
Catalan in the social media: The battle over global linguistic diversity on the Internet

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ABSTRACT

This article is divided into seven sections. After a first introductory section, the second, entitled “A supraterritorial world”, presents the power structures in today’s society which allow to understand the role that languages play in it. The third section, “Internet and linguistic colonisation”, is a proposed take on the status of languages on the Internet. The fourth one, called “Internationally, are there governments concerned with the use of their languages on the Internet?”, analyses the relationship between governments around the world and content creators. The fifth section, entitled “The reality of Catalan on the Internet: Taking stock of the past four years”, lists several actions undertaken in this field in Catalonia. The sixth section is called “So now what? Catalan’s challenges on the social media” and summarises some of the issues yet to be addressed. The article closes with a seventh section entitled “Significant, unstoppable years”, which contains the conclusions.

KEYWORDS

Catalan, Internet, globalisation, colonialism, influencers.

1. Introduction

This article has not been written by a linguistics scholar; it has been written by a journalist born in Catalonia in 1994, a person who looks around her and asks herself what is happening with her language, Catalan. But “around her” is no longer just her town, or her neighbourhood in the city where she lives, Barcelona. It is not even her country. In 2024, when we think about who we are and why we are experiencing certain phenomena, we have to look at the entire world. If we are talking about the social media and what role our language plays in them, we have to talk about globalisation.

2. A supraterritorial world

In the late twentieth century, our society witnessed how supraterritorial structures and discourses were gaining ground and becoming normalised. Suddenly, we were all buying clothing at the huge chain stores, computers spread to every home, Internet access became widespread, flying became an affordable transport option, the huge tech companies were created and their masterminds mythified, we experienced major economic crises and more recently we suffered from the extreme case of the extraordinarily quick spread of a pandemic.

The world no longer was, and no longer is, the sum of a set of territories that interact with each other according to their own rules; instead, it is the integration of all of them in a complex macrosystem of relations. The world is a supraterritorial reality, and this has many consequences, one of which is that this reality creates contexts and referents that may be similar among people who do not live in the same place in the world. We are still getting used to this, but this has major linguistic, cultural and social effects on us. And perhaps we are just now beginning to look at it critically, as we realise that this globalisation has a profound and almost definitive impact on our standards of living.

One of these impacts is that global mobility has multiplied. The power of tourism is so great that we locals can no longer afford a home in our own city. Migratory waves are so frequent and large that governments do not have enough mechanisms to give newcomers proper attention and a good life, or to help them integrate into the society where they have landed. Every day we get phone calls on our mobiles from companies that have somehow gotten their hands on our personal data, even though we do not know how. We open any of our devices and everything we see is tailored to our needs, leading to the desire to buy goods or become social influencers like the ones we see on the screen. The successful entrepreneurship models we look up to are start-ups who make easy money at an incredibly fast pace and with products that are produced we don't even know where. Everyone wants to invent the next hot app, but nobody values professional training. We need to import labour because we cannot find carpenters, electricians or handymen, yet at the same time we cannot give these labourers decent working conditions. And of course, the languages that are spoken around us are multiplying, and the local languages,

which face discrimination in this global context, are the ones that have to strive to convince society of the importance of their existence, an existence that, through speech, safeguards the world's cultural diversity.

Those on the economic right defend the nature of the free market tooth and nail, which leads to extreme neoliberalism and unbridled capitalism, with growth for the sake of growth regardless of needs. And the heedless left, which just now seems to be awakening (we hope) from its slumber, has hidden for all these years behind a kind of “global citizenship” which does not tie us to any particular place but totally individualistically tells us that we can go wherever we want and that that place will adapt to our happiness, because the most important thing is to be happy and respected as “oneself”. In this context, anything related to the linguistic, cultural or sociological specificities of a place is seen as a limitation, as a hindrance on people, not as something valuable.

The Internet is the perfect example of these suprastructures and superstructures which became universal in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and which radically changed the distance between people, their environment and the entire world.

