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### Attitude and assertiveness in the classroom in the use of spoken Catalan

Actitud y asertividad en el aula  
en el uso de la lengua catalana  
oral

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**Attitude and assertiveness in the classroom  
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**Actitud y asertividad en el aula en el uso de la lengua catalana oral**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research analyses attitude and assertiveness in the use of spoken Catalan in the classroom by 44 Primary Education undergraduates from the University of Barcelona and the Rovira i Virgili University during their teaching practice in 34 schools the academic year 2021–2022. Quantitative and qualitative data were compared to determine the results of training in language assertiveness during the teaching practice, using an observation questionnaire completed by the school tutors before (Q1) and after the training (Q2). Quantitatively, there is a statistically significant difference between Q2 and Q1 in two of the four dimensions studied: the frequency with which Catalan is used and the language competence of the trainee teachers. Qualitatively, we analysed the strategies these trainees used to foster the use of Catalan in class: in Q2, we observe an increase in the more assertive strategies and a decrease in the less assertive ones.

**KEYWORDS**

LANGUAGE ATTITUDE, ASSERTIVENESS, PRIMARY EDUCATION, CATALAN, TEACHING PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

**RESUMEN**

Analizamos la actitud y la asertividad en el uso del catalán oral que muestran en el aula 44 alumnos del grado de Educación Primaria de la Universidad de Barcelona y de la Universidad Rovira i Virgili durante las prácticas de 2021-2022, en 34 escuelas. Se comparan datos cuantitativos y cualitativos de una acción formativa sobre asertividad lingüística, gracias a un cuestionario de observación que cumplimentaron dos veces los tutores de los centros educativos: antes de la acción formativa (Q1) y después (Q2). Cuantitativamente, existe una diferencia estadísticamente significativa entre el Q2 respecto al Q1 en dos de las cuatro dimensiones que hemos estudiado: la frecuencia de uso de la lengua catalana y la competencia lingüística de los futuros maestros. Cualitativamente, se analizan las estrategias que estos alumnos utilizan en el aula para fomentar el uso del catalán: se observa un aumento en el Q2 de las estrategias más asertivas y una disminución de las menos asertivas.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

ACTITUD LINGÜÍSTICA, ASERTIVIDAD, EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA, LENGUA CATALANA, PRÁCTICAS EN ESCUELAS

## INTRODUCTION

This study is part of a wider inter-university project entitled *Diagnosis, assessment and improvement of language competence in Catalan in initial training for primary and secondary teachers*.

The paper analyses the attitude and assertiveness in the use of spoken Catalan displayed by students on the degree in Primary Education in the academic year 2021-2022 during one of their periods of teaching practice in schools. The participants were third-year students at the Universitat de Barcelona (UB) and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), with the cooperation of their teaching practice tutors at the different schools. The study sets out from an initial diagnosis of the attitudes displayed by the trainee teachers in this area and analyses the results of a training session aiming to equip them with effective tools to help them improve their teaching of Catalan in an assertive way.

They are students in the final year of their degree, for which reason they often show increasing interest in putting the knowledge they have acquired at the university to use in the classroom. Their desire to work professionally and effectively often clashes with a certain insecurity due to their lack of experience. The teaching practice period in a school is therefore a chance to experiment with educational strategies that may be useful in their future career.

We will focus on the trainee teachers' use of Catalan in their teaching practice in primary classrooms, Catalan being the vehicular language in schools in a region with two co-official languages (Catalan and Spanish) and a complex sociolinguistic situation. In this context, it is essential for teachers to behave assertively, allowing them to express themselves systematically in Catalan without attacking or manipulating their interlocutors (Suay, 2022). The need for trainee teachers to acquire an assertive attitude to foster the use of Catalan at school is crucial if the aim is to generate engagement with the language and prevent rejection among primary pupils, especially those who do not habitually speak Catalan. Beyond the school environment, language assertiveness in any context is essential in the current sociolinguistic circumstances of Catalan (Suay & Sanginés, 2010).

