

Language organization in an industrial cluster. Silent romanian immigration in the furniture cluster of Montsià (Catalunya)

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Resumen: Este estudio presenta los resultados de un proyecto de investigación sobre la integración lingüística y cultural de los rumanos en un clúster industrial de Cataluña. El trabajo de campo se ha llevado a cabo en la comarca del Montsià (una demarcación semirural del sur de Cataluña). Las empresas de muebles allí localizadas forman un clúster de empresas especializadas, complementarias e intensivas en mano de obra. La competitividad del clúster se basa en el uso de esta mano de obra extranjera (de origen rumano), que acepta unas condiciones laborales y contractuales inferiores. Aprenden el español y el catalán no porque los necesiten para la producción y el empleo, sino porque facilitan su integración en la comunidad local.

Palabras clave: Organización lingüística, clústeres industriales, inmigración rumana, lengua catalana

Abstract: This paper presents the results of a research project on the linguistic and cultural integration of Romanians in an industrial cluster in Catalonia. Fieldwork was undertaken in the area of Montsià (a semi-rural location in southern Catalonia). The furniture firms located there form a cluster of specialised, complementary and labour intensive companies. The use of a foreign labour force (Romanians) that accepts low work and employment standards is the basis of the competitiveness of the cluster. Spanish and Catalan are learnt not because of production or job requirements but because they are assets for integration in the local community.

Keywords: Language organization, Industrial clusters, Romanian Immigration, Catalan Language.

1. Introduction

This article analyses relationships amongst different linguistic groups in a local production system. We have selected a furniture industrial cluster located in Montsià, South Catalonia (Spain). According to Porter (1999), the advantage of this type of industry lies in the relatively low cost of the workforce in comparison with that of urban industrial environments. The activity of the cluster is based on practices with a mixed Fordist and artisan orientation. The level of internationalisation is low, and companies are mainly oriented towards the national market. The linguistic intensity of the production process is also low, as is the level of innovation and training. The companies are not coordinated by associations. These factors explain the tendency to hire workers with low salary aspirations. In the 1970s the managers used internal migrants and the local workforce to maintain their competitiveness but nowadays this strategy is no longer viable, partly because acceptability levels have risen. The tendency has been to hire eastern European migrants, mostly from Romania.

This framework of production practices and strategies of competitiveness, both of which focus on low costs, involves not only migration trends but also the creation of new language situations. In particular, the presence of immigrants from Romania in an industrial cluster which is strongly cohesive around local identity calls into question the importance of cultural dimensions as an element that helps «glue» together an industrial cluster. Given the hypothesis that local production systems are spaces where firms' language policies are rooted in the place, language practices are defined by rules that are implicit rather than explicit. Those rules find their legitimacy in the social climate. Our research questions are oriented towards analysing the effect of power relations amongst the different national groups involved in production processes on communicative and language practices. In particular we address the relationships amongst the main languages spoken: Catalan (the official language in Catalonia), Spanish (official language in Spain) and Romanian, the language used by most of the foreign migrants living in the area.

Our fieldwork is based on interviews (12) and focus groups (6) with members of the main groups involved in production: *a*) managers and company owners; *b*) local workers; *c*) Romanian workers. The interviews and focus groups took place in two stages, the first one in 2003 and the second one in 2007, both of which were part of wider, comparative research that delved into language changes in different types of firms (including the practices of both transnational companies and small and medium companies in the restaurant and bar sectors) (Alarcón, 2007; Solé, Alarcón, Garzón i Martínez, 2009).

The paper is divided into three parts and finishes with some concluding remarks. The first part describes the industrial tissue of the industrial cluster. The second locates the different national and language groups. The third part presents the main results of our fieldwork.

