
The use of Catalan in the X accounts of *Diari de Balears* and the public radio and TV stations of the Balearic Islands: An analysis of frequency of use and linguistic correctness

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ABSTRACT

Studying the use of the Catalan language on the social media has been a focus of interest among philologists, sociologists and communicators for over a decade, since a language's use in the digital sphere can be interpreted as an indicator of its health. This study is a qualitative, exploratory analysis of the way two profiles of the Balearic Islands media, IB3 and *Diari de Balears* adapt their language uses to the Balearic Islands' local forms on the X platform. It also examines how often they post in Catalan, the degree of correctness of those posts and whether the posts go viral. The results allow for some optimism, given the presence of the Balearic dialectal variety in the digital world, because the two media posted all the messages analysed in Catalan, primarily IB3, which mainly uses the Balearic Islands lexicon and whose posts are linguistically correct. However, neither of the media's posts go viral very often.

KEYWORDS

X, *Diari de Balears*, IB3 Televisió, Catalan language, qualitative study.

Introduction

Throughout the past decade, scholars in the fields of philology and communication have used different perspectives to study the degree to which Catalan is used on different platforms by both individual users and institutional and media accounts. That is, they have researched how the Catalan communication space (Gifreu, 1991) has adapted to and fit into the digital sphere. Recent studies like the one by Guevara-Claramunt (2021: 126) have highlighted the fact that Twitter (before it changed its name to X) “is an area where this language is healthy, despite being minoritised”. This statement corroborates similar findings in the study by Tölke (2015: 110) on the use of Valencian on Twitter, namely that “Valencian is the most common language used by young tweeters aged 15 to 35 in the Marina Alta county. In fact, the analysis of the corpus has shown that there are more tweets in Valencian than in Spanish. Furthermore, bilingual tweets, that is, those in both Spanish and Valencian, are quite infrequent”. Even though Catalan is a minoritised language, it has managed to carve out a digital communication space and has proven its strong digital vitality, as found in the study by Milà-Garcia and Tudela-Isanta (2022) on the use of Catalan on TikTok under the tag *#estiktokat*.

The analysis of language use on social media platforms is particularly relevant within today’s hypermedia context, in which 48% of the Spanish people get their news from the social media and 72% from the digital media, according to figures from the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Newman *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, the *Informe sobre l’audiovisual a Catalunya* (Report on Audiovisuals in Catalonia, Consell Audiovisual de Catalunya, 2024) found that more than 90% of the population of Catalonia between the ages of 14 and 64 use the digital media as a news source.

Calafat Vila (2020: 78) says that the use of Catalan in the media is fragmented in peripheral spaces, because “[...] the fact that the Catalan language is subject to legal and symbolic pressure from Spanish directly affects the Catalan media standard. Since the birth of Catalan-language audiovisuals in the 1980s, the language of secondary orality has been conceived in a fragmentary fashion, with three regional TV stations that face legal impediments to sharing their audiences”. As a result of this dispersion, Calafat Vila (2020: 79) notes that the stylebook of IB3, the public TV channel on the Balearic Islands, is used to “guide the correctness of language forms and provide general vocabulary to rectify interference from Spanish in the journalistic language of the Balearic Islands”, although this interference is not as significant in other regions. Similarly, Melià (2007) highlights the slow incorporation of Catalan in the public and media spheres on the Balearic Islands as a significant factor in this phenomenon. In this sense, it should be borne in mind that the public radio and TV of the Balearic Islands, IB3 Ràdio and IB3 Televisió, were launched in 2005 with a bilingual model, where the internally-produced contents are in Catalan but most of the advertising is in Spanish.

Likewise, it is important to stress not only how the media use the Catalan language but also its use and linguistic correctness among politicians. In this sense, the perception stemming from Belfiore’s (2016: 83) research on the use of Catalan by politicians on Twitter is as follows:

My perception *a priori* (that is, my suspicion that in general the linguistic correctness of politicians' tweets leaves lots of room for improvement) has been confirmed. In fact, as I predicted when I decided to embark on this politically incorrect study, through a detailed analysis of the corpus available to me, I have been able to demonstrate that some politicians write any which way, without worrying too much about the punctuation, spelling rules, lexicon or even structure of what they want to communicate.

This conclusion reveals that despite the more informal, spontaneous, briefer and less structured nature of messages on social media platforms, and specifically on X, it is important to watch language use because, as mentioned above, these platforms are increasingly used as news sources, especially among younger audiences.

