"The Official Language of Telefónica is English": Problematising the Construction of English as a Lingua Franca in the Spanish Telecommunications Sector

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This article investigates the contradictions around the construction of English as a democratising lingua franca for intercultural communication and business in the Spanish telecommunications sector. From a critical sociolinguistic ethnographic perspective, I claim that this crucial segment of the market has embraced and mobilized a rhetoric through which, by presenting this language as an unproblematised added-value resource for everyone, multinationals make claims of modernity and 'civic' entrepreneurial relationships to target lucrative economic niches, particularly multilingual transnational customers. However, these neoliberal celebratory discursive tropes on the efficiency and inclusiveness of global English contrast with the actual public language practices of the sector. English has become a pragmatic cover-up term for making claims of 'multilingual competence', but it is actually unsystematically offered only by key multinationals in specific spaces —usually call centres— and far less so by start-up operators. Overall, the sociolinguistic regime of the Spanish telecommunications sector fosters a Spanish-regimented market where English ends up serving the needs of an already connected dominant technoliterate elite, while those who do not have access to English or Spanish, basically non-literate migrant ICT users, remain underserved and are forced to navigate society through these institutionalised language barriers.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca; multilingualism; linguistic instrumentalism; language barriers; the new economy; telecommunications

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"La lengua oficial de Telefónica es el inglés": Una mirada crítica a la construcción del inglés como *lingua franca* en el sector de las telecomunicaciones español

Este artículo analiza las contradicciones en torno a la construcción del inglés como una *lingua franca* para la democratización de la comunicación intercultural y del comercio en el sector de las

telecomunicaciones español. Desde la sociolingüística crítica de base etnográfica, analizo cómo este segmento del mercado ha movilizado la construcción del inglés como un valor añadido instrumental con el fin de presentarse como una entidad moderna y 'cívica' y poder así captar los nichos comerciales más lucrativos, en particular los clientes transnacionales multilingües. Sin embargo, esta retórica neoliberal sobre la eficiencia y la internacionalización de las comunicaciones a través del inglés global contrasta con las prácticas lingüísticas públicas reales del sector: esta lengua se utiliza para auto-atribuirse un alto grado de 'competencia multilingüe', pero de hecho se ofrece de manera no sistemática y sólo por parte de las multinacionales —y de algunas *operadoras start-up*— en espacios delimitados, básicamente en centros de llamada. De este modo, el régimen sociolingüístico del sector de las telecomunicaciones promueve un mercado unificado en español donde el inglés sólo cubre las necesidades comunicativas de una élite ya inmersa en la alfabetización tecnológica, mientras que los clientes sin acceso al inglés o al español, en particular los migrantes no alfabetizados usuarios de las TIC, se ven forzados a navegar entre estas barreras lingüísticas institucionalizadas.

Palabras clave: inglés como *lingua franca*; multilingüismo; instrumentalismo lingüístico; barreras lingüísticas; la nueva economía; telecomunicaciones

1. Introduction

The globalised new economy, increasingly based on the services and information and communication technologies (ICT) sectors (Harvey 2005; Castells 2009), has placed language and communication at the epicentre of economic processes (Heller 2003, 2010; Pujolar 2007a).[1] Simultaneously, the new ways of organising business on the part of leading multinationals have put the management of linguistic diversity at the forefront of international competition for the targeting of new economic niches (Duchêne 2009), noticeably, multilingual mobile citizens, including transnational migrants. This is particularly so in the Catalan context in Spain, where migrants now account for 15.7% of a total population of 7,535,251 people (Idescat 2011) and show a remarkably higher connectivity rate when compared to non-migrant clients (Castells et al. 2007: 52-53). Migrants aged between 15 and 29, for instance, actually make *twice* as many calls, SMS and Internet connections as non-migrant youth (Robledo 2008), which may explain why the private sector has started to realise that, as Vegas, head of the 'immigrant' customer department of Orange, puts it, "immigration in Spain is the most important emerging market"(Ciberp@ís 2007: 1).[2]

In Spain, the telecommunications sector is one of the most powerful segments of the private market targeting migrant customers and managing the linguistic diversity that they bring with them. This sector today presents English as a lingua franca, frequently ideologised as an enabling tool, with an added value for, on the one hand, intercultural communication in a growingly multilingual society, and, on the other, business within the global marketplace in times of serious economic crisis.

In this paper, I investigate the contradictions around this construction of English as an equalising or instrumental lingua franca in the Spanish telecommunications sector, and describe and analyse the sociolinguistic regime of this market in order to link it to situations of linguistic difference and marginalisation, particularly among unconnected migrants. In the next section, I briefly describe the theoretical underpinnings that informed my analysis, as well as the types of data that I collected and the methodology that I employed in order to have a consistent linguistic landscape of this segment of the private sector. In the third section, I analyse the entrepreneurial discourses which present the use of English as a form of democratising linguistic capitals in order to connect the unconnected. More specifically, I unveil 'globalisation-cum-development' discourses on the English language (Pennycook 1998, 2007) which contribute to the reproduction of given sociolinguistic orders and linguistic regimes that rest upon the politico-economic interests of a Western-literate elite, to the exclusion of most non-literate clients.