2. The industrial furniture cluster in Montsià

2.1 Theoretical framework

Before going into the specific structure of the cluster, we should first introduce the concept of industrial cluster. According to Porter (1999), a cluster is defined as a set of companies which are close to each other and operate in an associated manner in a particular sector of activity. The companies in an industrial cluster share institutional links and are productively complementary. For Becattini (1990) the notion of industrial district refers to a socioterritorial entity marked by the presence of both a group of people and a group of firms with the following characteristics: *a*) a conglomerate of companies, mostly small and medium firms, which are geographically concentrated and specialized; *b*) a set of hierarchical relationships amongst economic agents according to dynamics of information, goods and staff exchanges through market competition or other means; *c*) the relationships amongst economic agents follow a code of conduct that is sometimes explicit but often implicit and which emerges from their social medium and the predominant culture, and *d*) the support of both public and private institutions. Under this definition, an industrial district is much more than a cluster. It is a socioterritorial entity characterized by the active presence of both a community of people and a set of companies in an area which is historically determined.

The main features of industrial districts are: 1) Concentration of production and innovative activities, 2) A common social and cultural environment, 3) Organization of ties in such a way that in an industrial district informal relations are more important than formal ones.

As far as the first characteristic is concerned, we cannot qualify the furniture cluster of Montsia as a really innovative region. In fact, Porter (1999) indicates that the competitive advantage of clusters lie in the relatively low cost of the workforce, as we will see. However, we will emphasize the social dimensions which are alluded to in the literature on industrial districts.

The literature on industrial districts indicates that, unlike what happens in other environments such as industrial cities, in industrial towns community and firms tend to merge. Therefore, relationships are very different from those

in big urban locations. Clusters are specific in the way that firms are part of the economic system. A local analysis reveals the circular nature of the productive process: producing does not mean only transforming a set of inputs and outputs; it also involves social reproduction, the reproduction of human and material factors that feed the productive process (Brunet i Belzunegui, 2001).

Local environments favour the development of shared communication codes, collective values and legitimized local institutions. For Ybarra (1998: 220–223), language is just another economic factor (infrastructures, media, land) in that it enhances or limits the development of social and production relations in a community. For Beccattini (1990), industrial districts can be defined as entities with a specific identity and self consciousness. They are peripheral areas which have a strong and homogeneous social and cultural background. The members of the community share habits and customs which are appropriate to the types of economic activity that are undertaken. The homogeneity of values and norms regulates conflicts and reinforces trust, stimulating complementarity and cooperation among activities and actors. Face-to-face relationships are the basis of economic and social interaction, in contrast to the impersonal relations that are usual in bigger spaces. Local systems, then, are particular spaces that accumulate productive experiences and produce knowledge.

For the local productive fabric innovation is not so important as social cohesion, a community of ideas and shared values. Is this a real vision if we take into account the cluster's high dependency on a foreign workforce? Is a high percentage of foreign population compatible with this vision of collective values?

2.2 Description of the furniture cluster in Montsià

According to the Competitiveness Institute (2004) there are more than 3,306 firms located in industrial clusters in Catalonia. Annual benefits are around 19,467 million euros – about 15.5% of the Catalan GDP and 60% of industrial GDP – and 135,995 direct jobs are generated. With all its singularities, the Catalan economy is considerably affected by many local productive situations, such as the furniture cluster.

The cluster is popularly called the «furniture triangle», and is located in the municipalities of La Sénia, Santa Barbara and Ulldecona in Montsià. The first production chain in the furniture sector was founded in the 1940s, although it was not until the 1970s that the industry became consolidated. Nowadays, the central nucleus of the cluster is made up of about sixty family firms surrounded

by a network of suppliers, clients and services (160 companies in total). Most firms perform just a part of the process and only a few of them perform it all. Specifically, this cluster makes about 22.8% of the furniture in Catalonia.

One of the distinct traits of the firms is their orientation towards the Catalan and Spanish market. Only about 10% of the production is exported, mainly to Portugal or eastern European countries. This is conditioned by the features of production. According to our informants, in spite of the search for individual solutions to gain new segments of the market, the furniture industry in Montsià is based on a relatively low-cost type of furniture made of plywood. This makes it more difficult to access the more selective segments of the market. Most retail establishments are independent retailers with small shops, which prompts the company owners to publish industry catalogues in order to reach the final consumer with greater ease. Distribution is very fragmented and heterogeneous, and cannot adapt to consumer patterns, which means that the furniture industry is often plunged into crisis (Porter, 1999). In 2003, 1,249 of the industrial workers in the area (2,848) were employed directly in the furniture and wood industry. This means that 43.8% of industrial workers in this area work in this subsector. This figure reveals the area's high degree of specialisation (only 3.83% of industrial workers in Catalonia work in this sector). The industry also generates around 3,500 jobs in the region.