In Catalonia, a stateless nation, we live with our own culture, which is being increasingly blurred by the macro- and microcultural forces around us, and we speak a medium-sized but minoritised language, Catalan. As stated by the Minister for Language Policy, Francesc Xavier Vila, Catalan finds itself “without its own state, or a propitious one”. Furthermore, as Catalans, there is no language the same size or smaller geographically near us, but instead a language that is a global power: Spanish, which has the second highest number of native speakers in the world and creates extremely powerful supraterritorial referents. Rosalia (Catalan) and Bad Bunny (Puerto Rican) were born thousands of kilometres away from each other but are two stars within the same cultural force that is expressed in Spanish.

We live in a “supra” world, always “supra”. And its suprastructures are beyond the control of countries, which in recent years have tried to hinder or regulate them in some ways: through data protection laws or attempts to regulate the large tech companies. Given this entire context, what this citizen wonders is: have we been linguistically and culturally colonised at the global level without even realising it?

3. Internet and linguistic colonisation

In 2024, Google Translate has 243 languages. Around 6,000 languages are thought to be spoken around the world. That is, this huge supraterritorial platform, which is available to everyone and therefore should perhaps include and represent everyone, only translates 4.05% of all the languages in the world. And this is the translation service; the percentage would fall even further if we count the languages Google offers in each of its services.

When your world has become completely digital yet you cannot use your own language but have to switch to another powerful language which does have everything adapted to it (or even if you can conduct searches in your language but the results are shown in another more powerful language), isn't that veiled colonialism? Mark Graham, a researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute, claims that inequality in access to information in one's own language, no matter what it is, has the potential to reinforce information production and representation patterns from the colonial era, especially bearing in mind that the inequality of the information and representation in different languages on the Internet can also affect how we understand territories and even how we act.

As Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo'o, the Kikuyu writer from Kenya, says in his book *Decolonising the Mind* (published in Catalan as *Descolonitzar la ment* by Raig Verd, 2017), a territory is not only colonised materially via violence and the imposition of languages but also mentally, by colonising habits and ways of thinking. The main Internet languages delimit how we see the world. For example, if you are a bilingual speaker of English and Zulu, you will find five million articles in English on Wikipedia that tell you what life and everything that is part of it are like, while you will only find 685 in the Zulu edition.

Back in the 2013 study "Digital Language Death", the researcher András Kornai noted that 95% of all languages currently in use will never be normalised on the Internet. And they will therefore lose power in our day-to-day lives. Kornai talks about "massive language death caused by the digital fracture", and therefore the death of entire cultures and ways of existing and of enriching the global conversation. But none of us will ever stop speaking; instead, the death of languages will be a death by replacement: the hegemonic languages like English, Chinese and Spanish will come to dominate the Internet and consequently the world, with all that this implies structurally, also in production and monetary terms.

Looking at it from the standpoint of Catalan, I do not believe that the Catalan language is at immediate risk. As noted by people like Inee Slaughter, the director of the Institute of Indigenous Languages, many indigenous languages only exist in oral forms, which creates a barrier that is difficult to overcome when adapting to the digital world. And these languages are quickly running out of time. Catalan is a medium-sized language, and it may have taken us a while to see it, but it seems that in recent years there has been an increasing collective awareness of the presence of Catalan on the Internet, as I will explain below.

4. Internationally, are there governments concerned with the use of their languages on the Internet?

We have to take into account that the issue of languages' adaptation to the Internet, which means cultures' adaptation in this supraterritorial battle, also has the French, the Swedish, the

Indian and the Icelandic people on high alert, just to mention a few. The latter, for example, are focusing on audiovisuals in their own language, just as we Catalans are doing, because they see it as a key point in linguistic transmission. This strategy was conveyed by the Icelandic Government to the Minister of Culture of the Government of Catalonia, Natàlia Garriga, in an institutional visit during the past term, which I know about firsthand because I was a member of this ministry's cabinet. In any case, when we talk about Catalan in the social media, we have to clearly bear in mind this context of global watchfulness.