In the fourth section, I show how the presumed provision of services in English indexes a high degree of 'multilingual competence' and of technological leadership on the part of multinationals trying to find their place in an already saturated Spanish ICT marketplace.[3] This self-attributed multilingual competence, however, is simply an entrepreneurial tool, a marketing leitmotif. An in-depth analysis of the language practices of the 30 mobile phone companies operating in Spain at the time of fieldwork in their call centres, official websites and advertising campaigns shows that 'being multilingual' and publicising a post-modern "multilinguistic model" (Tan and Rubdy 2008: 2) basically means offering, unsystematically, an English alternative to the services massively circulated in and through Spanish, disregarding the migrant customers' non-elite allochthonous languages.

In the face of this linguistic regime, in the conclusion I argue that the Spanish telecommunications sector participates in the neoliberal discourse on welcoming linguistic diversity and in presenting English as the pragmatic 'everybody's' language of intercultural communication. While English is mobilised in discourse for the sake of gaining a space in the global stage through an inclusive façade, the actual practices show that this lingua franca, in fact, operates within the constraints of a Spanish-monolingual framework. Consequently, those who do not have access to Spanish or who expect to be able to mobilise their capitals in English remain underserved and, in fact, find themselves navigating through these linguistic constraints and language barriers from the apparently multilingual Spanish telecommunications sector.

2. A CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO GLOBAL ENGLISH: THEORY, METHODS AND DATA

This article approaches issues around global English and multilingualism in the telecommunications sector from a *critical sociolinguistic ethnographic perspective* (Heller 2006). This means that I understand social life as orchestrated by, through and in *language*, a key powerful resource —that is, material and symbolic capital— which is constitutive of our everyday life (Bourdieu 1990, 1991; Duranti 1997). *Discourse* is also seen as social practice —or social action— and as an indicator in social contestation, reproduction and change. That is, discourse is the terrain where the competition for resources is played out and where the investments in given sociolinguistic orders unfold and can be empirically observed in the here and now (see Duchêne and Heller 2007).

Linguistic ideologies are indices of the norms, attitudes, judgements, thoughts and interests which govern both institutional —corporate/entrepreneurial— and individual sociolinguistic behaviours. They are the mediating link between social forms and ways of

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[3] In February 2009, 51,263,388 mobile phone lines were registered in Spain, an average of 111.1 lines per 100 registered citizens —3% more than in February 2008 (CMT 2009: 6-7). In Catalonia the penetration rate was even higher. In Barcelona city, for instance, there were 2.3 mobiles per household in 2008 (L'hiperbòlic 2008: 12-13).

talking which plays a crucial role in the social construction of meaning (see, for example, Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity 1998 and Blommaert 1999). Finally, *multilingualism* is here approached as both theory and practice (Heller 2007); that is, as a set of empirically graspable ideologies and discourses surrounding issues of language, as well as analysable real language practices which are messy, hybrid, multi-valued and ever-changing.

The data presented in this article include an in-depth ethnographic analysis of the management of linguistic diversity and the construction and treatment of multilingualism by the Spanish telecommunications sector, with a particular emphasis on the English language. This includes an exhaustive and systematised analysis of my record of the *public language practices by the 30 ICT ventures operating in Spain* at the time of fieldwork, over a span of two years (2007-2009): three key multinationals (Movistar, Orange and Vodafone), 20 ICT ventures and Spanish-based start-up businesses,[4] and, finally, seven more recently launched migrant-oriented operators which exclusively target migrant populations (Happy Móvil, Lebara Móviles, Talkout Móvil, MundiMóvil, Hong Da Mobile, Digi.mobil and LlamaYa, all of which set up between 2006 and 2009).

Following pioneering studies on the role of language in the market and on the workings of *commercial multilingualism* in private ICT-related domains (see Kelly-Holmes and Mautner 2010; Duchêne 2011), I analysed the languages that each of these companies employed in (1) their call centres, (2) official websites and (3) advertising campaigns. I will place the main focus on the first research space, the call centres. During the data collection process I called each company on at least three occasions, established a record of the languages spoken by the agents working there, and maintained contact via email as well. Simultaneously, I coded the languages used by each company in their websites and checked the systematised linguistic patterns that emerged from those pieces of data. Finally, I also gathered the leaflets issued during advertising campaigns, and visited several of their phone shops in the Barcelona area to gather written information when this was available. I contrasted the languages chosen and offered to the general public —and particularly, to migrant populations— in these three different domains, and was thus able to provide an empirical, consistent and broad picture of the linguistic landscape of the Spanish telecommunications world in Catalonia.