3. Linguistic and national groups

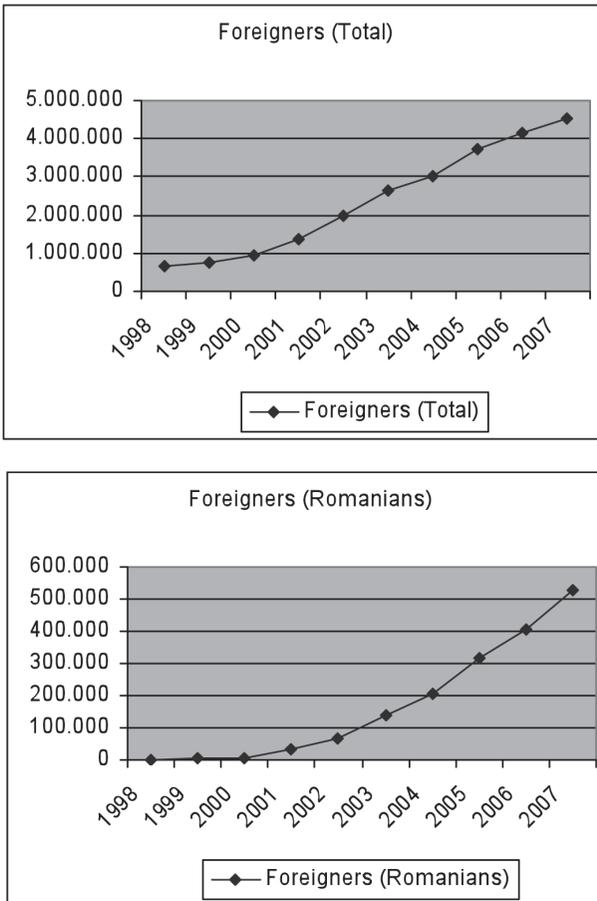
In recent years Romanians have become the main group of foreign migrants in Spain. In January 2008 there were 701,065 Romanians living in Spain (53.8% of whom were male). This remarkable growth in the Romanian population in Spain has been explained by Viruela (2006) as an effect of economic restructuring and differentials in GDP between Romania and Spain. One of the most important factors that explains the arrival of Romanians is the improved mobility throughout Europe, which was made possible by Romania's joining the Schengen area of the EU (as from 1st January 2002, they no longer required a visa to enter).

Since 2002, many Romanians have entered Spain as tourists although they were really looking for work. Many of them become irregular immigrants when they surpass the length of their stay or when they start carrying out economic activities in Spain. Controlling these «tourists-workers» is very complex for the Spanish authorities (Salt, 2005), especially in summer when Spain receives more than 50 million visitors (Tomás, 2003). Spain has assumed an active role in channelling migration flows from Romania. According to Viruela (2006),

since 2002 the Spanish government has encouraged the hiring of Romanian workers through bi-lateral agreements. However, agreements and the processes of regularisation in Spain have not managed to put a stop to many irregular migrants entering Spain from Romania. Therefore, even after Romania joined the European Union in 2007, free circulation of workers is still pending a two-year bail period, which means many Romanians still find themselves in a legal limbo in Spain.

The graph below shows the evolution of the population of Romanian origin and the total foreign population in Spain in the last ten years:

Evolution of foreign and Romanian population in Spain (1998–2007)



Source: Institut Nacional d'Estadística

Romanians are one of the most recent communities to settle in Spain and this has stimulated the development of highly peculiar settling patterns. There is a high concentration of Romanian migrants in areas of the country that have

begun to receive foreign migration in recent years. This has led the Colectivo IOE (quoted in Viruela, 2006) to speak about a «Romanisation of migration» in Spain. The population of Romanian origin in Catalonia is distributed throughout the territory, including small towns, villages and rural areas (Esparcia, 2002; Abizanda & Pinos, 2001).

