

Language policy in multinational and public service companies in Catalonia

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Abstract

This article compares different sociolinguistic data (on use, criteria, advantages, disadvantages and demands) respecting the use of the Catalan language in multinational and so-called public service companies (public utilities), as laid down by the Generalitat of Catalonia Language Policy Act. Additionally it presents an explicatory model of which variables have most impact on the use of Catalan in each of the types of company and provides some strategic guidelines on language policy in such companies.

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1. Introduction

Catalan is one of 6.000 languages spoken around the world, and compared with other stateless languages, we could say that it is in good health - while at the same time it is clearly not one of the important languages of international expression in the new economy. In a globalised world, as Arnaud Sales says (2004) "*what alters the status of languages on an international scale and facilitates the predominance of English, has to do, above all, with the breaking of the cultural space protected by the nation states*", but that applies obviously when looking at those languages which have traditionally been protected by the nation state.

The situation that Catalan finds itself in, on the other hand, is something else, given that Catalan has not been protected historically by the Spanish state and has even been discriminated against, at times, in favour of Spanish. By this means it was thought to achieve union and homogeneity within the borders, making Spanish the language protected by the state in the economic and international arenas. Thus, it seems *a priori* that neither the formation of the nation state, nor the process of globalisation and the concentration of capital, germane to our economic system, makes it easy for Catalan to achieve normalisation and parity in the world of multinational companies.

In June 2003, an international colloquium was held on language use in companies operating on an international scale, organised by the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Government of Quebec. With this as the framework, a series of studies were presented on patterns of language use in Catalonia, Quebec and the Basque Country. This article takes a closer look at the data obtained in Catalonia.

The Llei 1/1998 de política lingüística <<http://www.gencat.cat/llengua/legislacio>> (1998 Language Policy Act) lays down in article 31:

"1. Companies and public or private entities that offer public services, such as public transport, supplies and deliveries, communications and others, must use at least Catalan in signs and notices and announcements over public address systems.

2. Written communications and notifications addressed to persons resident in Catalonia by companies and organisations referred to in subsection 1, including invoices, bills and other

similar documents, should / must be at least in Catalan, without infringing the right of citizens to receive the same in Spanish if they request it.

3. The directive in subsection 2 relating to invoices and similar documents is to be understood as not infringing the State's competence or right to organise such services when supplied directly or via their own companies and entities /organisations."

In accordance with this regulation, a survey was carried out in 2003 by means of the Indexplà <<http://www.gencat.cat/llengua/noves>> (Noves SL, Summer 2003) questionnaire administered to public service companies to ascertain the state of their language use. The main results obtained are presented in this article.

1.1 Objectives

This article sets out to capture the sociolinguistic situation in two economic settings the multinationals and the public service companies operating in Catalonia. Differences and similarities are looked at and the variables that have most influence on levels of Catalan use are determined, in the two types of companies. Determining this is of fundamental importance if we want to achieve normalisation of Catalan (that is, its established use in all ambits) by acting upon the correct variables.

1.2 Sources of information and methodology.

The table below summarises the characteristics of the two studies which provided the data treated in this article.

Concept	Multinational companies	Public service companies
Universe	Privately owned companies with a turnover of more than 12 million euros and with more than 100 workers	Public and private companies and entities providing public transport, supplies and deliveries, communications and others
Population studied	300 companies	Census of 28 firms approached
Statistical error	e = +/- 4.8% for p =q =0.5	21 companies replied
Technique	Telephone interview	personal
Questionnaire	<i>Ad hoc</i> questionnaire	adapted Indexplà questionnaire
Field work	November 2002	July 2004
Study by	Line Staff Consulting	DEP strategic consultancy
Processing of data	Frequency tables, Cluster analysis and CHAID	Frequency tables and synthetic indicators
Report	<i>Usos lingüístics a les grans empreses presents a Catalunya (Language Use in big companies in Catalonia)</i>	<i>Enquesta sobre Usos Lingüístics a Institucions Públiques (EULIP) Survey on Language Use in Public Institutions</i>

1.3 Techniques of analysis used

In the preparation of this article we drew on two sociolinguistic studies carried out by the Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana (ISC) <<http://www.gencat.cat/llengua/dades>>of the Generalitat de Catalunya. The studies in question were: the *Survey on Language Use in Public Institutions (Enquesta sobre Usos Lingüístics a Institucions Públiques) (EULIP)* and the study on *Language Use in big companies in Catalonia (Usos lingüístics a les grans empreses presents a Catalunya)*. As can be seen from the technical details given above, these two studies utilise two different methods of data collection, have different samples and furthermore one or two of the variables in common across the two studies have been measured in different ways. As a result, we needed to make an effort to render the data more homogeneous to present comparable data wherever possible, something that did not always prove possible.

