

# LESLLA Symposium Proceedings



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LESLLA aims to support adults who are learning to read and write for the first time in their lives in a new language. We promote, on a worldwide, multidisciplinary basis, the sharing of research findings, effective pedagogical practices, and information on policy.

## LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

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A POC A POC (LITTLE BY LITTLE)  
MATERIAL FOR A CATALAN LANGUAGE COURSE AIMED AT ADULTS WITH  
LOW LEVELS OF FORMAL EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** The article presents the teacher's and the students' books for a 45-hour Catalan course. It specifies the target audience considering the sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia and the legislation about language integration in the territory. It also specifies the educational criteria used to develop the material. Finally, it explains why having edited and published material so that adults with low levels of formal education can learn the target language is important.

**KEYWORDS:** LESLLA, teacher materials, course book

1. SOME DATA ABOUT THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN SPAIN AND  
THE POSITION OF CATALAN IN THIS LANDSCAPE AND THE SPECIFIC  
LANGUAGE AND INTEGRATION POLICY

In Spain, there is an official language for the whole State and co-official languages in five regions. Thus, in the autonomous community of Galicia the official languages are Spanish and Galician; in the Basque Country they are Spanish and Basque, and in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Valencia they are Spanish and Catalan. Unlike Basque, Catalan and Spanish are Romance languages and have many points in common. Catalan has also some common aspects with French.



Fig. 1: Languages in Spain (from: <http://nohemingwaysspain.blogspot.com.es/2011/11/shared-language-shared-culture-spains-4.html>)

As Francesco Pasetti explains: “Act 4/2000 is the first legal measure that introduced immigrant integration on to the political agenda in Spain”. Based on this law, the central government designed the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration (known as PECEI, from the Spanish acronym) which is the core tool for integration. Two plans have been issued so far: one for the period 2007-2010 (PECEI I) and another for the period 2011-2014 (PECEI II). The second plan sets out language policy for integration in Spain.

The main institution responsible for managing and implementing the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration is the Secretary General for Immigration and Emigration with the central government in Madrid. But the geopolitical composition of Spain, with 19 regional governments, 50 provinces and 8,124 local authorities requires a multi-level governance model, in which local authorities are responsible for some of the plan's objectives, regional governments for others and the central authorities for the other objectives specified in the plan.

Regional governments work with their local authorities and together they are in charge of issuing reports required for permit renewals, such as the Report on Efforts to Integrate and the Report Demonstrating Social Ties. Central government is responsible for citizenship.

In this system, each regional government establishes the language requirements for obtaining one of the reports mentioned so the language policies for Catalonia may not be the same as those for the Basque Country or Andalusia, for example. Catalonia is one of the few regional governments (if not the only one) which has established criteria for language requirements with Decree-Law 150/2014, of 18 November, concerning reception services for immigrants and returnees to Catalonia, which stipulates that a person who wants to obtain a Report Demonstrating Social Ties should be able to use the two official languages (Catalan and Spanish) and, if this is not possible, must prove 90 hours of training in each of the two languages.

These 90-hour courses in Spanish and Catalan are free in Catalonia and can be taken at Adult Education Centres, other public institutions associated with the Catalan regional government and NGOs authorised to teach Catalan and Spanish.

## 2. SOME DATA ABOUT NEWCOMER ADULTS IN CATALONIA WITH LOW LEVELS OF FORMAL EDUCATION

According to the Catalan Statistical Institute (Idescat), of the 7,508,106 people living in Catalonia in 2015, 1,028,069 were born outside Spain: 13.69% of the total Catalan population.

The Moroccan group is the largest (214,250 people), representing 20% of the total population born abroad. In second place, with less than half this number, are Romanians (93,668).

Looking at Catalan immigration figures by continent, in first place we see Europe with 33.37% of the total of foreigners. The countries leading the ranking are Romania (93,668 people), as mentioned above, followed by other countries from central and Eastern Europe (58,143 people mainly from Russia and Ukraine). In second place, we find the population from Central America, the Caribbean and South America, amounting to 245,969 (about 23% of residents born outside Catalonia).

We can therefore conclude that migration to Catalonia consists primarily of people of Latin American origin and secondly newcomers from Morocco, with Romanians in third position.

We have no official data on these newcomers' level of formal education, but we can draw some conclusions from the Idescat information regarding the level of education of the adult population of Catalonia.

According to the Institute<sup>1</sup>, there are 10% of adults aged over 16 who cannot read or write and 13% with only primary school education or who did not complete primary school. Given that the vast majority of the population born in Catalonia has gone through compulsory primary schooling, we believe this 23% of adults consists either of newcomers or people aged over 70 who had to leave school just after the Spanish Civil War, which forced thousands of families facing poverty to migrate and make their children work.