I complemented the information gathered on the 30 ICT ventures' language practices with *participant observation* in key ICT events where I could observe and approach ICT specialists onsite, like the Mobile World Congress (14-18 February, 2008), the biggest event of its kind, or the 7th Telecommunications Day (30 September, 2008), organised by the Official Association of Telecommunications Engineers in Catalonia (COETTC). These were crucial social spaces of the telecommunications sector which proved highly useful for contextualising the approach to linguistic diversity by the ICT world and its agents.

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4 These were: Yoigo, MásMóvil, Carrefour Móvil, Día Móvil, Euskaltel, R Móvil, Eroski Móvil, Pepephone, Simyo, Bankinter, BT Móvil, Jazztel Móvil, XL Móvil, Telecable, Blau, Hits Mobile, Vuelingmóvil, RACC Mòbil, FonYou, and Sweno.

For the purposes of this article I also include three excerpts of the several semi-structured in-depth interviews I conducted with linguistic engineers, mobile phone operator agents and automatic translation specialists working for multinational companies like Movistar, whose discourses and ideologies complemented my quantitative records. I contacted most of them at the Mobile World Congress and later interviewed them in their workplaces, between 2007 and 2008.

Finally, I also draw on institutional documents from the Spanish Government's State Secretary of Telecommunications and the Information Society (SETSI), the Secretariat for Telecommunications and the Information Society in Catalonia (STSI) and the Observatory for the Information Society of Catalonia Foundation (FOBSIC), as well as other census and, above all, linguistic data from the telecommunications sector relevant for the analysis.

3. GLOBAL ENGLISH, A DEMOCRATISING LINGUA FRANCA?

Until recently, critical sociolinguistic research had not paid much attention to the language practices and the management of multilingualism by the telecommunications sector, less so in the Spanish territory. This is so because the private sector, as opposed to the public and the non-for-profit sectors, has traditionally been seen as *external* to such management and, consequently, it has largely been left unexplored. By contrast, the management of multilingualism in public administration offices, in public schools or in NGOs, for instance, is well documented in Catalonia and in Spain (see, respectively, Codó 2008; Martín-Rojo 2010; Garrido 2010).

And yet, the private sector and in particular the ICT market plays a key role in the creation of ideological constructs —language ideologies— about what gets defined as 'communication' and what counts as 'multilingualism'. In particular, I claim that the telecommunications sector has unquestioningly constructed and promoted the use of global English as the widespread dominant language of the world's telecommunicative system, the *commercial currency* of the globalised new economy. In this social field, the use of English as a lingua franca is seen as a way to overcome communication barriers and to preserve the unicity of the market in what is otherwise pejoratively depicted by some entrepreneurs and language economists as a messy 'tower of Babel' (see similar discourses on the need to 'unify' linguistic resources in the commercial realm in García Delgado, Alonso and Jiménez 2007, working for Movistar, formerly Telefónica).[5]

The emphasis on the economic value of English, which is circulated through the mobilisation of the discourse of profits (Heller 2010), and the notion of 'usefulness' and 'pragmatism' of given codes understood as *economic assets* (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2011) are an example of what Wee calls *linguistic instrumentalism*; that is, "a view of language that justifies its existence . . . in terms of its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals such

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[5] Language Economy is a field of study which, broadly speaking, investigates the ways in which linguistic and economic variables influence one another (Kamwangamalu 2008).

as access to economic development or social mobility" (2008: 32). Thus, global English has been constructed as a modernising tool or 'skill' that democratises access to technology and bridges the digital divide between technology-haves and technology-have-nots. This type of proselytising discourse is illustrated in Example 1, where two ICT designers (Mobile Interaction Design specialists) recommend the use of English software with marginalised populations in Africa as a resource for advancement, upward mobility and 'development'.

Example 1: Linguistic instrumentalism and the discursive construction of 'global English' as an added value

> In some developing countries . . . using English software allows them to practice their English and may provide an opportunity to gain better employment in another country. (Jones and Marsden 2006: 323)

Against the fetish of 'English-as-empowerment' found in such discourses, I suggest that the global ICT system is directed towards an already connected technoliterate elite who fully navigates within the multimodal culture of the information and communication age,[6] and that it in fact benefits the politico-economic interests of a global elite, reinforced, in turn, by the existing socio-political structures governing the new economy. That is, the vast majority of ICTs are geared by and towards the needs of populations socialised into a Western written culture (as shown in Cameron 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Chipchase 2008). This means that, against common thought, these ICTs do not readily provide access to technology and communication to those who are non-literate in one of the Western alphabets —for example, the Roman script— or in one of the European nation-state majority languages, or those who are non-numerate or unfamiliar with the alphanumeric system and the semiotic language nested in the Northern Hemisphere. In short, what these discourses hide is that the global ICT system ultimately incapacitates those populations who are non-technoliterate, and that setting English as the global standard lingua franca also brings about *new global illiteracies*, particularly to already marginalised populations such as migrants. Consequently, these have started to seek increasingly successful alternative spaces to access communication technology and overcome linguistic barriers outside institutional realms in informal migrant-run call shops such as the *locutorios*, in the Catalan case (see Sabaté i Dalmau 2010; forthcoming).