Assertiveness, according to Wolpe (1958), the first to define it, is the open expression of friendship, affection and other non-anxious feelings. The term has since been developed and nuanced by many authors, including Lazarus (1971), Galassi et al. (1974), Alberti & Emmons (1978, 2017), Schuler (1998), Gismeno (2000), Güell (2005) and Bach & Forés (2008), among others.

For Galassi et al. (1974), an assertive individual is expressive, spontaneous, secure and able to influence and guide others. For Alberti & Emmons (1978), an assertive person communicates openly, without undue anxiety. Some years later, in 2017, they insisted on the importance of non-verbal language—tone, inflection and volume—in being assertive. According to Schuler (1998), assertiveness is based on respect for one's own convictions without wishing to impose them on others.

Assertiveness is an effective tool as a communicative model, as it fosters collaborative learning and at the same time allows the development of a state of confidence and security throughout the learning process (Quiñonez & Moyano, 2019). Gismeno (2000) considers assertive behaviour to be a set of learned skills that an individual deploys in an interpersonal situation, skills that are specific and may or may not be used in a particular situation depending on personal variables, environmental factors, and the interaction between both of them. Bishop (2000) adds that being assertive means being able to express oneself with security, without having to fall back on passive, aggressive or manipulative behaviour, and at the same time it is necessary to know how to listen and respond to others' needs without losing sight of one's own interests.

Assertive behaviour covers what is said and how it is said, i.e. both verbal and non-verbal forms: expression, gesture, tone of voice, attitude and so on. It involves respect for the other person and is a skill related to communication (Güell, 2005). As Serrano (2003) states, the person with the best communication skills is one who knows how to listen well, who listens with their eyes and their whole body.

According to Güell (2005), assertiveness is not a character, personality or genetic trait, but simply a behaviour that is learnt through a multitude of socialising factors from birth to adulthood. Nevertheless, he considers that it can also be learnt as a behaviour in adulthood.

Bach & Forés (2008) broaden the term, considering that assertive communication is made up of many languages, both verbal and non-verbal, while always respecting the other person and oneself. Assertiveness aims at effective and affective communication at the same time, and is related to the ability to generate pleasant feelings and practise essential values like empathy and respect, among others. A person with empathy, according to Serrano (2012), communicates well as they are able to generate positive attitudes in others. Non-verbal communication is a strategic tool and we have to use it because its effects are extraordinary.

After describing the scope of our research and what we understand by assertiveness, we go on to describe what research tools and methodology were used in the study and then we present and discuss the results of the research. We end the paper with some conclusions, before listing the bibliographical references and an annex with details of the questionnaire we used.

## RESEARCH TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY

From September 2021 to January 2022 a pilot trial was conducted with 23 students from the simultaneous path in Pre-primary Education and Primary Education at the UB Faculty of Education, doing teaching practice in 15 schools, in order to validate the data collection tools and the workshops outlined below. From January to June 2022 the project was executed with third-year students on the degree in Primary Education who were doing teaching practice, 22 students from the UB Faculty of Education at 15 schools and 22 students from the EYV Faculty of Education and Psychology at 19 schools. We, therefore, set out with a sample of 44 students doing teaching practice, spread over 34 different schools.

The study began with two prior steps. First, the teaching practice tutors at both universities and the schools where the practice was going to take place were contacted to explain the project and were asked for their collaboration: the response received

was highly positive. Second, sessions were run to explain the project to the students who were going to take part, one at the UB and the other at the URV.

Next, we arranged with the tutors at the schools for them to observe how their trainees used spoken Catalan at different points during their teaching practice period. The aim of the observation was for the tutors to answer some very brief questions in a questionnaire on attitude and assertiveness in relation to Catalan (cf. Annex). The first observation served to conduct an initial diagnosis of the trainee teachers' attitude in the classroom during their teaching practice.

At this point we ran a training session for the degree students in the respective faculties, in the form of a two-hour workshop on assertive strategies to foster the use of spontaneous spoken Catalan in the primary classroom. To make the workshops dynamic and participatory, we divided the students into smaller groups (three at the UB and three at the URV), with a trainer specialised in assertive strategies running each session.

