
Q3: How many years of **formal instruction (grammar, history, math, etc.)** have you had in the following languages (from primary schooling until college)? (0-20+)  
Q4: How many years have you spent in a **country or region** where the following languages are spoken? (0-20+)  
Q5: How many years have you spent speaking the following languages in the **household**? (0-20+)  
Q6: How many years have you spent in a **workplace** where the following languages are spoken? (0-20+)



Section 2. Language background



Section 4. Sociolinguistic attitudes

Q16: I feel like “myself” when I speak in Spanish/Catalan. (0-6; 0 = completely disagree / 6 = completely agree)  
Q17: I identify with a Spanish-speaking / Catalan-speaking culture. (0-6; 0 = completely disagree / 6 = completely agree)  
Q18: It is important to me to use or get to use Spanish/Catalan as a native speaker. (0-6; 0 = completely disagree / 6 = completely agree)  
Q19: I want others to think that I am a native speaker of Spanish/Catalan. (0-6; 0 = completely disagree / 6 = completely agree)

### Conclusions

- Although the community under studied is clearly endangered by all measures (Wurm, 1975; UNESCO, 2009), it turned out to be a productive community in terms of the elicitation of emic or emergent categories concerning the anthropological and sociolinguistic underpinnings
- The variety of Majorcan Catalan spoken in San Pedro shows noteworthy variability when compared to modern Majorcan Catalan, as well as speaker-to-speaker variability
- Conservativeness and the role of Argentinian Spanish as the majority language in the community appear to play a role in such outcomes
- Many questions remain unanswered and, facing a potential lack of future access to the community, these might well remain unanswered

### References

### Oral Sample of San Pedro Majorcan Catalan