If the mobilisation of these discourses has a politico-economic agenda, it is not coincidental that the entities which constitute the world's telecommunicative core are English-speaking countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, followed by Germany, France and Canada (Barnett 2001). These are all key members of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations agency which sets

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⁶ Technoliteracy is defined as the command of a complex set of Western visual, auditory, iconic, digital, informational, technological and computer literacies (see Area, Gros and Marzal 2008 for further details).

the worldwide standards for communication and which coordinates the global use of the radio spectrum and the World Summit on the Information Society (ITU 2011). These entities, which have a direct influence on the market, tend to share a politico-economic investment in the English language, as explained by Tan and Rubdy, who claim that

> [t]he high status accorded to English, especially Standard English, has been reinforced by the significance it has assumed in the global cultural economy. English now represents the preferred language medium in which most transactions take place within transnational business organizations, as well as in political or economic encounters such as those that characterise the World Trade Organization, World Bank and Monetary Fund ensembles. (2008: 6-7)

Spain is also one of these information-rich states, since it joined the ITU —then called International Telegraph Union— in 1865 (Paetsch 1993: 99) and acquired membership of the World Trade Organization and the World Bank —also basically run in and through English— on 1 January 1995 and 15 September 1958, respectively (World Trade Organisation 2011; World Bank 2011). Thus, it is not coincidental that at macro ICT events in Spain English is the taken-for-granted language of technology, homogenising ICT designs and dominating the circuits of commercialisation regulated by an elite expert polity, as the chief staff manager of the Mobile World Congress held in Barcelona in 2008 explains in Example 2.[7]

Example 2: 'Global English' as the language of the technoliterate elite

@Location:		12 February 2008. Mobile World Congress. Chief staff manager's room. Barcelona.[8]
@Bck:		The researcher (RES) asks the chief staff manager (STA) about the languages being employed at the Mobile World Congress.
1	*STA:	preguntan por Telefónica # preguntan mucho también por Google # um por Vodafone # bueno las grandes.
	%tra:	they ask about Telefónica # many ask about Google a lot too # um about Vodafone # well the big ones.
2	*RES:	las grandes # vale # eh y: normalmente <en qué lenguas lo preguntan> [?].
	%tra:	the big ones # ok # eh a:nd normally <in what languages do they ask about them> [?].
→ 3	*STA:	inglés.
	%tra:	English.
4	*RES:	inglés?
	%tra:	English?

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[7] For confidentiality reasons, no real names of start-up companies or individual language workers are used, as agreed with the Ethics Committee at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (CEEAH, file 725H). The project also benefits from the advice of the cooperative of lawyers *Col·lectiu Ronda*.

[8] Interactions were transcribed following a slightly modified version of the CHILDES transcription system (MacWhinney 2000) suggested by Codó (2008: xi-xiii). In [%com] (comment) the context and the participants in the interaction are briefly described. In [%tra] (translation) free translations of the exchanges presented in the main tier uttered in languages other than English are provided —Spanish, if the typeface is plain, or Catalan, if it is in italics. All exchanges are reproduced verbatim, including non-standard talk, and were translated by the author.

→	5	*STA:	inglés # el noventa por ciento de las preguntas son en inglés.
		%tra:	English # ninety percent of the questions are in English.
	6	*RES:	sí?
		%tra:	really?
→	7	*STA:	sí # en inglés y si no castellano # pero es raro.
		%tra:	yes # in English and if not then in Castilian # but this is unusual.

Apart from commercial entities, the overarching power of English —highlighted in lines 3, 5 and 7 in Example 2— was also mobilised in Spanish territory by the Spanish and Catalan Governments, two important technopolitical entities of the information era, in that very same Congress.[9] The "Spanish Pavilion", sponsored by the Spanish Government, for instance, was presented through the internationalising motto "España, technology for life" —in English. The "Catalan Pavilion", sponsored by the Catalan Government through the Secretariat for Telecommunications and the Information Society (STSI), similarly took pride in its technological power to boost the Catalan economy through mobile communications, and it did so in English, as reproduced *verbatim* in Example 3.

Example 3: 'Global English' as an index of modernity and international leadership

> Catalonia boasts highly developed business-services; nearly 250 professional and business associations, more than 2,500 consulting and assessment companies, and more than 500 financial and insurance companies. Speed, reliability, technical assistance and personalised treatment are just some of the characteristics of Catalan business-services companies. (Generalitat de Catalunya 2008)

Thus, the gizmos and gadgets in Spanish territory have entered the ICT world in and through English, too, to become the unquestioned language of business and of ICT knowledge trade orchestrated by the aforementioned telecommunications think-tank. Global English is also the default model language on which to try out new technological developments. This is true not only for multinational companies outside Spain (just to mention an example, Samsung, LG and Philips are moving towards an English-only policy; Tan and Rubdy 2008: 1) but also for well-established ventures with a strong commercial power in Spain. For example, the latest Orange voice assistant for persons with mobility difficulties launched in Spain was first commercialised in English, later in French and finally in Spanish (Connectta't 2008). The same occurs with the vast majority of translation and voice recognition programs, which are developed in English and later transcoded into other languages (Translation and Interpretation Studies professor working for IBM, 7th Telecommunications Day in Catalonia, 30 September, 2008, Barcelona, personal communication).