In the workshops, on the basis of questions and case studies presented in the classroom, there was critical analysis and discussion of what teachers generally do, how they do it and why they do it when a pupil does not speak Catalan in class, with the aim of providing strategies to be active, assertive educators and to start applying these in their teaching practice.

Finally, after six weeks in which the degree students were able to use different strategies in the classroom during their teaching practice, the tutors repeated the questionnaire on attitude and assertiveness to determine any development in the trainee teachers through a quantitative study.

From a qualitative angle, the strategies and examples noted down by the teachers were analysed, both in the first questionnaire (Q1) and in the second (Q2), with regard to the students' use of these strategies in the classroom. Dimension 4 of the questionnaire, entitled "Use of Strategies", consists of two items (8 and 9). In the first, the tutor at the school had to indicate whether the trainee primary teacher doing their practice had used effective strategies to encourage the use of Catalan in the classroom. In the second whether they had used them to keep up the use of Catalan when a pupil switched to communicating in Spanish. In each question in dimension 4, they could choose from five possible options: "many", "some", "few", "very few" or "none". And finally, in dimension 5, if they had marked "a lot" or "some" in 4, they were asked to illustrate this with some examples. The following are some of the examples recorded: "They ask the child to make an effort or say they can help them"; "They always address the students in Catalan, and ask them to answer in Catalan if it is the Catalan lesson"; "They repeat what the student says in Catalan to check the information and encourage them to express themselves in Catalan as a process in their learning of the language".

To carry out a qualitative analysis of the comments and examples of assertiveness strategies in spoken language used by the trainees in the classroom (dimension 5), we classified them in order from most assertive (1) to least (6), and excluded the responses that were not useful to us because they did not reflect aspects related to assertiveness. This, we established a total of six categories of assertiveness:

1. Continuing the conversation in Catalan without correcting (in some cases, helping the pupil through a strategy or encouraging them to speak in Catalan).

2. Making the pupil think in order to say the same thing but in Catalan (in some cases, encouraging them to speak in Catalan).
3. Indicating or repeating how to say it in Catalan (in some cases, encouraging the pupil to speak in Catalan).
4. Pretending not to understand.
5. Asking them to answer in Catalan.
6. Correcting the pupil (reminding them that it is a Catalan class).

It should be pointed out that the responses obtained and classified from the pilot trial run beforehand at the UB were passed on to an outside reviser to validate the classification and the scale. The outside reviser was trained in how to classify responses and then codified all the responses individually. To compare the two codifications, the level of coincidence was calculated, giving a high degree of reliability (Cohen’s Kappa = 0.878). This result confirms the internal consistency of the classification.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following analysis and discussion of the results is from both quantitative and qualitative points of view.

### Quantitative data

Table 1 sums up the proportions of frequency of responses gathered for each of the 9 items in the questionnaire (cf. Annex) at both the times it was completed (Q1 and Q2). From a descriptive point of view, a clearly uneven distribution can be seen between the values on the Likert scale in the questionnaire, as most of the responses are concentrated in the first two values (1 and 2), while the presence of the options in the last two values (3 and 4) is minimal. While the proportions in the responses are highly similar between the items in Q1 and Q2, items 4, 6 and 7 display a tendency towards a more unequal use of the options for response 1 and 2 in Q2.

Time	Dimension	Item	Responses			
			1	2	3	4
Q1	dimension 1	item 1	.93	.06	.01	--
		item 2	.96	.03	.01	--
		item 3	.83	.16	.01	--
	dimension 2	item 4	.91	.08	.01	--
		item 5	.81	.18	.01	--
	dimension 3	item 6	.83	.16	.01	--
		item 7	.74	.25	.01	--
	dimension 4	item 8	.48	.31	.18	.03
		item 9	.46	.35	.16	.03
Q2	dimension 1	item 1	.91	.09	--	--
		item 2	.97	.03	--	--
		item 3	.84	.16	--	--
	dimension 2	item 4	.88	.12	--	--
		item 5	.81	.19	--	--
	dimension 3	item 6	.76	.24	--	--
		item 7	.65	.35	--	--
	dimension 4	item 8	.46	.35	.18	.01

		item 9	.43	.41	.15	.01
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Table 1. Proportions of frequency of responses for items according to when the data was collected

For qualitative analysis of the responses obtained from the questionnaires, four generalised mixed ordinal regression models were prepared for responses on the Likert scale, one for each set of items concerning each of the dimensions that make up the structure of the questionnaire (i. e. attitude, frequency of use, language competence and use of strategies). A cumulative link mixed model was fitted to the data using *clmm* function from the *ordinal* statistical package (Christensen, 2023) in the R environment. The random effect structure in each model includes random intercepts by participant and by item.