If we search for previous examples of collaboration between public administrations and content creators in the social media, the majority of results revolve around what are called “strategic diffusion theories”, that is, using influencers' services to disseminate a specific message among their audiences. This research is based on the concern about how different political parties around the world may use influencers to promote a specific discourse. This is why studies of strategic diffusion related to digital content creators are generally based on two analysis cases: electoral campaigns and mass information campaigns, such as when the Catalan or Belgian governments – along with many others – hired influencers to spread the safety rules during the coronavirus pandemic.

Regarding studies on the way influencers can be used for political purposes, in 2009 the scholars Andrea Galeotti from the London Business School and Sanjev Goyal from Cambridge University wrote a study entitled “Influencing the Influencers: A Theory of Strategic Diffusion” (Galeotti & Goyal, 2009), where they began to analyse how political parties and governments could use social media personalities to promote their objectives. Along with these analyses, there are also recent international cases of anti-corruption studies in the field of public digital investments. In 2020, Indonesia Corruption Watch published the preliminary document *Government Digital Activities: Reviewing the ABPN's Social Media and Influencer Sector Spending Policy*, which outlines and quantifies the Indonesian Government's tendency to invest in the social media sector and influencers' services. This organisation's intention is to continue to quantify the government's use of these strategies and to publish recurring studies to ensure its transparency.

Regarding this approach, we should clearly understand that collaboration between public institutions and digital content creators on linguistic normalisation issues should not be understood within the framework of any political campaign. As stated in article 8.2 of the 1998 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (based on other universal declarations and pacts like the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights), “All language communities are entitled to have at their disposal whatever means are necessary to ensure the transmission and continuity of their language”. Working on the use and preservation of the Catalan language on the Internet should not be seen as related to elections or the diffusion strategy of a specific political party but instead as part of governments' duty to preserve the languages in their territories.

Studies on information dissemination campaigns have blossomed in recent years. They probably became normalised during the COVID-19 pandemic, when different governments enlisted

influencers' services to communicate the safety and hygiene rules that society was supposed to follow. The Catalan Government also put this strategic diffusion into practice. For example, in August 2020, the Directorate General of Youth held the campaign #sommaskers (we are maskers) with the slogan “Fes-te masker i expressa't” (Become a masker and express yourself) to spread the word about using preventive measures in the pandemic. The campaign focused on the social media, its target audience was adolescents and young adults, and it had the cooperation of influencers of different ages, genders and backgrounds and in various thematic segments, like the Instagrammer @Daviditsme_cat, the TikToker @Raulroco_o and the actress @candeliousfang.

Around the world, different governments have hired people from the digital sector to make advertisements related to COVID-19 or other informative campaigns, but this practice of what is known as *influencer marketing* is still largely unregulated. It has many advantages, like its effectiveness in reaching specific audience segments, quick and easy monitoring of the influencers' different digital platforms and natural adaptation to the latest format and language trends, which is what makes the content appealing. Different political marketing experts claim that the content creators with the strongest potential influence are those called *microinfluencers*: people with fewer than 10,000 followers who have not yet monetised their online presence but have kept it more private. For this reason, the people who follow them trust them more and are more willing to listen to them and change their behaviour as a result. Many influencers in Catalonia are microinfluencers.

The relationship between political institutions (which, in this case, want to help disseminate the language on the Internet) and influencers also has disadvantages, like potential incoherence between the discourses and attitudes of the latter within and outside a public campaign. For example, in 2018, the Australian Government was harshly criticised when it funded two campaigns with digital content creators: one by the Ministry of Health to encourage young women to practise sport, and another by the Ministry of Defence to encourage young men to enrol in the Australian Air Force. The controversy arose after these campaigns because the influencers used on the health issue had previously promoted brands related to alcohol and fast food. Meanwhile, the videogame influencer Alen Catak (“Champ”), who was given the Ministry of Defence campaign, had previously posted videos in which he made sexist and homophobic jokes. Given this situation, the Assistant Minister for Finance, David Coleman, publicly declared that they would not continue to enlist influencers for campaigns. Amongst all the other countries that have used social media personalities to spread a message, I am not aware of any other similar decision.