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9 See Inda (2006) for the role of governments as technopolitical entities crucially managing both technology and ICT-mediated communications and establishing contacts and partnerships with the ICT sector.

In short, I argue that rather than an 'everybody's' lingua franca, the English language in the Spanish telecommunications world is constructed as a form of economic capital and as a 'neutral' resource for entering the international arena to compete in the globalised ICT marketplace. This construction is fostered by the mobilisation of the ideology of linguistic instrumentalism on the part of a global technoliterate elite, currently invested, whether economically and/or politically, in having privileged access to the realm of technology. In fact, though, as will be unfolded in the following section, English is neither offered systematically by all ICT ventures nor made available to all end-users —particularly, mobile phone clients— and, therefore, in reality does not serve the function of being the empowering tool that bridges language divides.

4. 'MULTILINGUAL COMPETENCE', A LINGUISTIC FETISH

Today, Movistar call centres in Barcelona can help users in Catalan, Spanish, English, German, French, Polish and Romanian, among others. Vodafone agents can speak Arabic, Basque and Galician. The Orange website offers an online automatic 'translator' which includes English, German, French and Russian. Lebara Móviles sponsors its discount plans in 12 languages, including Dutch, Italian, Polish and Urdu, and the recently launched migrant-oriented operator MundiMóvil circulates its motto "Calling yours never was so easy [*sic*]" in Romanian, Hindi, and Greek, among others (see MundiMóvil 2011). In short, ICT operators in Spain, regardless of whether they are multinationals, smaller start-up enterprises or migrant-oriented operators, pride themselves on their 'multilingual customer services' whereby they can help clients "in their language" (Movistar 2008). It seems, therefore, that they have become *highly multilingual*. But what does this multilingualism consist of? What place and what role does English occupy in the sociolinguistic hierarchy of the Spanish telecommunications sector, in relation to the aforementioned array of languages? What does this tell us about the real management of linguistic diversity by the private market?

Multilingual competency today is a resource in and of itself, a strategic managerial tool for enterprises that want to reach transnational customer segments. The offering of a presumably wide variety of services in several languages has also come to signal a high degree of innovation, know-how and efficiency, which provides ICT ventures with an image of economic competitiveness and modernity at both local and global levels (Duchêne 2009, 2011).

Thus, the sector in Spain has fully embraced the 'multilingualism-as-added-value' rhetoric, and it has done so as a kind of corporate acknowledgement of a general, abstract or loosely defined ("empty", Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2011: 126) linguistic diversity. This fashionable floating label indexes Europeanism and post-nationality and allows for companies to self-attribute the democratisation of a truly global information era, where language barriers are overcome. In Example 4, I illustrate these claims with the remarks around multilingual competence made by a Telefónica services and solutions consultant whom I interviewed at the Mobile World Congress in 2008.

Example 4: 'Global English' as a cover-up term for 'multilingual competence'

@Location:		12 February, 2008. Mobile World Congress. Telefónica stand. Barcelona.
@Bck:		A Telefónica services and solutions consultant (CON) tells the researcher (RES) about the company's corporate commitment to offering multilingual services.
1	*CON:	somos multilingües ## la convergencia también obliga,, <no> [?] obliga a abrir una plataforma multilingüe # los servicios van a tener que tener la posibilidad de ser multilingües porque si no a lo mejor no voy a poder comunicarme con alguien que está al otro lado.
	%tra:	we are multilingual # convergence obliges,, <right> [?] it obliges [us] to open a multilingual platform # the services will have to have the possibility of being multilingual because otherwise perhaps I won't be able to communicate with someone who is on the other side.
2	*RES:	ah.
→ 3	*CON:	con el inglés va a ser más posible,, <no> [?] porque tanto el inglés como el español son idiomas potentes son fuertes # extendidos en muchos países ## además el idioma oficial de Telefónica es el inglés.
	%tra:	with English this will be more plausible,, <right> [?] because both English and Spanish are powerful languages they are strong # spread in many countries ## besides the official language of Telefónica is English.

Example 4 also shows that in Spain many ventures present themselves as multilingual simply because they promote the use of English and Spanish as the two 'strong', 'powerful', linguae francae of worldwide interconnection (line 3). In fact, multilingualism is interestingly —and explicitly— equated with the use of English, which has become a *cover-up term* for claiming 'multilingual competence'. That is, it has become a mobiliser of prestige, as seen in the consultant's final remark: "the official language of Telefónica is English" (line 3).