To avoid a possible scale effect, a necessary condition used to fit proportional odds models, participants’ responses were converted to z-scores. Each model was constructed by including the time variable (2 levels: before the intervention and after) as a fixed effect; the random effect structure includes random intercepts by participants and random slopes for time by participant. We instructed that the questionnaire should be filled out before the training session (the workshop on assertive strategies) Q1, and that after the session Q2.

With regard to the time, this is not a significant predictor either of responses related to assertive attitude or dimension 1 ( $b = -0.34$ ,  $SE = 1.19$ ,  $p > 0.5$ ,  $95\%CI[-2.68,1.98]$ ) or to responses related to the use of strategies or dimension 4 ( $b = 0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.36$ ,  $p > 0.5$ ,  $95\%CI[-0.69,0.75]$ ). In the case of frequency of use or dimension 2, the time does lead to a significant increase in the probability of increasing the top rating in the scale ( $b = 0.86$ ,  $SE = 0.002$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $95\%CI[0.85,0.86]$ ) and also with regard to language competence or dimension 3 ( $b = 0.63$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $95\%CI[0.62,0.63]$ ).

In Figure 1 it can be seen that for the items related to dimension 2 or frequency of use (item 4 and item 5), going from Q1 to Q2 in item 4 (“Frequency of use of Catalan as the vehicular language in class”) reveals an increase in the responses for value 2 (practically always). The same trend is recorded in the responses to item 5 (“Frequency of use of Catalan as the vehicular language in the playground”), where value 3 (often) disappears and value 2 (practically always) is generalised.

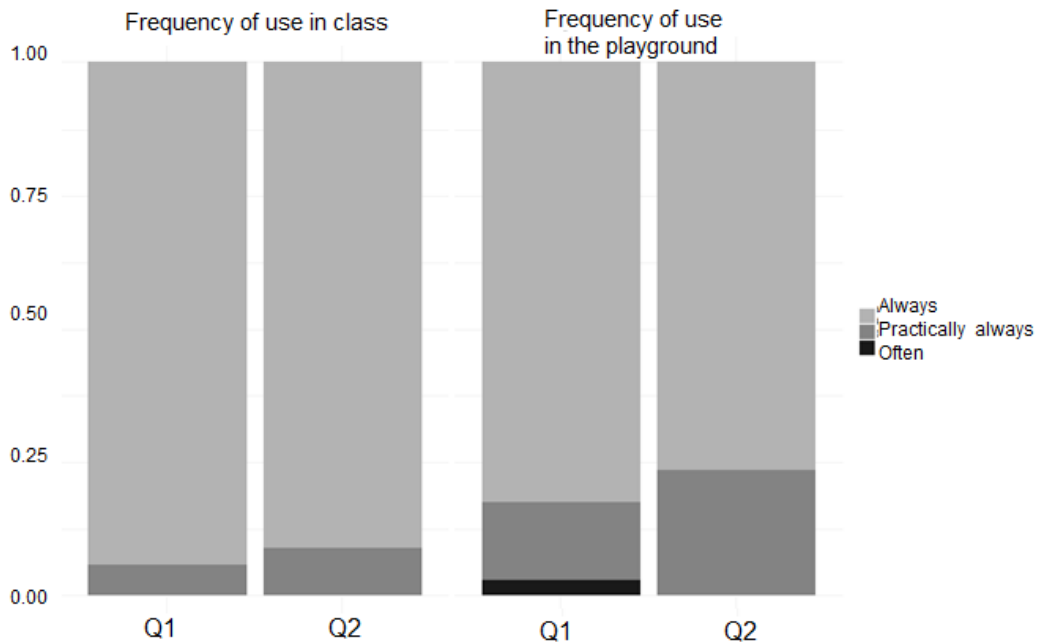


Figure 1. Frequency of use of Catalan as the vehicular language in class and in the playground in Q1 and Q2