It should be borne in mind that collaboration between public institutions and digital content creators on linguistic normalisation issues has to be undertaken with full awareness of its advantages (especially its effectiveness in getting a message to reach a large audience) and its risks (especially the inability to control the influencers' attitudes and comments before or afterward). However, it should also be noted that these disadvantages can also arise with other types of

personalities like actors, opinion leaders and journalists, yet public institutions help them through their culture or media support lines. Aside from this, in the private sphere these disadvantages do not appear to be an impediment to using influencers as a mouthpiece.

All of this leads us to believe that the public administration's choice of content creators, as well as the conditions of collaboration, cannot solely depend on their social media followers but also requires a profile analysis. For example, if the goal is linguistic normalisation, the influencer's content has to be checked to ensure that they truly use the language online and therefore can be a role model in using it naturally.

In any case, we have to recall again that information campaigns are one thing, and public institutions' fundamental duty to foster the normalisation of a language on the Internet is another. Enlisting Catalan-language influencers to promote occasional actions is unquestionably positive but not game-changing: what really matters is working on a structural undergirding that fosters content dissemination and creation in a language, which should be a government's main job in order to preserve digital linguistic diversity.

It is hard to find international examples of this duty for a variety of reasons. One of them is the overall lack of knowledge of the relationship between language and digitalisation, and how the latter can forever change a society's linguistic habits, as explained in the previous section. A great deal of research in this field remains to be done, and in addition to the benefits for global linguistic diversity, Catalan public (or private) institutions could be international pioneers and role models in researching and promoting nonhegemonic languages' forms of survival on the Internet.

Precisely due to the complexity of linguistic diversity, the search for international examples of influencers who favour the normalisation of a nonhegemonic language is difficult and cannot be limited solely to digital searches, because most likely the language in which these actions are conducted is not the dominant one and therefore they cannot be found by searching in the common languages. Furthermore, for the time being there is no international network that brings together these initiatives.

In Catalonia, in 2020 the Directorate General of Language Policy of the Ministry of Culture of the Catalan Government commissioned the CUSC (Sociolinguistics and Communication Research Centre of the Universitat de Barcelona) to perform a study entitled *Català, youtubers i instagramers. Un punt de partida per promoure l'ús de la llengua* (Catalan, YouTubers and Instagrammers. A Starting Point for Promoting the Use of the Language), which analysed "the use of Catalan in general contents by digital stars targeted at adolescents and young adults and proposals to promote Catalan in this arena". At that time, I interviewed one of its authors, Avel·lí Flors-Mas (his co-authors were Marina Massaguer Comes and F. Xavier Vila). Asked the question of where to go if we want information on international public institutions that are promoting specific linguistic normalisation strategies in the digital arena, Flors-Mas recommended contacting initiatives like the Mercator, the research centre on multilingualism and language

learning, or the NPLD (Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity), both of them in Europe. The exchange of information with initiatives like these would help to cross-reference international linguistic experiences and seek common fronts, but this would be part of a specific research project that would clearly extend beyond the scope of this article.

The incipient work that has been and is being done at the intersection of the digital and linguistic fields tends to be primarily focused on assuring that nondominant languages can be used on tech devices. For example, in October 2018 the Welsh Government publicised an action plan on tech language that was part of the “Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers” government strategy (2017). The goal of the action plan was to “plan technological developments that ensure that Welsh can be used in a wide range of contexts, using voice recognition to type or other forms of interaction between humans and computers”. This plan is focused on technologies and at no time refers to the second issue that has to be addressed within the digital world: contents in the language.