However, the actual language practices of the 30 mobile phone operators, as observed in their call centres, official websites and advertisement campaigns, provide another picture. An in-depth analysis of each company demonstrates that all of them offer their services in *Spanish* as *the only* or as *the default language*, as detailed in Table 1, which is a summary of the linguistic landscape of the Spanish telecommunications sector in the Barcelona area and its call centre customer services provision in (1) Spanish, (2) other dominant European languages, (3) the migrants' languages, (4) the co-official language in Catalonia, Catalan, and, finally, (5) English, the object of this study.

As can be inferred from Table 1, in the Spanish telecommunications world Spanish has become the norm. In fact, it is the first language offered by 29 out of the 30 companies —the exception being Digi.mobil, which targets Romanian migrants in Romanian as the default language, along with Spanish. Dominant European languages other than English (basically French, German and some Dutch) are unsystematically offered, mostly by the three multinationals (Movistar, Vodafone and Orange), by two (out of 20) smaller start-ups and by two (out of seven) migrant-oriented operators.

COMPANY	LANGUAGES OFFERED	COMPANY	LANGUAGES OFFERED
Movistar	Spanish, English, Catalan, German, French, Polish, Romanian, Arabic	XL Móvil	Spanish
Orange	Spanish, English, Catalan, Romanian, Arabic, Galician, Basque	Telecable	Spanish
Vodafone	Spanish, English, Catalan, German	Blau	Spanish
Yoigo	Spanish	Hits Mobile,	Spanish, English, Dutch
MásMóvil	Spanish, English, German	Vuelingmóvil	Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Italian, Catalan
Carrefour Móvil	Spanish, English	RACC Mòbil	Spanish, Catalan
Día Móvil	Spanish, English	FonYou	Spanish
Euskaltel	Spanish, Basque	Sweno	Not operational
R Móvil	Spanish, Galician	Happy Móvil	Spanish, Russian, Romanian, French, (English), (Arabic)
Eroski Móvil	Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque	Lebara Móviles	Spanish, English, French, Russian, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, Dutch, Polish
Pepephone	Spanish, English, Catalan	Talkout Móvil	Spanish, English
Simyo	Spanish	MundiMóvil	Spanish, English
Bankinter	Spanish, English, German, Catalan	Hong Da Mobile	Not operational
BT Móvil	Spanish	Digi.mobil	Romanian, Spanish
Jazztel Móvil	Spanish, (English)	LlamaYa	Spanish, English

Table 1: The linguistic landscape of the Spanish telecommunications sector.
Call centre customer services provision (2007-2009)

Allochthonous minority codes are not included in the three spaces observed, with the noticeable exception of Arabic and Romanian, offered by two multinationals and by a few migrant-oriented operators in their call centres, like Lebara or, as already pointed out, Digi.mobil. The rest of migrant-oriented operators provide these two languages unsystematically and, at times, as an *ad hoc* exception or as a way to sort out communication problems —the migrant-oriented operator Happy Móvil, for instance, offers Arabic only at the weekends from 16:00 until 21:00 hours, when the Arabic-speaking agent is available. In short, then, the migrants' languages are token or absent altogether and can only be found in a few mottos circulated in majority nation-state languages —for instance, they are very occasionally circulated in Urdu instead of Panjabi, or in Modern Standard Arabic instead of Tamazight, more often than not only during advertisement campaigns, not in call centres. In addition, these mottos, as I have already exemplified with the case of "calling yours never was so easy [*sic*]", are often conducted via automatic translation, which, unsurprisingly, with this unrealistic, haphazard language, at times renders the services inaccessible to non-literate migrant users of minority languages.

In order to investigate the reasons provided by the telecommunications sector for this lack of minority language resources and their patchy approach to them, I interviewed the CEO of an international, pioneering Catalonia-based ICT venture which offers text and image translation via mobile phones in a variety of languages. At the time of the interview this enterprise was working on assembling an automatic Spanish-Arabic translator for Movistar, which, in the end, did not get commercialised, as explained in Example 5.