In addition to the quantitative comparisons we put forward an explanatory model relating to which variables most influenced use in each type of company. To do this an analysis was carried out of the variance of all the variables under study in order to see which of these were significant at 95% rate - those, in other words that had considerable effect on (use of)

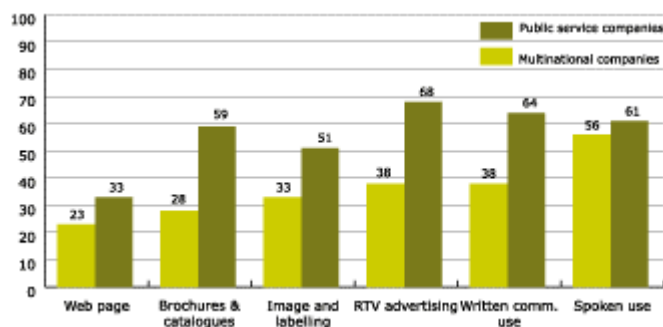
Catalan. After that, the C&RT¹ technique was applied to the variables that emerged as significant. The latter uses segmentation trees to represent the explanatory model in a very graphic way, showing the variables that discriminate most in terms of Catalan use.

2. Language use and criteria

2.1 External communications

In the six areas of communication submitted to analysis in both types of company, Catalan showed a higher level of use in the public service companies than in the multinationals. Notice that in spoken use, use of Catalan was in the middle range (56% and 61% respectively) while in the web pages of the organisations concerned there was a minority use of Catalan only (23% and 33%).

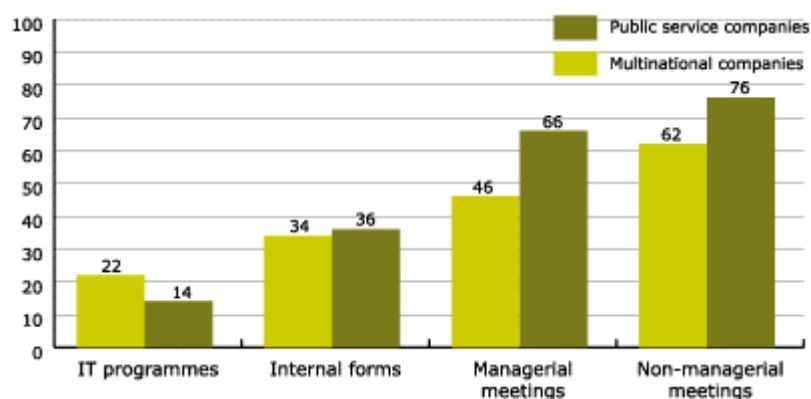
Figure 1. Use of Catalan in outside communications



2.2 Internal communications

Where internal communication is concerned, the use of Catalan oscillates between 14% in software to a high of 76% in meetings between employees other than the bosses. Here again, therefore, just as with external communication, we see that software / IT programmes show the lowest levels of use in the firms. Another notable point is the difference between the two types of company in meetings, especially the non-managerial meetings (that is, where managers are not present) since the international scope of multinational companies in itself means that other languages may be used at managerial level.

Figure 2. The use of Catalan in internal communications



¹ The C&RT method (also known as CART) (Classification And Regression Trees) is an exploration technique applicable to relations between a dependent variable and a series of discriminating variables or criteria. This method creates regression and classification trees and involves the minimisation of impurity measures in the model according to the discriminating variable chosen optimally. C&RT generates binary trees (each division gives precisely two secondary nodes or daughters) according to the following maxim: take the chi-squared statistic for the categorical criterion variables and Fisher's statistic for the continuous variables.