Figure 2 analyses the dimension related to language competence (dimension 3); in particular the second item or item 7 (“Correctness in spontaneous spoken Catalan”) is the one that changes the most between the two questionnaires in terms of the distribution of responses on the scale. Q2, after the training session, shows more responses with value 2 (good), while value 3 (average) disappears. Item 6 on oral fluency shows that the proportion of responses choosing value 1 (very good) increases slightly from Q1 to Q2.

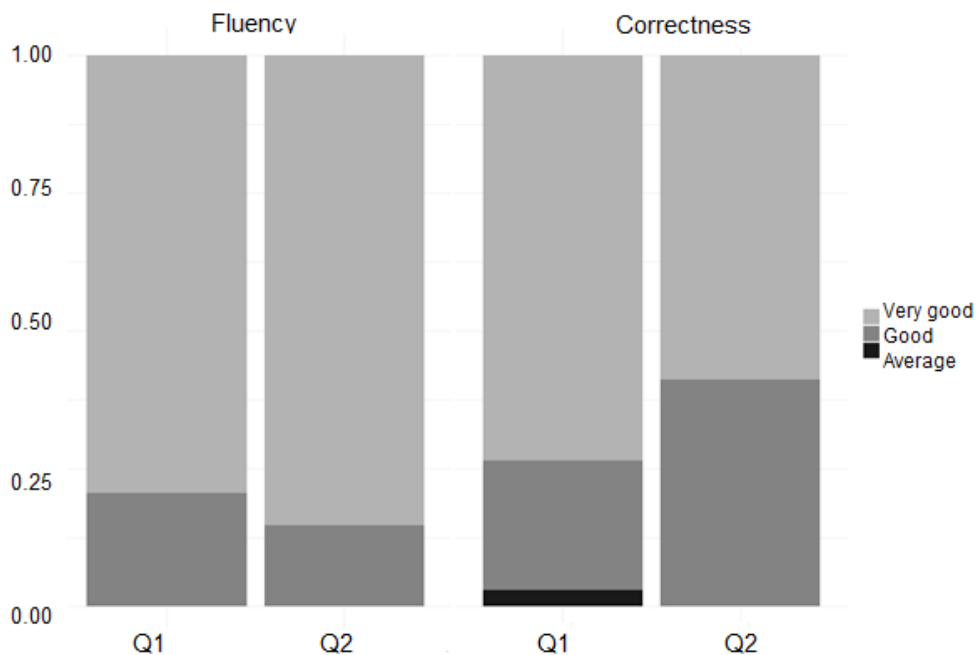


Figure 2. Language competence in Q1 and Q2



### Qualitative data

Next, we analyse the different examples and comments on assertiveness strategies in spoken language noted down by the tutors at the schools in dimension 5 of the prior questionnaire (Q1) and the subsequent one (Q2).

On the basis of the classification we have established for the six assertiveness strategies, we consider there are two blocks. On the one hand, the first block includes the most assertive responses, from 1 to 3, where the trainee teacher does not switch language, encourages the pupil to speak in Catalan, makes them think and often gives them the correct model. On the other, the second block, from 4 to 6, includes the least assertive responses, as when a trainee teacher says they do not understand a pupil in the classroom this is often misinterpreted because the pupil may think about what they said and not in which language they said it, and when they are asked to answer in Catalan or are corrected, they are being told they are doing it wrong. They do not encourage them but comment on it through an indirect discourse.

With regard to the first questionnaire (Q1), 32 comments were recorded, 21 in the first block and 11 in the second. In the first block, with more assertive strategies, there were 13 comments on strategy 1, of continuing the conversation in Catalan without correcting (in some cases helping the pupil through a strategy or encouraging them to speak in Catalan).