Focusing on Montsià and the most important municipality in the «furniture triangle», La Sénia, we observe that the Romanians are now the first national group of foreign origin and practically quintuplicate the number of migrants from the rest of the world. In 2007 they were almost 20% of the total population. They come mainly from the Romanian region of Targoviste-Dambovita (Romania) and keep close ties with other settling areas which are relatively close, such as Castelló de la Plana (200 km south of La Sénia).

The linguistic and social composition in La Sénia and Montsià is the product of a variety of migratory waves which can be explained by the nature of the productive process and competitive strategies. During the 1970s and 1980s the factories in the town employed workers that were internal migrants from other parts of Spain. Production was based on low-quality furniture (the main material is melamine, a low-quality conglomerate). The industry required many disciplined workers who would accept very low salaries. Training was not essential at entry level. These factors keep producing nowadays with Romanians, although they have better industrial training than the internal migrants. The substitution of internal migration with Romanian migration has prompted a new situation in Catalonia as far as the geographic origin of the workforce is concerned. From 2007 onwards, in La Sénia the foreign population has surpassed the internal migrant population.

4. Language groups: perspectives, practices and strategies

4.1. Local workers

The local participants in the focus groups are both male and female, and they are all single, mainly with secondary education. They were all born in La Sénia and work in furniture firms in the area. They all have advanced knowledge of Catalan, although Catalan is the mother tongue of only two informants. In their daily life and at work they use both of the official languages of the region (Spanish and Catalan). Their fluency in foreign languages is very limited (they only admit to speaking a very basic level of English), with one exception; an informant declared

that he had studied French and Italian. However, they do not use foreign languages at work, because the official languages are the only ones required of them in their jobs.

Asked what language they valued most, local workers said that they regarded English as a «language of reference» (Nettle, 2000), a desirable and useful form of capital. This contrasts with their perception of English language as an useless asset in their professional activity. This can be attributed to the relatively low internationalization of production and the lack of linguistic intensity of the productive process. They have a high regard for English not because of its economic value but because it is a language that enables them to access resources of both a cultural, leisure and personal kind. English allows them to access a wider exchange community.

It is interesting to note that the group considers it has very limited options for properly learning a foreign language: language learning involves effort in both time and money, which they regard as incompatible with their current situation. They also consider that only some time in a foreign country can enable them to attain a good level of English. This reveals the relationship between language and class inequalities: languages are a form of capital that are useful for gaining access to important resources for social mobility. However, only a comfortable economic position (which includes the possibility of travel and the time and money to study) makes it possible to master a foreign language. Local workers consider that linguistic capital, which for them is not strictly necessary, is also very costly in economic terms. They make further clear distinctions between reading, understanding, speaking or writing the language. This is related to the different symbolic capital ascribed to the different uses of the language in the firms.

Local workers are fully aware that they occupy a privileged position in the local labour market in relation to newcomers: there exists a rigid ethnic stratification of the labour market that channels migrants to certain niches. However, they are also aware that Romanian workers may be potential competitors, even more so than other immigrant groups. Romanians are a disciplined community, with a good knowledge of foreign languages and cultural traits that are very close to the Spanish. In particular, they are a group with a strong capacity of becoming «assimilable», and it is this ease with which they integrate that makes Romanians threatening. In purely linguistic terms, the ease with which they learn local official languages makes them analogous with locals. Assimilation allows them to transcend the rigid ethnostratification of the labour market and to compete on equal terms with locals by accessing jobs that are theoretically reserved for them

(such as the public administration). It should be noted, however, that although locals notice the competition, their discourse was never xenophobic.

4.2 Local managers

The managers-owners of firms in the La Sénia cluster are a group with some language peculiarities. All of the participants in this group were middle-age males who had been born in the area and who managed medium-to-small firms (20–40 employees). Their educational level was very low, most of them being only high school graduates.