2.3 Employee knowledge and use of Catalan

We lack data that is comparable across the two types of companies, and for that reason we shall limit ourselves to giving the data in table form. In the case of the multinationals we have data on subjective perception of use: "In what proportion is Catalan spoken?"

Table 1. "In what proportion is Catalan spoken in the company?"

Places of work	% Catalan
Factory and production people	48.1
Technical staff and middle management	68.5
Managers and executives	72.1
Employees attending the public	74.5
Administrative and office staff	74.8

In the case of the public utilities what was asked was the degree of fluency in Catalan in the organisation: "What percentage know Catalan to the level required by their work?"

Table 2. "What percentage know Catalan to the level required by their work?"

At level required by their work	% yes
Hall porters and subalterns	72.3
Telephonists, receptionists and concierge	82.9
Management, administration and secretarial	87.8
Technical staff and representatives	88.8
Maintenance and mechanics	82.9

2.4 Language medium in internal training in the company

As regards the language used as medium in training schemes organised by the company, we find that Catalan is said to be used 62% of the time (according to the questionnaires) either exclusively or in conjunction with 62%, while in public service companies the figure was 43%. It should be pointed out that in the case of the figures for public service companies, the response "in Catalan and Spanish alike" was not available, resulting in more polarised results.

Table 3. Language used in in-house training of employees

Language of in-house training schemes	Multinationals	Public service companies
In Catalan	36.3	43.1
In Catalan and Spanish alike	25.6	-
In Spanish or another language	36.2	56.9

2.5 Linguistic criteria in selection of new staff

51% of the multinationals and 38% of the public service companies state that knowledge of the Catalan language is a prerequisite for all applicants for certain posts in these companies; while 25% and 24% respectively consider this simply as a plus or advantage to take into consideration.

Table 4. Linguistic criteria in selecting new staff

Type of linguistic criterion	Multinationals	Empreses serveis públics
Catalan as a requirement for all staff or those in key points	50.7	38.1
Catalan as a plus for all staff or those in key points	25.4	23.9
Catalan is not considered when appointing	23.7	38.1

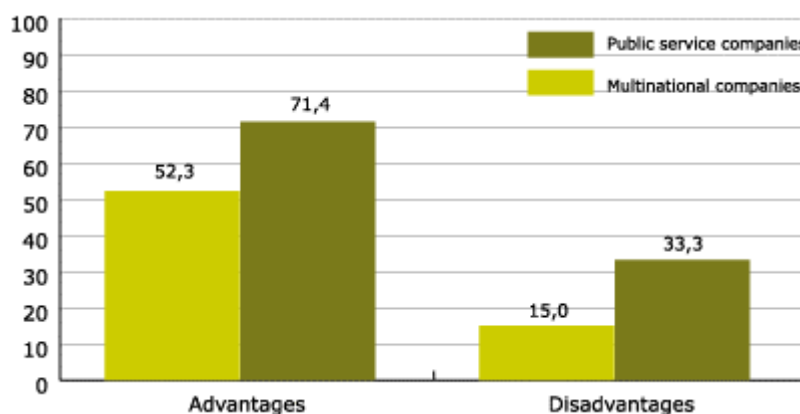
Recently, Silvio Rendón has shown, in "The Catalan premium: Language and employment in Catalonia" <<http://docubib.uc3m.es/WORKINGPAPERS/WE/we033410.pdf>> that the fact of knowing Catalan is a premium when seeking employment in Catalonia. This finding points up the fact that firms ask for knowledge of Catalan as a requirement or plus when taking on new employees.

3. Language attitudes

3.1 Evaluation of advantages and disadvantages

52% of the multinationals and 71% of the public service companies believe that the use of Catalan in their company brings with it advantages, as opposed to 15% and 33% respectively who see rather disadvantages or drawbacks.