Examples of strategy 1:

Where situations arose of pupils switching language, they were not corrected with regard to the error, but subliminally, continuing their thread in Catalan so that the pupil did not feel individually criticised.

In any conversation, explanation, conflict resolution and so on, the student teacher uses Catalan to foster communication, a strategy for reasoning and conversing. When a child speaks to her in Spanish, she automatically speaks in Catalan to act as a model of this language for the child.

There were 5 comments on the strategy of making the pupil think in order to say the same thing but in Catalan (in some cases, encouraging them to speak in Catalan).

Examples of strategy 2:

They are asked what the answer they gave in Spanish would be in Catalan (less so in Spanish lessons).

For example, if the pupil switches from Catalan to Spanish, as a game they are asked, “How do you want to say that? I did not understand, did you mean...?” to redirect and encourage the pupil to carry on in Catalan.

And 3 comments on strategy 3, of indicating or repeating how to say it in Catalan (in some cases, encouraging the pupil to speak in Catalan).

Example of strategy 3:

Reformulating in Catalan what the pupil says, and continuing the conversation in this language.

In the second block, which includes less assertive strategies, 4 comments were recorded on strategy 4, pretending not to understand.

Example of strategy 4:

Using ironic expressions like, “I don’t understand what you’re saying, I’m wearing my Catalan ear today”.

There were 2 comments on strategy 5, of asking them to answer in Catalan.

Example of strategy 5:

They often ask a pupil to answer in Catalan; this seems violent if you don't have the practice.

And finally, 5 on strategy 6, of correcting the pupil (reminding them that it is a Catalan class).

Example of strategy 6:

Correcting in the event of language interferences, reminding pupils that the activity is being done in Catalan.

We would highlight two aspects of the first questionnaire (Q1). On the one hand, there are more comments on the more assertive strategies, those in the first block, than on those in the second, less assertive block. And on the other, before running the workshop there were a large number of trainees already using the strategy we considered more assertive.

The second questionnaire (Q2) was completed six weeks after the trainees had attended the two-hour workshop. In Q2 the number of comments made by tutors at the school had risen to 38, 35 on the first block and 3 on the second block. In the first block, with more assertive strategies, there were 15 responses for strategy 1.

Examples of strategy 1:

Always using Catalan as the vehicular language, but at the same time respecting and helping pupils who are Spanish-speaking newcomers, giving them time to adapt and not forcing those who still have difficulty with Catalan or do not understand it; personally, this seems to me to be a very correct approach. She therefore keeps using Catalan, but without forcing or obliging the pupil, giving due time to adapt.

When a child answers in Spanish she repeats the answer in Catalan as feedback. She repeats it in different ways in Catalan using synonyms or using gestures to aid comprehension.

She does not switch language and the child returns to Catalan.

There were 5 comments on strategy 2.

Examples of strategy 2:

If the children ask her something in Spanish, she makes them reformulate it in Catalan so that they can practise and realise/remember that Catalan is the vehicular language of the school.

The student has sometimes found that children address him in Spanish and he first carries on talking to them in Catalan and then invites them to find a way of saying it in Catalan, either through synonyms of the word they are looking for or by giving them clues so that they can work it out.

And finally, 15 on strategy 3.

Examples of strategy 3:

When they say something incorrect or Spanish-influenced, she corrects the word by saying it properly and the pupil realises they have made a mistake but in a natural way (without saying, "You got it wrong," or "You don't say it like that").

In class, pupils are addressed in Catalan at all times and if any pupil does not know a word or does not know how to say it, they are provided with it and asked to repeat it, and they are helped to use it in class, if necessary.

They use repetition in the correct format without directly correcting, for example: "It's *sèrio...*", "I think it's a *serious* matter [Catalan response translated into English].

In the second block of less assertive strategies, there was no response for strategy 4, the one pretending not to understand what the pupil is saying. And only one comment on strategy 5.

Example of strategy 5:

When a pupil addresses them in Spanish they ask them to do so in Catalan and help them.

And 2 comments were recorded for strategy 6:

Examples of strategy 6:

They are reminded that this is a class in Catalan.

They are asked to return to the vehicular language.