## 3. TARGET STUDENTS FOR A POC A POC BEGINNING CATALAN FOR ADULTS I

*A poc a poc* is aimed at the 13% of adults who live in Catalonia and have a very low level of formal education. This 13% includes adults from Africa and some Asian countries (mainly Pakistan and India). However, the material is also suitable for newcomers who have compulsory secondary and higher education but are not familiar with the Latin alphabet because no English, French or Spanish is included in the curriculum in their countries of origin. This is the case of newcomers to Catalonia originally from Russia, Ukraine, China and Pakistan. These people, however, will clearly learn much more quickly.

1. Data from 2011.

For learners from Central America, the Caribbean and South America this material may not be appropriate, as their knowledge of Spanish makes the acquisition of Catalan quicker and easier. However, we realise that South Americans with little formal education (mainly from Bolivia and Central America) are also an appropriate audience for this material. In their case, their low educational level outweighs their knowledge of a language as closely related as Spanish.

Our material does not cover the 10% of people who cannot read or write because it is not adult literacy material, but it is suitable for people whose skills in reading-writing in the Latin alphabet are at a very early stage. However, as explained later, it is possible to use the material only for oral comprehension and production. In this case, the learner is doing a course in Catalan without learning to read and write in Catalan.

For adult literacy in Catalan, the Secretary for Equality, Citizenship and Migration (Department of Welfare and the Family) has prepared material<sup>2</sup> in Catalan which is available to all organisations that apply for it. The Department of Education's Adult Education Centres<sup>3</sup> also offer instrumental instruction, which includes literacy in Catalan and Spanish.

#### 4. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIAL

*A poc a poc* Beginning Catalan for Adults 1 is material for a 45-hour Catalan course. A second part (*A poc a poc* Beginning Catalan for Adults 2) is planned, to reach the 90 hours of education required by Catalan law for refugees and immigrants.

The content of the material falls within the parameters proposed for the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference and focuses on the initial Catalan program from the General Directorate for Language Policy<sup>4</sup>. We should say, however, that, considering the learner profile, we have simplified the curriculum in terms of complexity and the amount of information displayed<sup>5</sup>. So we might say we are dealing with an intermediate level between A0 and A1 (it could perhaps be described as A0.5).

The course book works on everyday expressions and very basic phrases related to communicative use in areas close to learners in their personal, social and professional situations. For example:

- Being able to identify people: "It's me"
- Being able to give their date of birth: "23rd of April 1972"
- Being able to ask for the price of a product: "How much is this?"
- Knowing the name of basic transport: "train, car, plain, metro, bus, bicycle, motorbike, on foot"
- Understanding shop opening hours: "open, closed, summer timetable"

2. Lletres per a tothom (Letters for everybody) (2011) [http://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/details/Article/article\\_programa\\_lletres\\_tothom](http://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/details/Article/article_programa_lletres_tothom)

3. 120 Adult Education Centres offer literacy all over Catalonia.

4. Catalan language programme beginners' level, General Directorate of Linguistic Policy, Department of Culture, Government of Catalonia (2011)

5. In order to simplify the A1 curriculum we have also used what the Cervantes Institute proposes for Spanish.

- Being able to ask about the basic features of an apartment: "How many rooms has the apartment got?"

The material prioritises comprehension and oral expression over other competences. Reading is secondary and writing work appears only sporadically. The main activity in the classroom is oral interaction between the teacher and the class group, between the teacher and a learner, and finally the conversation among learners.

*A poc a poc* Beginning Catalan for Adults 1 consists of three pieces of material: the learners' book, the teacher's book and a website. The main material is the teacher's book, the learners' book is secondary and serves to reinforce what has been worked on orally or is useful for the work the learner does at home. Finally, the site is designed to support the teaching and the additional content provided there will be briefly explained at the end of this article.

Before starting to design the material, the authors carried out research to analyse the materials published in the world for this level. We were surprised that it was very difficult to find published material. The most complete material published we found was one by Pearson Education (US) called *English for results*. This has a first level (they call it introduction level) very suitable for LESLLA students. This material offers an American student's book, a teacher's book and a book with multi-level communication activities.

In Europe, we have found a textbook from a French publisher, Editions Maison des Langues, aimed at immigrants learning French, which is also useful and appropriate for LESLLA students. It is called *Rendez-vous* and consists of a students' book that incorporates a CD with audio.