Similarly, in 2020 the Government of Catalonia presented the Aina project, which “will generate technological and linguistic resources for Catalan (corpus, language models, translation engines and speech recognition) and make it available open access to the scholarly and business community to make it attractive to include in artificial intelligence (AI) and language technology services and applications like voice assistants, automatic translators and chatbots”. This plan was also exclusively digital and had no content strategy.

The fact that the governments’ action that relates language with the use of technologies is incipient is proven by the fact that in late 2019 a country like India (with the second largest base of Internet users in the world and the second most quickly digitalising economy in the world, according to the McKinsey Global Institute) announced that it was “launching a national mission to create digital content in Indian languages” and to ensure the use of its native languages on the Internet. Temporal logic leads us to assume that if the global powers have only now begun to see the importance of protecting their languages on the Internet, countries with fewer resources run the risk of getting there too late, when the consequences are already too difficult to reverse.

Two examples of actions focused on normalising the language on the Internet via content were cited in the aforementioned 2020 study on YouTubers and Instagrammers in Catalan: Youtubeir@s and Bilbao Gazte. Both are one-off actions promoted by public institutions that do not take a structural approach but share the objective of encouraging the use of the local language among citizens and young people. Youtubeir@s is a contest that began in 2016 and is defined as a “project to bring visibility to Galician-language creators in favour of the formation and expansion of an increasingly strong community with a personality of its own. Youtubeir@s holds workshops, colloquia, debates and presentations all over the territory to project Galician as a living language online”. This initiative is organised by the linguistic normalisation service of the town councils of Baña, Ames, Moaña, Ourense, Pontevedra, Ribadeo, Santiago de Com-

postela, Teo, Rianxo and O Grove; the universities of La Coruña, Santiago de Compostela and Vigo; and La Coruña Provincial Council. Regarding the Bilbao Gazte (Young Bilbao) initiative, in 2019 the Youth Department of Bilbao City Council announced that it was looking for young people to star in the YouTube channel of a youth project. One of the requirements of the contest was that the participants had to speak both Basque and Spanish so that the videos could be made in both languages.

In the interview I held with Avel·lí Flors-Mas when the study *Català, youtubers i instagramers* came out, the sociolinguist also told me that based on this study the promoter of the Welsh platform Clic had got in touch with the CUSC to share what his team was doing to create digital content for children and young people in Welsh, in an initiative that is essentially a multi-format platform within the country's TV channel (specifically, channel S4C), similar to Radiotelevisión Española (RTVE) digital Playz channel with content for young people.

In Catalonia, in 2023 the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation created the youth channel EVA as part of the launch of the new 3Cat digital platform. Catalan influencers have been given a place on this channel where they can band together to gain visibility, interact with each other and strengthen the network of Catalan-speakers on the Internet. The public TV station had a lot of work to do in this field, and it has done well to launch initiatives like this channel because it is clearly negative for a language to have isolated content creators that do not share and pool their audiences.

In the private sphere, we are unaware of any international initiatives that seek to normalise a nondominant language by creating reference influencers. In the Catalan-speaking countries and outside its borders, the only example we know is Canal Malaia. In 2020, my brother Arnau Rius and I created Canal Malaia, a platform to promote content creators in Catalan on the Internet. We did so because we were aware of this entire background and of the need for our language to enter the social media via young voices, as in any normal country. Later, Arnau also created Via Ràpida, a channel with educational videos in Catalan so that secondary students in Catalonia who want to study by watching YouTube videos can have videos adapted to the real curricular content in Catalan and do not have to educate themselves through videos made by Spanish speakers from somewhere else in the world.

According to Avel·lí Flors-Mas, internationally Canal Malaia is likely to be the first private project of influencers developed for linguistic purposes, beyond websites that collect all kinds of content in a given language, just like the Catalan initiatives Youtubers.cat and Gaming.cat. As mentioned above, the much needed research based on direct communication among countries and languages from around the world should also include a study on whether there are private initiatives similar to Canal Malaia, at least in Europe, or whether Catalonia is the first country where this idea has emerged.