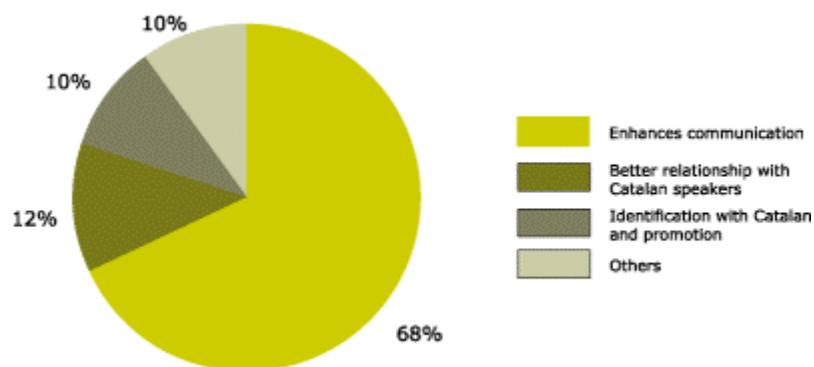
Figure 3. Advantages and disadvantages in using Catalan in the company



3.2 Main advantages adduced

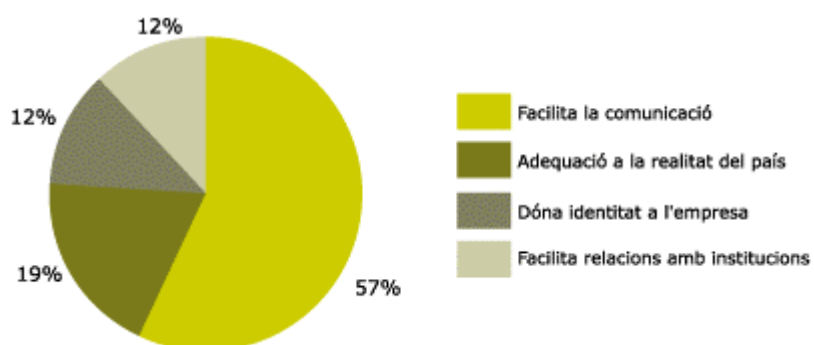
68% of the multinationals stated that it *enhanced communication*. Resumed under this heading were aspects such as "better attention (to customers)", "giving a good image", "giving better service", "prestigious image" and "image of "closeness" (accessibility, etc.). The second advantage cited (13%) was "better relationship with Catalan speakers"

Figure 4. Advantages in using Catalan in the multinationals



In the case of public service companies also, 57% of the companies in the sample state that the main and most obvious advantage is that Catalan enhances communication. The second advantage cited (19%) is “better fit with the cultural and language situation”.

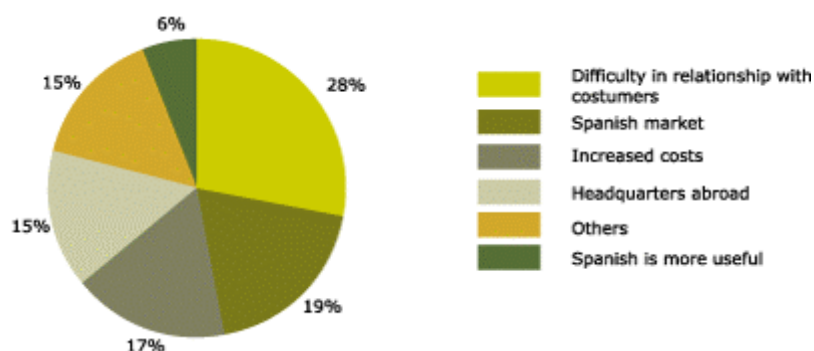
Figure 5. Advantages in using Catalan in public service companies



3.3 Main disadvantages adduced

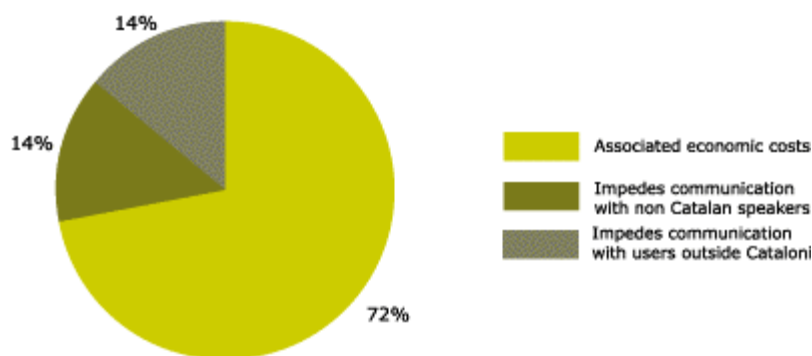
In the case of the multinationals and the disadvantages they adduce, we find no single predominant argument. Difficulty in relating with customers (28%) and “the Spanish-speaking market” (19%) and increased costs (17%) are the three perceived drawbacks that are most frequent of the minority (less than 50%-level) responses obtained.