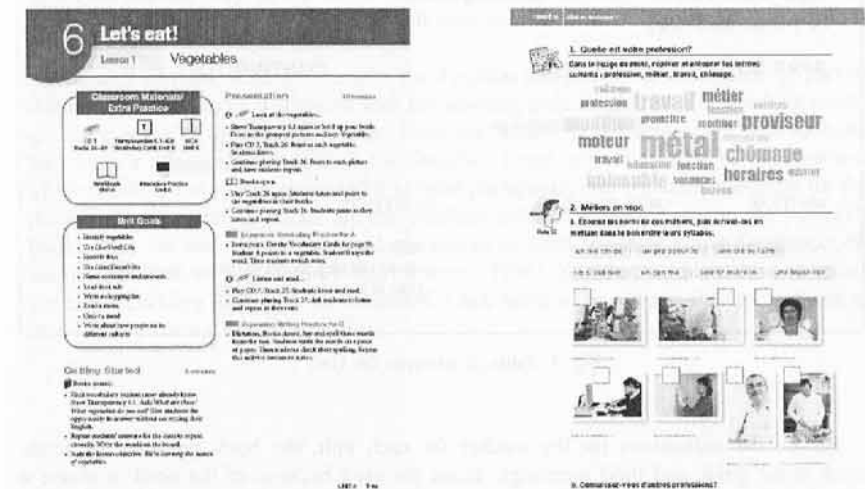


Fig. 2: On the left, an example page from the Teacher's Book from *English For Results*. On the right, an example page of the Students' Book from *Rendez-Vous*.

We have not found any publisher in Spain or Catalonia with textbooks for this level or target students. In the case of Spain, we found that the material comes from NGOs that receive a subsidy to publish material. Usually the material is posted on a website and the teacher has to download and print it.

In the case of Catalan, some public institutions have published material which they distribute to students in the form of portfolios or upload to a website so the teacher has to download and print it. Some publishing houses in Catalonia have textbooks which they say are initial level but they are in fact for A1 and are not appropriate for adults with low levels of formal education, as in the case of LESLLA learners.

## 5. THE TEACHER'S BOOK

This material is divided into two parts: the first is the teaching guide for the teacher and the second is a set of colour prints required for running the course.

At the beginning of the teacher's guide, there is a table of contents and objectives for the six units that comprise the course. For each unit, there is the number of hours required, which sections each unit contains, and the objectives and content to be worked on each section.

UNITAT 1		UNIT 1
<b>Hola com va?</b>		Hello how is it going?
(6 hores lectives)		(6 teaching hours)
APARTAT	OBJECTIUS	CONTINGUTS
A. Hola i adéu	Saludar i acomiadar-se.	—Hola, Adéu —Bon dia, bona tarda, bona nit —Com va? Bé, gràcies
SECTION	OBJECTIVES	CONTENTS
A. Hello and Bye	Greeting	- Hello, Goodbye - Good morning, good afternoon, good night - How is it going? Fine, thanks

Fig. 3: Table of contents for Unit 1.

Before the indications for the teacher for each unit, the book presents the icons used in the guide and their meanings. Icons are used because of the need to create a visual guide that is quick and easy to use. We are aware that some teachers who use the guide are volunteers with no training in language teaching and not used to reading guides of this kind.

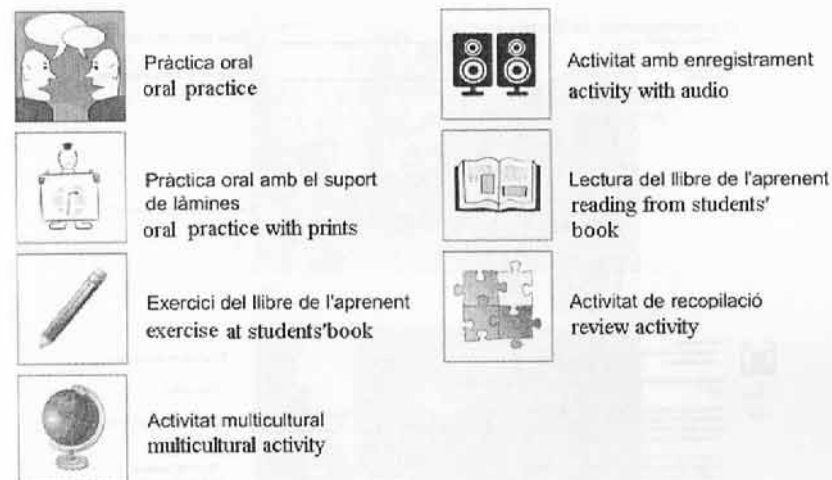


Fig. 4: Icons from the Teacher's Book.