Finally, in this context characterised by a lack of in-depth research on the topic, it seems that the only case of public support of content creators with the ultimate goal of strengthening a

medium-sized language is also in Catalonia. In 2024, as stated before, I was part of the Minister of Culture's cabinet, where, together with Minister Natàlia Garriga and Professor Francesc Xavier Vila (at the time Secretary of Language Policy), we developed a new line of grants "to create video series for the social media in Catalan or Occitan". These grants seek to professionalise 24 Catalan-language and Occitan-language influencers every year by ensuring their minimal financial stability during the grant period, and to improve the positioning of Catalan content on the Internet. The budgetary allocation for these grants for the period 2024-2025 is €312,000. This is a pioneering political initiative whose results should be analysed, once available.

Therefore, to summarise this section: we know that the commitment to Catalan-speaking influencers should not be viewed as an action within a political campaign but as one of the options available to governments to preserve linguistic diversity; that public administrations can use digital content creators in specific information campaigns even though their main job is to foster a structure that normalises the online use of the society's nondominant languages; that Catalonia has the opportunity to be a global benchmark in studying the relationships between linguistic diversity and digitalisation; that it would be worthwhile for Catalonia to study international cases of linguistic normalisation projects in the digital environment via direct communication with other countries; that the action plans that connect technologies and language should focus not just on specific technologies but also on their contents; and that the Catalan Government made a major commitment when it created a specific line of grants for Catalan-language content creators, whose impact should be measured. Despite positive steps, we nonetheless need to continue working to normalise Catalan on the Internet with all the measures possible and to keep abreast of the constant changes in the social media.

5. The reality of Catalan on the Internet: Taking stock of the past four years

The discourse on the use of Catalan on the Internet is often catastrophist, and I understand that, because it is a topic of prime importance and many Catalan speakers feel constrained in online environments. However, I would positively assess these past four years, when many things have happened very quickly for different reasons, four of which I would like to highlight.

First, I believe that collective awareness of the importance of speaking Catalan on the Internet has emerged and spread very quickly. I believe that Catalan speakers who are concerned about their language's health have realised how important it is and understood that influencers are key referents who communicate in a way that is familiar to younger generations and helps to normalise the language. It is important not to look at these communicators disparagingly or patronisingly, and not to value them only according to whether their content is personally interesting to us. Instead, we should view them as very important agents of cultural and linguistic transmission in today's society.

Secondly, in the past year we have witnessed an incredible boom in the young Catalan music scene, which is having a very clear impact in the social media. The most outstanding cases are The Tyets, who have beaten records for listens and views in Catalan, along with many other bands like Oques Grasses, Figa Flawas and Mushkaa. Today, the music industry does not exist without the social media, where thousands of communication strategies are rolled out so that the songs spark interest and reach citizens. Therefore, the fact that there are songs in Catalan that have gone viral and crossed territorial and mental borders is also extremely helpful in normalising Catalan on the Internet.

Thirdly, in three years the Catalan Ministry of Culture has shifted its audiovisual promotion policies. For example, it has focused on local productions made in Catalonia and in Catalan; it has reached agreements with large platforms like Netflix and HBOMax, among others, to include content in Catalan in their catalogues; and it has boosted dubbing and prioritised dubbing blockbuster films. This has also dovetailed with initiatives of the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation like *Eufòria*, programmes that have generated referents in Catalan among a very young audience around 10-12 years old. Just like with music, all the Catalan-language audiovisual contents that are created (films, series, TV programmes) have direct repercussions on the Catalan-language contents on the Internet and the visibility of the people who create them.

The fourth is the arrival of TikTok. When we began Canal Malaia, TikTok had just begun to spread in Catalonia, and it has had very positive repercussions on Catalan-language content. We should bear in mind that Instagram (2010), Twitter (2005) and Facebook (2004) are social media designed by Americans, whereas TikTok is Chinese, and it seems that the Asian giant is aware of language varieties and interested in grouping and displaying content by regional languages. And this has favoured Catalan, because TikTok is the social media where the algorithm randomly displays the most content in Catalan. This is coupled with an increase in the normalisation of Catalan-language creators and the fact that in the last parliamentary term the Catalan Ministry of Culture and TikTok announced that the TikTok interface was now available in Catalan. All these factors have created circumstances in which this social medium benefits Catalan speakers more than the other platforms did.