Example 5: The lack of minority language resources in the ICT world

@Location:		29 April, 2009. Company's office in the country of the Vallès Occidental, Barcelona.
@Bck:		The CEO of a leading ICT venture summarises his experience in trying to assemble a Spanish-Arabic translator for Movistar, which in the end was scrapped.
1	*CEO:	*bueno‹què passa› [?] que traduir a castellà # en aquest cas era castellà àrab àrab castellà.*
	%tra:	well‹what's the matter› [?] that translating into Castilian # in this case it was Castilian Arabic Arabic Castilian.
2	*RES:	aha.
→ 3	*CEO:	*és difícil # llavors es pensaven que el nostre traductor ho faria perfecte i clar no ho fa perfecte perquè és un traductor automàtic i llavores‹li› [/] li van passar precisament a una persona de: una empresa‹de› [/] de telecomunicacions al Marroc.*
	%tra:	it's difficult # then they thought that our translator would do the job perfectly and of course it doesn't do it perfectly because it is an automatic translator and so then they passed ‹it› [/] it on precisely to a person fro:m a telecommunications company ‹in› [/] in Morocco.
4	*RES:	sí.
	%tra:	yes.
→ 5	*CEO:	*i clar no s'ajustava ben bé a l'origen real de les frases i dius +"/.*
	%tra:	and of course it didn't adapt well to the real origin of the sentences and you say +"/.
6	*CEO:	*+"clar # lògic.*
	%tra:	+" of course # logical.
→ 7	*CEO:	*per això ‹hauríem de›[/] hauríem de fer això que estem fent ara,, ‹no› [?] aportar un producte específic adaptat a aquelles necessitats llavors això sí que es pot garantir la qualitat però així si vols un traductor genèric per resoldre dubtes tràmits per exemple burocràtics pels immigrants # hem de muntar un traductor específic per allò.*
	%tra:	to get this ‹we would have to›[/] we would have to do what we are doing right now,, ‹right› [?] to provide a specific product which is well suited to those needs and then quality can indeed be guaranteed but if you want a generic translator to answer bureaucratic questions procedures for instance for immigrants # we need to create a specific translator for that.
8	*RES:	*clar.*
	%tra:	of course.
→ 9	*CEO:	*llavors funcionarà molt bé # no t'hauràs de: limitar a una manera de dir les frases o així # sinó serà lliure ## funcionarà bé per allò però clar has d'invertir uns recursos ## va quedar allà no vam insistir més perquè -, ‹i› [/] i ells no insisteixen # és a dir jo crec que això lo que demostra és‹la› [/] la falta de necessitat real d'això,, ‹no› [?].*
	%tra:	then it will work really well # you won't have to: limit it to one way of saying the sentences or whatnot # rather it will be free ## it will work well for that but then look you have to invest some resources ## we left it there we didn't persist any longer because -, ‹and› [/] and they don't persist # that's I think that what this demonstrates is ‹the›

	[/] the lack of a real need for this,, <right> [?].
10 *RES:	*clar.*
%tra:	sure.
→ 11 *CEO:	*o la falta de preocupació pels operadors per aquest tipus de gent pues potser perquè per aquest tipus de negoci pel volum que genera és poc.*
%tra:	or the lack of concern about these sort of people by operators maybe because for this type of business the turnover it generates is small.

The first trial of the Spanish-Arabic automatic translator, as the executive officer explains, was taken to a telecommunications enterprise in Morocco (line 3), where they realised that it did not adapt well to "the real origin of the sentences" (line 5). He states that a generic translator will not cover the specific needs of migrants, such as dealing with administrative questions or procedures (line 7). For this reason, there is the need to create a "free human quality translator" (as automatic translation agents and linguistic engineers call it), one that specifically suits the migrants' communicative needs in given specific contexts. He believes that his company has the technological means to design it, but it would increase the costs significantly. The first trial did not succeed and the negotiations with Movistar ended in deadlock. According to him, there are three possible explanations for this. The first one is that Movistar does not have a real need for it in order to keep targeting Arabic-using migrant customers (line 9) —which implies that the multinational has thus far been able to capitalise on this specific migrant niche through Spanish, using only generic translators. The second explanation he provides is that the multinational is simply not concerned about this particular customer niche and is perhaps more interested in Spanish-using Latin Americans; note that this particular company has established businesses in 13 Latin American countries. This explanation might seem contradictory, as Movistar is indeed investing resources in studying how to include Arabic in its repertoire —at least in automatic translation— and because it claims to offer Arabic in its call centres; Arabic was the last language in the hierarchy offered to me by a Movistar agent in a call centre. The last, and to me most plausible, explanation is that Movistar has estimated that the turnover generated by the Arabic-using clientele is not worth an investment beyond the generic Spanish-Arabic translator (line 11).

In all of these cases, the multinational is fostering the illusion that services in non-elite allochthonous minority languages are being offered, for example through mass advertising campaigns circulating single-sentence slogans in Arabic, whereas in fact the Arabic-using customers for whom such services were originally intended are being simultaneously underserved.

The co-official language of Catalonia, Catalan, has gained a position in the language hierarchy of the Spanish telecommunications sector, although, when it is offered, it is usually relegated to a place after Spanish. For example, handset designers such as Sharp, Samsung, LG, Nokia and HP do not offer the Catalan option in all the mobiles they sell in Spain, according to a 2007 study by the Observatory for the Information Society of Catalonia Foundation (FOBSIC 2007). Movistar, Orange and Vodafone at that time did

not offer their official websites in Catalan, and start-up and ICT operators such as Jazztel Móvil, XL Móvil, Blau, Hits Mobile, FonYou, Carrefour Móvil, Día Móvil, Happy Móvil and BT Móvil did not offer customer services in Catalan. In short, only seven out of 30 mobile phone operators offer Catalan in their call centres, infringing the customers' language rights as found in the Catalan Statute of Autonomy, which states that customers have the right to obtain services in Catalan in Catalonia, and companies the obligation to offer them (Generalitat de Catalunya 2006). Tellingly, in 2009 none of the seven migrant-oriented operators offered customer services in Catalan, the institutional linguistic ideology behind this corporate distribution of linguistic resources being that migrants will —or should— enter the technological era in and through Spanish.