Figure 6. Disadvantages in using Catalan in multinational companies



For the public services companies the main drawback is the difference in economic costs involved in using Catalan, and the second most-stated drawback that we find is difficulty in communicating with non-Catalan speakers in Catalonia and with users outside Catalonia.

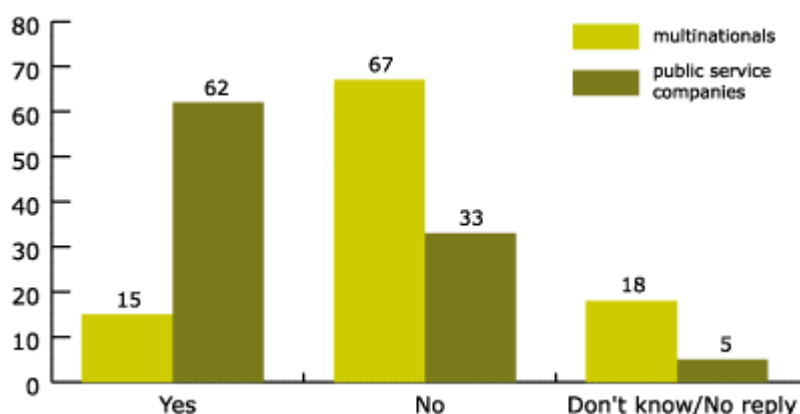
Figure 7. Disadvantages in using Catalan in public service companies



3.4 The intention of increasing use of Catalan

These perceived advantages and disadvantages can lead companies to increase or not increase the use of the Catalan language. 15% of the multinationals intend to increase use, as against 62% of public service companies. So here there is a clear difference, owing above all to the territory covered by the two types of company.

Figure 8. The intention of increasing use of Catalan in the company

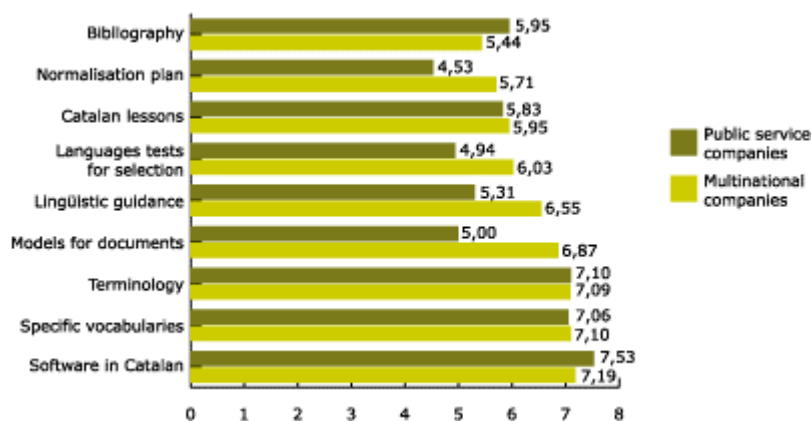


4. Interest in language services

4.1 Rating of language services

On a scale of 0 to 10, the three language services most highly rated by both the multinationals and the public service companies are software in Catalan, vocabularies and terminology. These three services are characterised by their comprehensible material and easy and rapid application by companies. The other services are less well known and probably demand greater commitment, and are usually more costly to apply. A fact to note here is that the most highly rated services for both types of company are in the area where there is lowest use, as we have seen: in Information Technology / software. That is good news, interesting to the services that are helping to increase use where this is low.

Figure 9. Interest in the language services offered



5. Variables that affect language use

In this section we will look at, and reproduce in diagram form, the most important variables influencing the use of Catalan in the companies under scrutiny. To make comparison of the two types of companies easier we firstly carried out a process to make the measured variables as homogeneous as possible². Analysis was carried out using the C&RT technique which divides the variable under scrutiny into two groups each time, taking the greatest difference between means, and seeking to have them as homogeneous as possible amongst themselves as the guiding principles. The intention here was to show which were the variables with most discriminatory power in indicating levels of Catalan use in firms.