Table 2 sums up the proportions of the types of strategy according to the comments made by tutors at the schools in dimension 5 of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire	More assertive strategies (first block)			Less assertive strategies (second block)		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q1 (n = 32)	.41	.16	.10	.12	.05	.16
Q2 (n = 38)	.39	.13	.39	--	.03	.06

Table 2. Proportions of types of comment in Q1 and Q2 regarding the strategies used

It can be seen that in the second questionnaire, on the one hand the number of less assertive strategies in the second block has fallen a lot, especially number 4 (pretending not to understand), as pupils often interpret that their answer is not right, not that they have said it in Spanish rather than in Catalan. And on the other, the use of the more assertive strategies in the first block has risen, especially number 3, which consists of indicating or repeating how to say it in Catalan, and in some cases, encouraging the pupil to speak in Catalan.

To determine whether a relationship actually exists between the distribution of responses and when they were recorded, a test of independence was conducted. Because of the sample size, we carried out a chi-squared test with Monte Carlo simulation ( $B = 10000$ ). The results indicate that there is a strong, statistically significant difference in the distributions of different types of comments between the first and the second time ( $X^2 = 18.82$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $V = 0.45$ ). The examination of residuals shows a significant difference between observed and expected values for the amount of comment 3 ( $Z_{res} = -1.97$ ) between the first (10%) and second questionnaires (39%).

It is worth highlighting the importance of pupils having the model in Catalan to be able to imitate it and make them feel more secure when speaking in Catalan: it gives them security and encourages them to try it.

Therefore, with regard to the most assertive strategies, we highlight the importance of reinforcing the positive ones for pupils to assimilate the message gradually. It is not a matter of convincing, but of inviting people to speak Catalan. Moreover, it is important to make comments in the right place, at the right time and in the right words, with the right intonation and due respect. In general, teachers must make an

effort to thank, praise or congratulate pupils that get it right. Also, if assertive strategies are used more, pupils benefit from them in two ways: firstly, they are given a feeling of well-being, and secondly, it enables them to achieve significant social rewards.

With regard to the less assertive strategies, if the teacher tells the pupil they are mistaken or have got it wrong, with expressions like, “You don’t say it like that,” or “What you’ve said isn’t right,” the pupil may feel criticised and react with an attitude rejecting learning. They are strategies involving a certain degree of aggression that hinder and obstruct any inclination to use Catalan, because the teacher places all the burden on the pupil’s shoulders, instead of taking their own responsibility. On the other hand, if the teacher is able to supply the pupil with the model in a positive way, properly expressed, they open their channel for communication. For the teacher to communicate more effectively, they must express what they want or what they would like, rather than what they do not want. It is always more effective to speak positively. In Catalonia students wishing to be admitted to the degree course in Primary Education (and also Pre-primary Education) must take two tests before entering the university: the PAU (university entrance examinations) and PAP (teaching aptitude examinations). It should be born in mind that neither of these tests assesses spoken language, even though it is the most necessary, and most used by teachers in their everyday work, as well as their responsibility for developing their pupils’ language competence. Therefore, there are not tests that assure trainee teachers’ mastery of spoken language, even though they cannot do their everyday job properly without it. If in addition to this their attitude or assertiveness to transmit and boost the use of Catalan is not appropriate, they are unlikely to ensure pupils learn properly. Therefore, bearing in mind the results of this study, running workshops and training in the use of assertive strategies in the classroom may be a good option in training future teachers, to boost their ability to have a positive influence on their pupils’ use of Catalan.

Furthermore, through the meetings with tutors at the university and in the schools, we realised that the training had also had a direct influence on them. Firstly, the tutors at the university who attended the workshop and were not language specialists were more aware that they had to think about their Primary Education trainees’ attitude and assertiveness. Secondly, the tutors at the schools, who had to consider and respond to the items in the questionnaires, discovered some new assertiveness strategies used by the trainee teachers, and at the same time both tutors and students reflected together about the strategies both groups used, each tutor in a school with their student doing teaching practice.