In linguistic terms, managers consider themselves to be speakers of Catalan, the most commonly used language in the family and social context. At work, the use of Catalan is combined with the presence of Spanish (which is used mostly in relationships with foreign workers and national clients) and some foreign languages (which are used with some international clients and suppliers). One interesting aspect of this is the importance of Italian as the main foreign language for this group: Italy is a country of reference in the furniture trade, making Italian a language of reference for traders in this sector (it makes it easier to communicate with others at fairs and congresses, to read specialized publications, etc).

The presence of Romanian workers mostly creates communication problems in the factories, affects social cohesion at the urban level (lodgings, saturation of rental markets, etc) or changes commercial patterns (they do not make use of the retail outlets in town). Hiring Romanians, however, is considered a good move: they are a cheap, disciplined, obedient and flexible workforce. Undoubtedly, their presence has helped to keep up the competitiveness of the sector, easing the deficit in the workforce and lowering salaries. Managers state that for small and medium enterprises adopting language policies and hiring staff with specialized language skills is very complicated, because economic costs are very high. They are not planning, therefore, any investment strategies involving language learning. Their alternative is to adopt language solutions aimed at solving specific language problems. However, none of them use the language skills of their Romanian workers to tackle the language needs of their firms. Thus, ethnic stratification (which is clear from the belief that foreign workers can only do unskilled jobs) creates a situation in which the linguistic capital of a firm goes to waste. They even give more importance than local workers to the linguistic and cultural distance amongst groups.

Here we should bear in mind that for locals, the fact that Romanians find it easy to integrate was threatening. Catalan is not attributed a great value as a mar-

ket language, although it is of considerable value in day-to-day interaction. This is especially true of a town like La Sénia where Catalan is more prevalent than in Barcelona and its metropolitan area (and where Spanish and Catalan coexist on almost equal terms). As has happened with German in multinational contexts, in La Sénia Catalan is the language endowed with symbolic value: it is the language of the elites and allows access to an important pool of resources leading to social mobility. Catalan is the language of the group that holds the economic capital, and has considerable significance in terms of identity.

4.3 Foreign workers from Romania

The arrival of Romanian workers in the Montsià area was originated by workforce shortages in the area at the beginning of the 1990s, when they began to replace the Moroccans, the predominant community in the sector up to that time. They came to the area to escape from the harsh economic conditions in their country of origin and were attracted to Spain by the employment opportunities offered by the furniture industry, their migrant networks, and the welcoming attitude of local businessmen. The participants in our focus group represent the average profile of workers in La Sénia. They are males and females, between 20 and 30 years old, and have been living in town only for a short time. Many of them are married and have children. The educational levels of our informants are high: the three women hold a university degree and the males have completed their upper secondary education. However, they all occupy positions of low-skilled workers, with relatively low salaries (around 700 euros). The ethnic stratification of the labour force essentially disqualifies the immigrant workforce, who do not have their skills recognised due to their status of non-EU foreigners. They usually manage to find work in companies by using social networks (friends and relatives). As far as languages are concerned, they have a working knowledge of Spanish and Catalan, which is correlated with the time they have been living in the area and the people with whom they have been interacting in everyday life. They realize that they have a better knowledge of Spanish than of Catalan, although they also know some of the latter. As for foreign languages, three of them state that they have a high level of English, one can speak in French and one speaks a little German (learnt at school).

The migratory projects of Romanians tend to include the option of return. Their stay in La Sénia is a strategy to accumulate economic capital so that they can return or send remittances to their relatives. They are not involved in stage

migration: they are people who migrated directly to La Sénia, mostly due to the action of migrant networks.

The educational credentials of Romanians are also devalued by the fact that their skills in foreign languages are not valued in the segment of the labour force they join as foreign workers. Speaking foreign languages is not one of the skills that is required of workers, because the activities do not require them. They are not even recognised for their knowledge of the official languages (Catalan and Spanish), at least by the company: the commands they receive are few and clear. The tasks that are required of them do not need high levels of interaction and communication amongst workers (something that does happen in the service sector). Messages are often limited to instructions on how to do certain things in the production chain: they are simple, direct and non negotiable. It is not frequent to have contact with the end client and therefore there is no need to create elaborate strategies of customer service. However, speaking the languages of production (especially in the case of Catalan) is important for them to integrate in the host society. So, the economic value of languages is not what defines them, but rather their nature as facilitators of socio-cultural integration.