As regards the segmentation trees (branching trees representing segmentation) what is missing here are the characteristics or typology of the companies (the equivalent of sociodemographic facts in individuals³) since variables like the geographical situation of the company, whether a branch of a mother company or not, the percentage of sales in Catalonia, the number of workers, turnover, and the market sector /type of product or service, all give important information on the kinds of companies that use more or less Catalan. But one could hardly apply a governmental language policy programme to them directly, over the short or medium term, or at any rate this would not be easy.

5.1 Multinational companies

The previous ISC study on the use of Catalan in multinational companies, whose data we have already drawn upon in this article, correlates the characteristics of the companies with their use of Catalan, thus showing what kinds of company as defined by these characteristics most use and which least use Catalan⁴.

We developed an explicatory model analysing the relationship between the variables of performance and attitude of the big companies on the one hand with the use of the language

² The variable indicating percentage of in-house training courses in Catalan in public service companies is an aggregate of two other variables: (the language used as medium for courses and written language used in the courses), to make the analysis more homogeneous with the variable available from the study of the big companies. Use is also measured in different ways in the two studies but with the same basic idea; furthermore, in the study of the big companies, the scale goes from 0-10 while the EULIP study it goes from 0-100, and to make them identical the scale used for the big companies was multiplied by 10. The scale from 0 to 100 we will call ICUC (Index of Catalan Use in Companies)

³ These are: number of workers, turnover in 2001, type of customer: another company or end user, the age of the company, geographical setting, whether or not a branch, percentage of sales in Catalonia and sector (type of product or service).

⁴ Readers interested in this type of segmentation within the range of big companies can consult *Usos lingüístics a les grans empreses presents a Catalunya* (Language use in big companies in Catalonia), Departament de Cultura, Directorate General for Language Policy, 2002.

on the other, since use can be explained not only by the characteristics of the companies but by other variables too. Discernible from the ISC model are two groups of variables which have been measured but not related to use and which turn out to be not unimportant:

The performance variables of the company correlating with use of Catalan are:

- "Proportion of staff training courses (STC) in Catalan"
- "Does the company avail itself of Catalan translation or correction services?"
- "Does the company have its own in-house directives on the use of Catalan?"
- "Is knowledge of Catalan taken into account when taking on staff?"
- "Is knowledge Spanish taken into account when taking on staff?"
- "Does the company sponsor activities related to Catalonia's cultural heritage".

The variables *evaluation and attitude* vis-à-vis use of Catalan in companies are:

- "Plans to organise Catalan classes"
- "Plans to increase the use of Catalan in your company"
- "Do you think there are advantages in using Catalan in the company?"
- "Do you think there are disadvantages in using Catalan in the company?"
- "What is your evaluation of use of Catalan in your company"
- "How important is Catalan in your company?"

The technique employed here enables one to relate these two groups of variables with the use of Catalan, in order to be able to discern with more accuracy what influences language use in the international companies. In this way we will be able to pinpoint the companies using Catalan more or less, as defined by the variables mentioned above (those of performance and attitude).

In the first instance, to be able to see which variables in the two groups are significant, that is to say have appreciable impact on the use of Catalan, an analysis was carried out of the variance range of all the variables⁵ in the said groups. The results of this process show that only four out of all the variables emerge as statistically significant to 95%. Thus it will be these four variables that we shall use to develop our explanatory model.

Significant variables in the explanatory model

• Proportion of in-house training schemes that the firm organises in Catalan
• Knowledge of Catalan as a criterion when taking on new staff
• Subjective importance of Catalan in the company
• Value put on Catalan in the Company

Secondly, a segmentation tree was constructed using the C&RT technique, by means of which a graphic representation of an explanatory model was obtained, explaining use of Catalan and taking into account the variables from the two groups that we have said were significant.

In every tree diagram, the mean Index of Catalan use in Companies (ICUC) is indicated, plus the number of companies in each group and the percentage that this figure represents over the total sample (300). Thus following the branching we can see which variables are those that discriminate best and know the group of companies that make more or less intensive use of Catalan.