Despite the results of this study, one must be aware that being an assertive person requires a learning process, a constant effort to gain confidence and end up realising that assertiveness is part of one’s professional baggage. It must be learnt because there is no single “solution” for every situation; it will depend on the context and a teacher needs to be able to adapt to this. However, we believe that we have taken a first step towards an improvement in teaching, both for Primary Education student teachers and their tutors at the university and in schools.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study we analyse the attitude and assertiveness in the use of spoken Catalan displayed in the classroom by 44 students on the degree in Primary Education at the

Universitat de Barcelona and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili during their teaching practice in the academic year 2021–2022, distributed around 34 schools. At one point during their teaching practice the trainees attended a two-hour workshop in small groups to work on their ability to teach Catalan in an assertive way. An observation questionnaire filled in twice by the tutors in the schools, once before the workshop (Q1) and again after it (Q2), was used to assess the effect of this training on trainees, with quantitative and qualitative data.

With regard to the analysis of the quantitative data, the statistical differences between Q1 and Q2 were assessed in each of the four dimensions included in the questionnaire: assertive attitude, frequency of use of the language, language competence and use of strategies. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of the responses in Q2 compared to Q1 in terms of the dimensions related to the frequency of use of the language (dimension 2) and to language competence (dimension 3). On the other hand, the difference is not significant in the dimensions related to assertive attitude (dimension 1) and the use of strategies (dimension 4).

The presence of use of strategies (dimension 4) shows no significant evolution overall, considering the total number of strategies used in both questionnaires. However, the questionnaire included a final section (dimension 5) for the tutors at the schools to enter comments on the strategies used by the trainee teachers. This enabled us to conduct a closer analysis of their use of strategies on the basis of qualitative data, by comparing the comments and the types of strategies in Q1 with those in Q2. After classifying these strategies into six broad types, from most assertive to least assertive, there was a clear increase in Q2 in the more assertive strategies and a reduction in the less assertive ones.

With these data it can be concluded that the training session the student teachers attended, even though it only lasted two hours, achieved its goal, which was to improve their attitude and assertiveness in the classroom in the use of spoken Catalan during the teaching practice on their degree in Primary Education. We suppose that if the training lasted longer the results would be even more positive.

On the basis of the results of this research, future work could pursue it with a larger number of participants and more comprehensive training. Furthermore, including a sociolinguistic questionnaire addressed to Primary Education students would allow a comparative analysis of the use of assertiveness strategies among students in different sociolinguistic circumstances. It would also be worth assessing assertiveness by using recordings of teaching practice sessions to analyse trainee teachers' non-verbal language (expression, tone, speed, intensity, gesture and so on), to determine whether their spoken and non-verbal languages match.

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#### DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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## ANNEX

### *Questionnaire on attitude and assertiveness in the use of spontaneous spoken language*

After asking for consent to take part in the project and personal details (full name of the tutor at the school, email address, school where teaching practice is done, full name of the trainee teacher), the questionnaire consists of the questions listed below.

#### Dimension 1. Assertive attitude

Items	Values				
	A lot	Often	Sometimes	Not much	Not at all
1. Predisposition to use Catalan as the regular language in the classroom.					
2. Positive personal attitude towards Catalan at school.					
3. Assertive attitude when addressing children. (Assertiveness is the appropriate expression of one’s emotions in social relations, without aggressiveness or anxiety.)					

#### Dimension 2. Frequency of use of the language

Items	Values				
	Always	Practically always	Often	Sometimes	Never
4. Frequency of use of Catalan as the vehicular language in class.					
5. Frequency of use of Catalan as the vehicular language in the playground.					

Dimension 3. Language competence

Items	Values				
	Very good	Good	Average	With weaknesses	Poor
6. Fluency in spontaneous spoken Catalan.					
7. Correctness in spontaneous spoken Catalan.					

Dimension 4. Use of strategies

Items	Values				
	Many	Some	Few	Very few	None
8. Uses effective strategies to stimulate the use of Catalan in the classroom with pupils.					
9. Uses effective strategies to keep up the use of Catalan when a pupil switches to communicating in Spanish.					

Dimension 5. If you answered “many” or “some” in dimension 4, illustrate this with some examples you have seen. Thank you.