

THE CATALAN LANGUAGE AROUND THE WORLD



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THE CATALAN LANGUAGE HAS NOW ACHIEVED INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND PROJECTION. THE SCALE OF CATALAN TEACHING IN THE WORLD TODAY HAS IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES LED TO THE CREATION OF ASSOCIATIONS ENGAGED IN THE STUDY OF CATALAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

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The Catalan language has now achieved international recognition and projection thanks to its condition as the official language of the Principality of Andorra, of Catalonia, the País Valencià and the Balearic Isles, but also to the determination of the Catalan institutions and the interest shown by the Catalan society at large.

Important signs of this are the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament in December 1990 in response to the petition presented by the Catalan Parliament, the Parliament of the Balearic Islands and by popular initiative, which granted official recognition for Catalan as a language of the Community, and the use of Catalan as one of the official languages (in plenty

of situations the preferential language) at the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992. To this, though, we have to add the growing importance of the teaching of Catalan abroad, with classes held at more than a hundred universities around the world (not including those in the Catalan-speaking areas).

However, this teaching goes back a long way. Remember, for example, that Edgar Allison Peers in Liverpool and Ignasi González-Llubera in Belfast introduced the teaching of Catalan into their universities as far back as the twenties. And then of course the exiles produced by the end of the Civil War (1939) led to a considerable increase in the number of Catalan teachers at foreign universities

(we could, for instance, mention Josep M. Batista i Roca at Cambridge and Joan Coromines at Chicago), which stimulated these universities' interest in teaching Catalan. And I need hardly say that the Catalans of the time had a special interest in telling the rest of the world about our linguistic reality, which was the object of discrimination and repression by the Franco regime.

The scale of Catalan teaching in the world today has in several countries led to the creation of associations engaged in the study of Catalan language and culture: the *Anglo-Catalan Society* was founded in 1954, the *Associazione Italiana di Studi Catalani* was founded in 1978, the same as the *North-American*

Catalan Society, the *Deutsch-Katalanische Gesellschaft* in 1983 and the *Association Française des Catalanistes* in 1990. In France there is also a *Centre d'Estudis Catalans*, founded in 1977 and part of the University of Paris-Sorbonne, where an excellent job of study and diffusion of Catalan culture is carried out. The *Oficina Catalana de Frankfurt* was set up in 1988 to co-ordinate and promote a number of activities publicizing Catalan culture in Germany. To these organisations, which do an excellent job of communication and promotion, must be added the *Associació Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes*, founded in 1973 and bringing together people all over the world who are interested in Catalan language and literature. The association has made a name for itself thanks to the interest of the talks it organises and the publications it promotes.

To support the teaching of Catalan abroad the Generalitat de Catalunya set up in 1988 the "Commission for the teaching of Catalan in universities outside the territorial ambit of Catalonia", which has fomented the creation of forty lecture-ships and almost twenty courses now in operation at different universities abroad. This commission is presided by the Commissar for the External Promotion of Catalan, a post set up by the Generalitat to co-ordinate and potentiate initiatives in this field.

With the same object, the Generalitat de Catalunya, through its Directorate General of Linguistic Policy, has promoted and published different versions of the *Digui, digui...* teaching method (originally designed for Castilian speakers wanting to study Catalan) for teaching Catalan to speakers of English, French, Italian and German. In addition, the Generalitat de Catalunya has since 1990 awarded an international certificate in Catalan, which in 1993 reached the figure of 175 candidates who sat exams in Brussels, Budapest, Gironella, Liverpool, London, Madrid, Naples, Prague, Santiago de Chile and Swansea. This international certificate, administered by the Directorate General for Linguistic Policy, belongs to the network of ALTE certificates (Association of Language Testers in Europe), which is made up of prestigious European organisations awarding international language certificates (University of Cambridge, Goethe Institute, French Alliance, CITO, Cervantes Institute, University of Salamanca, University of Perugia, University of Lisbon, the Danish Lan-



guage Teaching Consortium). As well as this, in 1993 the International Certificate Conference (ICC), a German-based institution, added a certificate in Catalan to its range of international certificates, administered in Germany and France and prepared with the support of the Directorate General for Linguistic Policy. From a territorial point of view, then, the international certificates in Catalan offered by the Directorate General for Linguistic Policy and those offered by the ICC are complementary.

The Directorate General for Linguistic Policy also fulfills an efficient task of publicizing the Catalan linguistic reality through *language fairs and exhibitions*, at the *European Regional Assembly*, at *symposia*, through literature for foreign *tourists* visiting Catalonia, etc.

Other initiatives by the Generalitat de Catalunya which have contributed to the international projection of the Catalan language are carried out by the *Institució de les Lletres Catalanes*, which promotes the translation of Catalan literary works to other languages and organises exhibitions on Catalan literature which travel to different countries; the *Consorci Català de Projecció Exterior de la Cultura*, which plays an important role promoting the presence of Catalan cultural productions abroad, and the *Comissionat d'Actuacions Exteriors*, which channels Catalonia's international relations and encourages exchanges abroad and links

with Catalan centres all over the world. These often do an admirable job of publicizing the Catalan reality through their libraries, the Catalan language courses they organise, the formation of choral, dance and theatre groups, radio programmes, etc.

Alongside the activities by institutions belonging to the Generalitat de Catalunya, we need to mention the work in this field by government institutions in Andorra, the Balearic Islands and the País Valencià, and by the *universities* of the Catalan-language area, basically through teacher and student exchanges with universities in other countries. And it is also worth pointing out that in spite of the political and administrative barriers there are a number of initiatives aimed at guaranteeing reciprocal communication and information in this subject between the public institutions in the different Catalan-speaking territories.

Another extraordinary task which deserves a mention is the one carried out in this field by academic, cultural and civic institutions such as the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, the Centre UNESCO de Catalunya, the Fundació Congrés de Cultura Catalana, the Institut de Projecció Exterior de la Cultura Catalana, the Centre Català del PEN Club, the Enciclopèdia Catalana, etc. These organisations offer scholarships and study grants to foreign teachers and students related with the teaching of Catalan, make awards in recognition of the work of individuals or organisations in the diffusion of the Catalan reality abroad, produce support publications (manuals, bilingual dictionaries, etc.) for the teaching and diffusion of the Catalan language and organise congresses, etc. with the object of contributing to the international projection of Catalan culture, with a special emphasis on linguistic aspects.

The Catalan language, then, is projected abroad through public organisms, but also through universities and academic institutions and by the whole of the civil society. Our language is a fundamental element of our identity as a people, because of the link it provides with our historical roots and between the different Catalan-language areas, but also because of the determination of Catalans to make it in every way the language of day-to-day life, a modern instrument of communication, suitable for literary and scientific expression, for understanding and explaining the world around us and for recognizing ourselves as a nation. ■