Diagram 1 shows graphically the segmentation tree of the big companies. To arrive at the group of companies that make greatest use of Catalan one simply has to follow the path marked in **green** and to arrive at the least or lowest use of Catalan the **red** path has to be followed.

⁵ The analysis of variance of all the segmentation trees were carried out by the author, using two data bases from the above-mentioned studies.

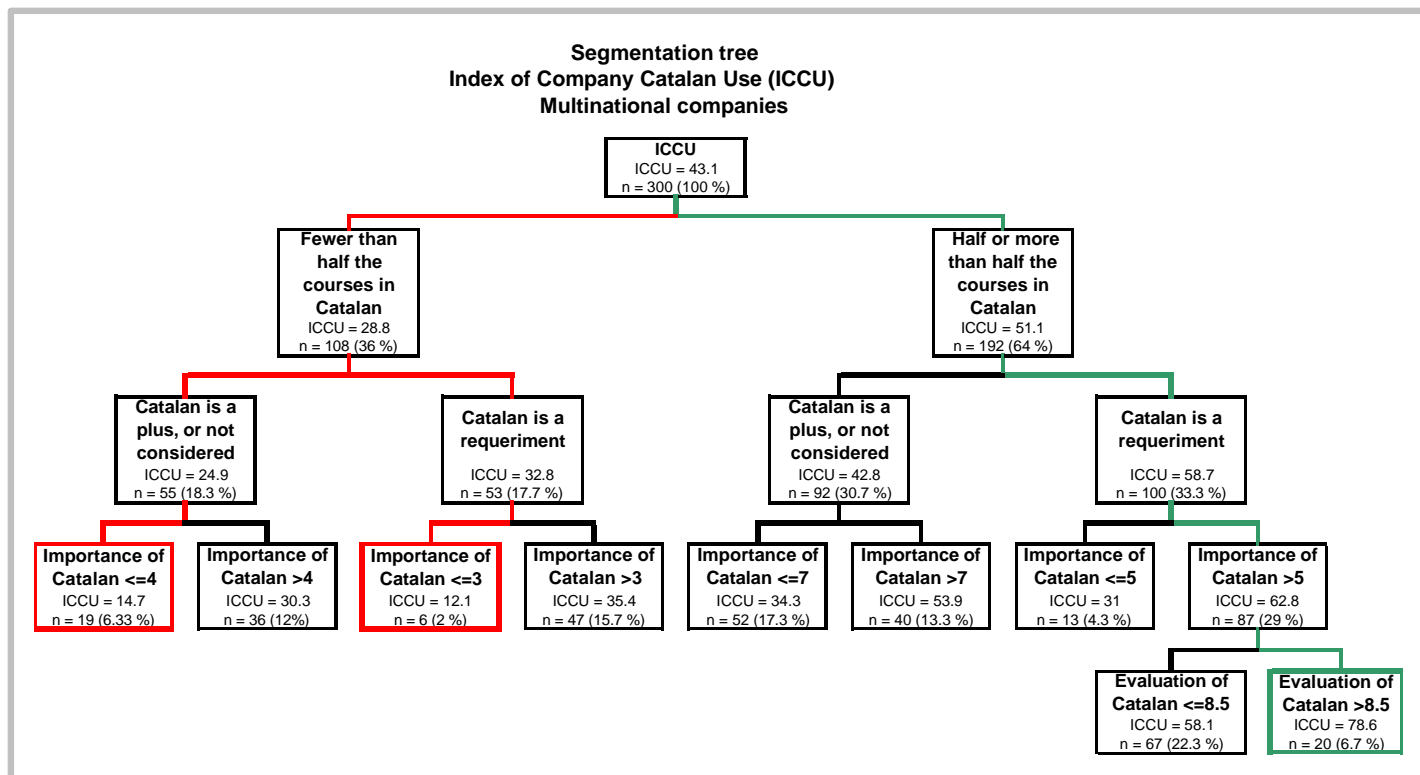
In the second instance there are two paths, since the group of companies that use least Catalan comprises only 6 companies. and is not very significant, and so a second path has been marked to another group showing low use and consisting of more companies numerically (19 companies).