Overall, these data on the *real* management of linguistic diversity by the Spanish telecommunications sectors provide further arguments to claim that it works within a linguistic regime which fosters a monoglossic *Spanish-regimented market*. English, then, navigates within the constraints of this institutionalised unicity by becoming a local additional language which, boosted by its largely unquestioned international weight in the global linguistic hierarchy, unsystematically complements some of the services. The data show that it is *not* the lingua franca of the sector: only 14 out of 30 operators offer their services also in English —apart from Spanish— and these are basically multinationals, not Spanish-based ventures or start-ups; of these, only eight out of 20 offer English in their call centres. The multinationals which offer it do so mostly in call centres only: Movistar and Orange, for instance, launched their websites strictly in Spanish, and today they do not offer English versions. Moreover, many of these English services are only offered to the elite transnational entrepreneurial class: the company Jazztel, for example, only offers English to Jazztel investors, not to all clients. Finally, only four of the seven migrant-oriented operators offer some services in English (Happy Móvil, for instance, offers it only after 16:00 hours), which further points to the fact that in reality it has not become an instrumental language for intercultural communication to be employed with transnational mobile citizens.

5. CONCLUSIONS: LINGUISTIC INEQUALITY IN A SPANISH-REGIMENTED SECTOR

In this paper I have argued that the private market plays a pivotal role in the management of linguistic diversity in current network societies, and that the telecommunications sector epitomises this era of "multilingualisation" (Duchêne 2009: 28), where multilingual competence is a marketing product, a commercial tool that in Spain deserves further detailed sociolinguistic analysis.

My research has also shown that the non-natural, manipulative puzzle of languages offered in this capitalist culture demonstrates that multilingualism, at least for this segment of the private market, is a linguistic fetish (Kelly-Holmes 2005), that is, a promotional façade which reproduces the power structures of global economics and does not suit the needs of transnational end-users, particularly those who are non-literate or non-socialised in the Western multimodal culture or in the alphanumeric system upon which the ICTs are based.

The linguistic hierarchies that are being played out in this specific social domain show that the technoliterate elite doing business with and through the ICTs in this Spanish economy fosters a monoglossic map. An analysis of the language practices of the 30 operators in the Spanish telecommunications sector shows that linguistic diversity is managed through a Spanish-regimented market. Thus, Spanish as a global and a local lingua franca is the unquestioned language of intercultural communication and business, to the detriment of other European languages such as English, French or German, and to the exclusion of non-elite allochthonous minority codes with increasingly growing presence in Spain and Catalonia —such as Arabic, Wu or Punjabi— and to the detriment, as well, of co-official languages like Catalan in Catalonia.

This confirms Pujolar's (2007b) claims that Spanish has retained an important position as a public language in the private sector. The data presented here in fact show that the private sector tends to treat and to welcome transnational citizens —like migrants— and the Catalan consumer groups as two segments of *a linguistically unified Spanish-only marketplace*. And again, this is justified as a necessary "economisation" of linguistic resources (Duchêne 2011: 102) based on the emphasis on the economic advantages of establishing Spanish as the lingua franca for the politically strategic protection of the Spanish-speaking 'condominium' against English (see García Delgado, Alonso and Jiménez 2007).

In this institutionalised unicity, English is constructed as the language of technology and global ICT-mediated networks through the mobilisation of a rhetoric around linguistic instrumentalism —or, to put it bluntly, around the argument that it is *cash*. As such, global English in this market embodies a series of contradictions, since it becomes not the idealised lingua franca but a 'safety crutch': paradoxically, a resource facilitator of ICT business and exchange for an already connected global technopolitical elite; a cover-up term with economic legitimacy employed to index openness, prestige and innovation by companies; and, finally, a scarce, unsystematically provided resource for some Western-literate users, notably the upper-middle transnational business or the tourist classes.

Overall, the lack of real multilingual resources and the haphazard treatment of the languages of migration by the Spanish telecommunications sector bear witness to the fact that the sector does not fully understand the migrants' linguistic practices, nor does it fulfil many of their communicative needs. Those clients who do not have access to Spanish or, occasionally, English, remain underserved and are forced to navigate through these institutionalised structural language barriers. The frequently called digital divide, then, is also a *language divide*, one which speaks not only of technological development but also of linguistic marginalisation and therefore, social difference and social exclusion through language in the information and communication age.

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