Yet this in no way means that we can rest on our laurels, precisely because all of this has happened in three or four years, which proves the speed at which things transpire. As Catalans, we always have to be aware of all the changes and make sure that our language is always present.

6. So now what? Catalan's challenges on the social media

Below I outline several challenges we are still facing in this field. I focus on challenges of on-screen communication, not on other challenges like linguistic reception in the face of migratory

movements or the educational system, which also have an impact on the use of Catalan on the Internet but are not directly related to the topic of this article.

First, we still need more content for young people. Programmes like *Eufòria* were designed to reach adolescent audiences, but they ultimately appeal to a younger audience, aged 10-12. We have to find a way to be interesting for the age bracket just above that, around 16 years old. There is also a huge and very obvious gap with anime. TV3's new over-the-top platform (OTT) seems to be working on this, and we hope that it bears results.

Secondly, we have to help content creators make a living, because many of them start out thinking that they can earn a bit of money but they don't, or they don't earn enough, or the issue of invoices and freelancer fees and taxes is so complicated that they get frustrated and quit. The new line of grants from the Department of Culture to help professionalise content creators in Catalan that I mentioned above is a step in the right direction, but it remains to be seen how it works.

Thirdly, connected to the second point, we have a huge challenge with Catalan companies in general, regardless of whether or not they work in advertising and communication. Many companies have not yet adapted to digital marketing, and very few hire advertising from Catalan content creators. And this despite the fact that, as explained above, Catalan influencers are microinfluencers, and microinfluencers are highly sought after by global brands. It is a pity that most of the Catalan business community (with very few exceptions) is so detached from this entire world, because it would be a prime source of direct financing for all the young people who speak Catalan online. The public administration cannot be alone in pursuing this goal.

The fourth and final challenge is collective awareness. How do we get these messages to reach all citizens of Catalonia, not only people who are concerned with the language? We all know people who speak Catalan every day, but when they post photos on Instagram with their friends (or for their job or business), or make videos on TikTok, they use Spanish or English. It is a huge challenge to get all of society aware and make sure that they understand that maintaining our language online would do much to further both our own culture and global diversity. It could also be an outstanding example for other languages that have fewer speakers than we do or that are minoritised by a state, just as the Catalan language is.

7. Significant, unstoppable years

In short, the recent years have been significant in the world of communication on the Internet in Catalan, but there is still a lot of work to be done, and we all have to roll up our sleeves: the public administration without a doubt, the business community, the media and communication world, and families. The danger is real because, as stated above, influenced by the sheer amount

of content in the dominant languages, Internet users are abandoning their languages online in favour of languages that they do not even master very well, which clearly also affects their ability to process and create knowledge based on what they find on the Internet.

Digitalisation is endangering nonhegemonic languages and cultures, and to deal with it, we should not turn our backs on the Internet; on the contrary, we have to be there more than ever. We have to take the cosmopolitan, neoliberal blindfolds off our eyes and normalise the use of medium-sized, small and even endangered languages in the digital environment. This is the job of not only young people but also adults, who now live in a completely digital world. In the case of Catalans, who can easily switch languages because we are bilingual and therefore any one of us can easily search in Spanish, it is important that we resist changing languages while also insisting that our governments should get deeply involved in this issue.

If we talk about the status of Catalan on the social media, the conclusion is that a lot of work has been done lately, but there are not yet any guarantees that the language will not be affected by the structural context of the Internet, which is dominated by large languages and cultures and major powers. Diversity is ultimately maintained by practising it and letting it be practised. And global linguistic diversity is engaged in a major battle on the Internet.

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