As mentioned above, the units are divided into sections. At this point, the book works in a conventional way in the sense that all language learning textbooks structure the content in units and then divide each unit into smaller areas of content, called sections in our book.

For each of these sections, we give the duration and provide a photograph of part of the learner's book to be worked on with the teaching points required. The teaching points are the essence of the teacher's book. They are numbered and referenced with an icon; they have a title, and they contain the linguistic items to be worked. The explanations of the teaching points are organised into brief paragraphs that are understandable for the teacher. These teaching points are the smallest didactic guidance unit in the teacher's book. They are not independent and are linked to other teaching points forming a didactic sequence, as proposed by Martin Peris (1996). So what we have done is create six units, dividing each unit into sections. Each section has several didactic sequences that include several teaching points.

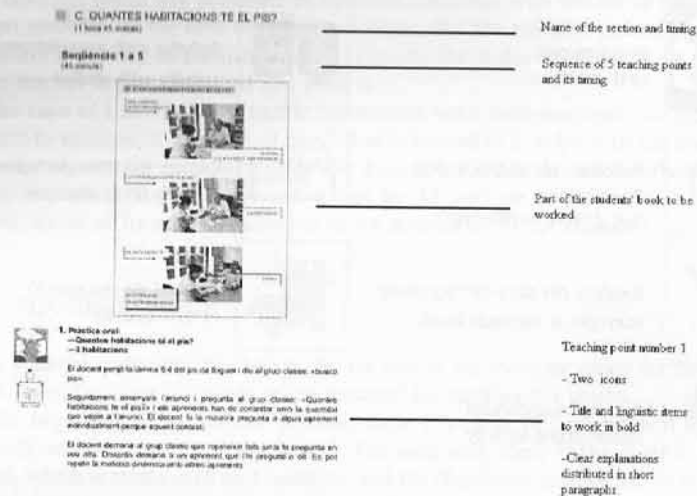


Fig. 5: Example of the Teacher's Book

All the didactic sequences begin with dynamic oral practice activities in which the teacher dramatises communicative situations with the involvement of learners. Dramatisations are a good strategy for working on the same linguistic item in different ways and making it recurrent. As explained in Ellis (2001), a high degree of exposure to the same item (token or type frequency) is needed for it to be learned, and dramatisations do not lead to demotivating repetition.

Only after several teaching points involving oral competence are any written activities done. We considered that there should be more oral work preceding the written work because LESLLA learners have low levels of competence in reading and writing, as presented in Burt et al. (2008).

As real material provides motivation, as pointed out in Condelli et al. (2006), we have included recordings of real comprehension activities, such as announcements at a train station. It also includes some teaching points about the social situation in the host community and learners are encouraged to compare this with their places of origin and think about the differences and similarities.

At the end of the material the teacher has 118 colour photographs indexed so they can easily be located through the explanations of the teaching points. We have prioritised the use of photographs instead of illustrations because learners recognise them more easily. Illustrations contain a certain degree of abstraction, which is an impediment for learners with low levels of formal education, as pointed out by Bigelow and Vinogradov (2011).

Similarly, the photographs used in the prints are the same as the ones appearing in the learner's book. This is to make it easier to transmit the content that has been worked on orally into the reading and writing practice in the learner's book.



Fig. 6: Two prints for Unit 1.

## 6. THE LEARNERS' BOOK

As explained previously, the learners' book is intended as learning material for secondary use after working orally in the classroom communicative situations.

We have therefore offered a book for the learner in colour and with a lot of photographs. One of the criteria we established was to provide decent material at these initial levels and provide the learner more than just unbound black and white photocopies. Along the same lines, the material is meaningful for working on certain communicative situations, not just vocabulary.

We tried to ensure the amount of information distributed on each page was not excessive so learners do not have the feeling of having to focus their attention on many linguistic items.

Communicative situations are presented in the form of dialogues with bubbles of different colours for each speaker. The speech presented has previously been worked on orally, so there should be no problems in interpreting the dialogues presented in bubbles coming out of the characters' mouths in the pictures.

As shown in Figure 5, we use capital letters for text as well as colours, so names always appear in blue, noun determiners in orange, verbs in green, words expressing time in violet, words expressing location in brown, etc. We wanted to introduce the modularity of language in an implicit way and avoid learners having to memorise chunks of linguistic sets related to a communicative action. The font we have used is Ariel, as it is one of the most commonly one used and should easily be recognised by students.

HOLA, BON DIA,  
EM DIC SOFIA,  
ENCANTADA.