The strategies of linguistic investment in Romania (foreign language learning) are conditioned by the people's will to migrate in the face of an unfavourable political and economic climate. The possibility of migrating is always open and does not depend on them but rather on structural factors that are external. They know that their language is spoken by a minority and therefore they know they must rely on their knowledge of other languages.

Figure 1: Sources of value of languages according to community

	<i>Locals</i>	<i>Immigrants</i>
Value of language	Identity Hierarchy	
Labour market	Local	International
Source of value	Community	
Opinion on EU and free movement of workers	Indifferent. Frontier control.	Opportunity. Not included
Mobility strategies	No mobility	Long term and long distance migration
Perception of language as capital	No	Disqualification of migrant

Source: author

Although they are conscious of the importance Catalan has for their integration in the community and their access to resources, they question the value of a linguistic investment in Catalan, particularly if they do not plan to stay long in La Sénia and prefer to move to other parts of Spain. Catalan is necessary only in Catalonia, and, therefore, is an important investment only if they remain in La Sénia. In other parts of Spain these workers perceive that Catalan would not be valuable linguistic capital. In fact, in Catalonia Romanians perceive that they are obliged to learn Catalan against their will.

4.4 Languages from the corporate perspective

In the context of the production chain we observe that both Spanish and Catalan are valued as useful languages not only in the relationship between managers and workers but also among workers. The situation of Spanish is hegemonic in commercial relations with other business and providers across Spain. Although Spanish may have a function in the execution of production and in relationships with costumers, it is excluded from the elements that make up valuable social capital in aspects such as labour promotion. The use of official languages in general, and of Catalan in particular, is seen as an important symbolic capital regarding the role of confidence for the strengthening of the exchange community.

Last but not least, a language is silenced in the productive process: the language of newcomers to the labour market in Montsià and the daily life of the region, mainly Romanians who are clearly subordinate to general patterns of ethnic stratification in the labour market. This subordination transfers from the social to the economic and back. There are no formal associations of Romanian citizens in the area. They have no formal or informal representatives in front of managers. Language is silenced because these workers limit themselves to obeying clear and simple orders, which are unambiguous and require no interpreting. In the average working day the fact that these workers are needed is not recognised. In fact, the language skills that the immigrant population might bring, especially foreign migration, are undervalued. In general, there is a lack of trust, values and shared norms.

The language diversity of the cluster creates two main problems: 1) It makes it difficult not only to export but also to establish networks of cooperation in Europe, or even in Spain. In fact, in the furniture cluster the command of foreign languages is very low. There is no tradition, for example, of hiring workers from other EU countries in the production plants; the furniture sector has considerable difficulty in exporting to Europe. 2) It alters the cultural and linguistic bases that were thought to be homogeneous and key to competitiveness.

As for internationalisation, very limited and occasional actions are taken in foreign markets, mostly in the retail area. In fact, most of the furniture industry in La Sénia also manufactures parts for other furniture companies. This is why the languages in the workplace are mainly Spanish and Catalan. Local businessmen rarely participate in social and commercial relations with foreign countries and, generally speaking, they have an almost non-existent knowledge of the contact languages. The area, and therefore the local businessmen, is outside the «circuit» (disconnected) and the language use and diversity of the companies in Barcelona and its metropolitan area cannot be found here.