Based on this overview, the purpose of this study is to provide a brief, qualitative analysis of how Catalan is used on the Balearic Islands media profiles on X.

Methodology

The methodology of this research is qualitative, grounded on observation of the posts of the IB3 media (profiles: @IB3 and @IB3televisió) and *Diari de Balears* (@dbalears) from 23 to 30 September 2024. Specifically, the following variables were observed: language of the posts, linguistic correctness, use of the platform's resources (emoticons, tags, etc.), appropriateness of the lexicon (using Balearic Islands vocabulary) and whether or not the posts went viral. Twitter Advanced Search was used to compile and analyse this sample. A total of 93 tweets were analysed: 30 from IB3 and 63 from *Diari de Balears*.

Results

The first thing that drew our attention in the analysis was that the @IB3televisió account had been inactive since 2022, and therefore no post from this profile was analysed even though it was included in the search parameters. Another issue worth noting is that none of the posts garnered much online interaction. The two most viral posts were from the IB3 profile. The first one's metrics included two comments, seven retweets and forty likes, while the second one had no comments, two retweets and thirty-seven likes. That is, this initial exploratory analysis showed that the contents of the Balearic Islands media profiles generally have a low tendency to go viral.

The IB3 profile mainly promotes the channel's own contents, because it has another profile where it posts news. This means that the IB3 profile can use more of the platform's resources than the *Diari de Balears* profile, which is news-oriented. In this sense, we found that 90% of

IB3's posts had audiovisual content, 95% emoticons and approximately 80% two or more emoticons in the same post. Furthermore, all the posts had tags and links, and almost 90% primarily mentioned either one of the public entity's journalists or an artist or sports club. In *Diari de Balears*, all the posts had tags or links and all had a single emoticon at the start of the message. 70% of the posts had an image, none had a video and 40% had some mention of other users.

All the posts by both IB3 and *Diari de Balears* were in Catalan, with a high degree of linguistic correctness. However, regarding their lexicon, even though both profiles used the correct vocabulary and varieties from the Balearic Islands, the IB3 profiles tended to use these verbal and lexical forms more. Some examples are the local "Arrancam en manco d'una hora" instead of "Arranquem en menys d'una hora" and the local "Sus al programa previ" instead of "Comença el programa previ" or "Donem el tret de sortida al programa previ". These and other examples demonstrate IB3's commitment to promote the local forms from the Balearic Islands' family of dialects as long as their posts remain linguistically correct.

Conclusions and discussion

Confirming the studies by Guevara-Claramunt (2021), Tölke (2015) and Milà-Garcia and Tude-la-Isanta (2022), our research allows us to be moderately optimistic about the health of Catalan, and specifically of the Balearic Islands dialect, on the social media since there are ever more media and journalists – and influencers, like Àngel Aguiló Palou (@AngelAguiloP) – who post all or almost all their content in this dialectal variety of Catalan. Although we also found that at least the media posts seldom go viral on X, we can corroborate that these results allow us to be more optimistic about the state of Catalan in the Balearic Islands' digital sphere than the results presented in the study by Melià (2007). Future research should corroborate whether only media posts fail to go viral or whether this also occurs in posts in the Balearic Islands dialect by other types of users and content creators, like the aforementioned @AngelAguiloP and others.

Our research also confirmed the conclusions of the study by Calafat Vila (2020), given that we found that the IB3's profile on X takes particular care to adapt its content to the linguistic forms of the Balearic Islands dialect. As Calafat Vila noted in her study, this is one of the maxims of the IB3's stylebook, along with combatting the encroachment of Spanish terms among journalists on the Balearic Islands.

Our research also revealed that the IB3 profile on X has adopted the platform's stylistic and communicative resources (tags, mentions, multimedia content) more actively than the *Diari de Balears* profile, which is probably more heavily conditioned by its status as a newspaper.

Finally, future research could expand the line of study proposed by Belfiore (2016), with the variables used in this study: the language of their posts, their degree of linguistic correctness,

the use of the platform's resources (emojicons, tags, etc.), the appropriateness of the lexicon using vocabulary from the Balearic Islands and the degree to which the posts on X by Balearic Islands politicians go viral. Although this exploratory study focused on the media, it would also be interesting and revelatory to shift this analysis to the sphere of politics. Furthermore, while this study revolved around the platform X, since it is the most heavily used in journalism, future studies could analyse the use of Balearic Islands Catalan on other platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

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