The firms with greatest use of Catalan (ICUC= 78.6) are therefore those where more than half of the in-house training courses are in Catalan (i.e. use Catalan as the medium), have knowledge of Catalan as a requirement when taking on new staff in Catalonia, obtain a score of more than 5 in the importance accorded to Catalan and more than 8.5 out of 10 in their positive evaluation of use of Catalan in the company. We see that these constitute a group of firms that use Catalan in almost all ambits and situations, in a way that goes beyond being a purely functional response to the market.

Firms with low use (IU=12.1) are those that run less than half their in-house training courses in Catalan, require knowledge of Catalan when talking on new staff, and score less than 5 in the importance accorded Catalan. Thus, for these companies, Catalan is a consideration only when hiring staff, that is, it has a purely functional value, undoubtedly because of the type of service they offer, which makes linguistic contact necessary with the customer or client, and the Catalan market.

The other path with companies with very low use of Catalan (ICUC=14.7) are those that run less than half their in-house training courses in Catalan as the medium, do not take Catalan into account when taking on new staff in Catalonia, and score less than 5 in the importance accorded use of Catalan. These companies do not even accord a functional value to Catalan and make little use of the language in all ambits and situations. Nonetheless, their ICUC score emerges as higher than that of the companies referred to in the previous paragraph, perhaps because there are only 6 of them and so not completely representative.

Diagram 1. Segmentation tree showing the variables of performance and attitude toward / evaluation of Catalan in the big companies



Source: Own elaboration, based in ISC data.

We see that the two variables with most discriminatory power are those of performance, followed by the two variables of performance and evaluation. In other words, the variables that significantly affect use of Catalan, the performance variables are more important than those of attitude or evaluation, and this is quite logical, since it is one thing to be politically correct, and seeing this as maybe the expedient thing to do where possible, and another putting it into practice, especially where the big companies are concerned motivated as they are by hard-nosed economics and demand.

Analysing the variables one by one we see that what best discriminates use of Catalan measured by the index of Catalan use in the company, is the *percentage of training courses run by the company in Catalan*. It can be seen that the ICUC= 28.7 if more than half the courses run by the company are in Catalan and the IUCE=51.1 if they run less than half the courses in Catalan.

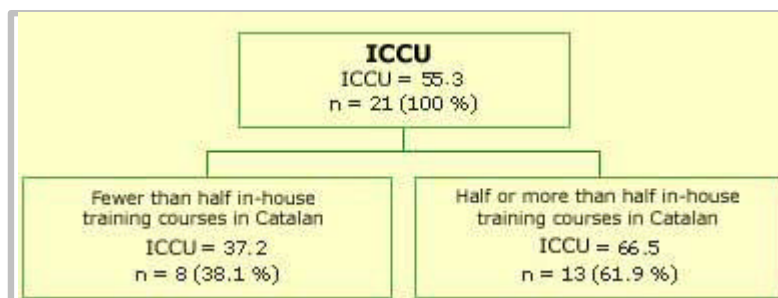
The second most effective variable in discriminatory power on use of Catalan is whether the company has knowledge of Catalan as a requirement when taking on staff, and this is logical given that where incoming employees have to know Catalan, Catalan will obviously be used more than in companies where employees don't necessarily know the language. This variable is clearly explanatory and could be a very important point to consider in the language policy directed at the commercial world.

In third place is the importance given to the use of Catalan within the company and lastly there is the subjective evaluation of Catalan use within the company. With these two variables, if there is a high perception of use, this will normally be because the use actually is high, even though there may be companies that tend to see use as insufficient while others see it as excessive despite equal use in practice for economic and ideological reasons.

5.2 Public service companies

When constructing the segmentation tree of the ICUC in public service companies it can be seen that there is only one significant variable with discriminatory power regarding use in this sort of company: The percentage of in-house training courses carried out in Catalan, echoing what we found in the case of multinational companies.

Diagram 2. Segmentation tree for public service companies.



Source: Own elaboration, based on ISC data.

We see then, that public service companies that have half the in-house training courses or more in Catalan have a ICUC OF 66.5 and those that have fewer than half score 37.27. It can be seen that these indices are higher than those in the groups separated off by the first branch of the tree in the case of the multinationals since the public service companies have a higher mean ICUC.