Figure 2: Features of the language policy in the local production system

Language of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Languages of the local community ♦ Languages of the immigrant workforce
Origin of the exchange value of languages	♦ Community and productive environment
Origin of the use value of languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Access and promotion ♦ Belonging to a linguistic group
Staff	Monolingual: Managers and locals Bilingual: Immigrant workers
Extension of specific language functions (translation, customer service, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Absence of specific language functions ♦ Externalisation of functions in the face of language needs
Language of power/ identity	Local language
Importance of language capital for:	
♦ Hiring	Very low
♦ Coordination	Low
♦ Promotion	Very high
♦ Production	Low
Language policies of the company	Implicit and informal
Presence of Catalan	High

Source: author

The arrival of Romanian workers considerably widens the scope of the linguistic capital in the area. It also gives managers more options. Even so, despite the fact that they are very skilled workers and their knowledge of foreign languages is much superior to that of the locals, they are relegated to manual tasks, in which communicative abilities do not play a decisive role and their linguistic capital goes largely unused. In fact, Romanian workers describe their job as a «silent job» and seldom speak. They often limit themselves to executing their managers' commands. Teamwork, which would make the communication and

linguistic skills of those people more necessary, is non-existent in production plants in the La Sénia furniture cluster.

Romanian workers point out that they have never participated in collective bargaining. There is a strong segmentation between the local managers and workers, who can speak Catalan, and the Romanians who keep their language for their group relations. There is a key identification with the official language, giving rise to social closure.

Among managers it is commonly perceived that working with eastern Europeans is more straightforward than working with locals, because the former are a less problematic workforce. The person who pointed this out was a 50-year-old manager, which suggests that it is the older managers, the ones who have spent their hierarchical careers in a traditional Fordist economy, who prefer workers from countries where this production model is predominant to the more skilled local workforce, who are more reluctant to be managed in an authoritarian way.

From a corporate perspective, the language problems of this industrial cluster derive more from the difficulties of integrating the local workforce (as is the case of the Romanians) than from establishing cooperation networks based on trust with other clusters or distribution companies at the international level.

5. Conclusions

In endogenous models rooted in the environment, language has two functions: 1) it is a means of communication and 2) it transmits values, codes, knowledge, ethics and economic skills. From this perspective, Catalan serves all the functions hegemonically. It is the language of relationship between local institutions and businessmen and the language in which companies manage their economies. It is also the language of greatest symbolic value.

In the furniture cluster, the strategy for internationalisation is limited. This is because local businessmen have little linguistic capital and keep their distance from the international commercial circuits. The cluster is disconnected from the main urban areas of Catalonia, which are endowed with a certain social atmosphere. The competitive strategy of the cluster is based on keeping labour costs low, and it is this that has helped to maintain an important inflow of migration from workers from Eastern Europe.

The language scenario is characterised by a strong hierarchy that gives Catalan a central position in both economic relations and daily life. The Catalan community monopolizes positions of power, in companies and society at large and it is the language shared by businessmen in the area and the local community.

Managers are recruited from within the Catalan language community, not on the basis of merit but on the basis of the trust relationships in the group. Access to other resources is limited to those who belong to a particular language group.

The second most important group is that of the Romanian migrants. This group of workers forms the basis of the company. The language spoken by immigrants does not have any symbolic recognition or valuation in the workplace (Heller, 2010; Cohen, 2009). The tasks they have to do are simple and do not require any type of communication skills, so they are not asked to have any particular linguistic capital. The importance of linguistic capital in the selection of personnel is minimal. However, they are highly trained workers with an important foreign-language capital. Their status as migrants and the fact that they belong to the lowest strata in the productive structure leads the local businessmen not to value training, which brings about an important waste of linguistic capital. Language acquires key importance in the context of daily life. Even though the ability to speak Spanish ensures basic interaction with the community, knowledge of Catalan is indispensable if workers are to integrate in the community. Not only that, a knowledge of Catalan is also essential to attain recognition from the community and access to certain resources (such as new employment opportunities outside the furniture industry and La Sénia). Therefore, learning Catalan may be the first step to finding a job in another area or location in La Sénia.

It should be pointed out is that the instructions and communications between middle managers and the Romanian workers are given in Spanish. This means that languages are segmented according to their rank in the organisation just as they are in multinational ethnocentric companies. Catalan, then, becomes the language of power and prestige, Spanish is the language of work, and the language of the migrants is marginalized.

This model reinforces language divisions as a mechanism for segmenting the resources in the local productive system. The members of the dominant linguistic group, Catalan, have privileged access to the companies' networks, knowledge and property. This is precisely what it is impossible for the Romanian community.

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