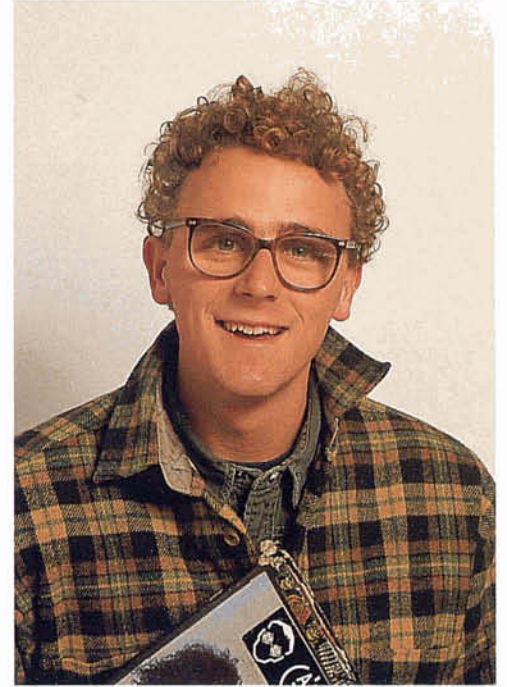


A LANGUAGE SUITABLE FOR ALL PURPOSES



© ELOI BONJÓCH

HAVING COMPLETED THE NORMATIVE CODIFICATION, STANDARD CATALAN HAD TO GO THROUGH ITS SOCIAL VEHICULATION AND ITS FUNCTIONAL ELABORATION. THESE HAVE BEEN THE TWO CHIEF FRONTS IN THE PROCESS OF LINGUISTIC NORMALIZATION IN THE LAST FEW YEARS.

ISIDOR MARÍ SUBDIRECTOR GENERAL FOR LINGUISTIC POLICY,
DIRECTOR OF THE TERMCAT TERMINOLOGY CENTRE

Normalization and functional elaboration of the standard

We tend to associate the idea of “linguistic normalization” with the notions of “language norms” and “normal use”. In Catalan socio-linguistic terminology the second of these associations in fact predominates: normalization as the process by which Catalan recovers all the social functions open to a modern language when it is

not subordinated but normal. This process involves extending the knowledge of Catalan throughout the population and extending the use of Catalan to all public functions –official and administrative use, education, media and cultural industries, socio-economic activities, the health system, etc.

But we mustn’t forget that extending the knowledge and use of the Catalan lang-

uage requires a parallel –some would even say prior– development of the language itself as an instrument of communication. For this reason Francesc Vallverdú proposed a distinction between the social front of linguistic normalization –extension of knowledge and of use– and its actual linguistic front –which he calls “normativization”.

Fortunately, the normative codification of modern Catalan had already taken place

before the dictatorship of General Franco. The Institut d'Estudis Catalans –thanks especially to the work of Pompeu Fabra– promulgated the orthographic rules in 1913, the normative grammar appeared in 1918 and the general dictionary in 1932. The rules of the Catalan language were therefore substantially established when the Generalitat de Catalunya was restored and the new stage of linguistic normalization lasting to our own day could get under way.

To distinguish between the work done and the work remaining it is useful to turn to the phases of linguistic planning proposed by Einar Haugen. According to this socio-linguist, after selecting and codifying a linguistic variety –so that it can serve as a standard or common form for the whole of the linguistic community–, we have to go through a third phase of vehiculation or effective social acceptance of this codified common form and even a fourth phase of functional elaboration in which the standard form is developed as an instrument of communication suited to all uses.

At the beginning of the eighties Catalan was a codified, or normativized language, but the standard form had still not been vehiculated throughout the Països Catalans nor effectively introduced to all areas of public life. At the same time, although it had a long tradition as a language of cultural and scientific expression –impossible to sum up in a few lines–, a special effort was needed for the development or updating of its specialized registers: the legal and administrative language indispensable for its use as an official language; the journalistic and communicative styles necessary for the press, radio, television or cinema; the specializations found in all the scientific, technical and professional fields of knowledge and even in sport and leisure activities.

In short, having completed the normative codification –which required only minor polishing and updating–, standard Catalan had to go through its social vehiculation –extension of knowledge and use– and its functional elaboration –development of specialized language and specific terminology for each field. These have been the two chief fronts in the process of linguistic normalization in the last few years.

Normativization and functional elaboration: recent landmarks.

As regards the completion and updating of the rules, I would like to stress the recent activities of the Philological Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, and in particular



the guidelines on pronunciation and morphology in its *Proposta per a un estàndard oral de la llengua catalana* (Proposal for an oral standard in the Catalan language). In the lexical field, a new enlarged and updated edition of the normative dictionary is about to appear, while there is a project under way directed by Joaquim Rafel for a dictionary of contemporary Catalan based on an enormous computerized textual corpus. A further stage in this process will probably be the updating of the normative grammar.

As regards the elaboration of specialized registers and terminology, one cannot praise too highly the general effort of systematization involved in the *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* (1969-1980), an invaluable basis for subsequent work in more specific or specialized areas of knowledge. These sectorial developments have advanced farthest, of course, in those fields in which the use of Catalan has increased most notice-

ably. Thus, for example, in the legal and administrative field not only are there outstanding specialists, studies and periodicals devoted specifically to the development and diffusion of the language in these areas, but it was also included early on in the structure of administrative aspects and has an Advisory Commission on Administrative Language linked to the Generalitat de Catalunya and in contact with the rest of the linguistic territory.

The co-ordination of the work on terminology was also officially institutionalized through the TERMCAT Terminology Centre, set up in 1985 by agreement between the General Directorate of Linguistic Policy of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. Its activity covers all aspects of terminology, from training, back-up information and methodological advice for specialists preparing terminological collections to the diffusion of terminology through a variety of publications or direct attention to inquiries, and including the normalization of new terms and the maintenance of a data bank of Catalan terminology with equivalents in Castilian, French, English and occasionally other languages. The celebration of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona provided TERMCAT with the opportunity to carry out a large-scale project of systematization of sports terminology, with 29 dictionaries for the various sports events. At present it is working on an equally ambitious project –a hundred dictionaries of which the first six have already appeared–, aimed at covering the terminology of the main university courses, in collaboration with the Fundació Barcelona. The scope of this terminology centre is not only general in the sense that it is concerned with all fields of knowledge, but also in its intention to extend its services to the whole of the Catalan-language area, thanks to the agreements it has established with the universities of the País Valencià and that of the Balearics, which also have TERMCAT collaborating centres.

These elements, and many others, will, if properly potentiated, allow us to approach with optimism the new drive with which our linguistic policy hopes to extend the social use of Catalan over the next few years. In this new stage, as in recent years, the growth of the use of Catalan will have to be accompanied –and preferably preceded– by the full availability of the corresponding specialized language. In this way the social and linguistic fronts of normalization will be able to advance together towards full normality. ■