HELLO, GOOD MORNING  
MY NAME IS SOFIA  
NICE TO MEET YOU



HELLO  
MY NAME IS SALIM  
NICE TO MEET YOU

HOLA,  
JO EM DIC SALIM.  
ENCANTAT.



BON DIA

GOOD MORNING  
BON DIA. QUÈ VOLS?

GOOD MORNING. WHAT DO YOU NEED?

QUANT VAL  
I QUILO DE PATATES?

0,90 € (NORANTA CÈNTIMS)

HOW MUCH IS  
I KILO OF POTATOES? (NINETY CENTS)

Fig. 7: Dialogues with Bubbles in Colours.

In the same way, we have used one of the easy reading criteria for complex sentences, segmenting the sentence using grammatical or pragmatic criteria. For example, we segmented "HELLO", "MY NAME IS SALIM" and "NICE TO MEET YOU" on three different lines because they are communicatively different. Sometimes the criterion has been grammatical, as in the case of "HOW MUCH IS" and "I KILO OF POTATOES."














The book also contains exercises so the learners can practice what they have read in theory. The vast majority are reading exercises and only a small proportion of them involve written production. There are mainly two types of activities: choosing between

two or three options or relating items. As you can see in exercise 1, the student has to relate each means of transport with a sign they can see in the street. In exercise 7, the student has to choose between three options (street, square or avenue) according to the photograph.

1. Relate

I. Relaciona


abc

	metro	metro	
	plane	avió	
	car	cotxe	
	train	tren	
	on foot	a peu	
	motorbike	moto	
	bus	autobús	
	bicycle	bicicleta	

7. Choose

7. Tria

abc def



street square avenue carrer plaça avinguda carrer plaça avinguda street square avenue

street square avenue carrer plaça avinguda c. pl. av. st. sq. av.

st. sq. av. c. pl. av. c. pl. av. st. sq. av.

Fig. 8: Type of exercise.

We have used lowercase type, always in black, without using the colour system of the theory because we wanted the learner to focus on the mechanics of the exercises. The instructions are greatly simplified and are accompanied by icons to reinforce them.

The content of the exercises is consistent with the approach of the theoretical part of the learners' book. Thus, there is no explicit linguistic grammar work, but the idea is to strengthen the acquisition of vocabulary and language items presented in the theoretical part of the book.

At the end of the book there is an appendix with sound and letter correspondence in Catalan and typical questions arising from classroom dynamics.

## 7. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Finally, we built a website<sup>6</sup> designed for teachers with continuous contributions so that the material would not be static. So, apart from samples of the units, teacher's book and learners' book, there is also a page dedicated to reinforcement and extension activities for each unit of the book and the audios of the exercises.

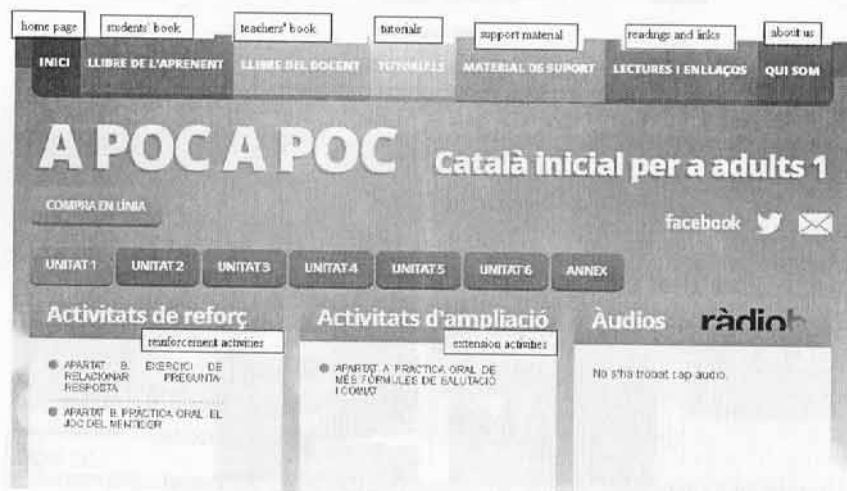


Fig. 9: Website with reinforcement and extension exercises

The site also includes tutorials on some of the methodological techniques presented in the teacher's book, such as vocabulary for working with the prints. We have also included links that we believe may be of interest to Catalan language teachers of adults with low levels of formal education, and there is also a section with articles related to the subject. These articles contain a short summary of the content and a link to the entire article.

6. [www.catalainicialperadults.cat](http://www.catalainicialperadults.cat)

For articles and links, we have included material in Catalan but also from other parts of the world where there is bibliography on teaching a second language to adults with low levels of formal education.

Finally, it seemed important to us to have a social media profile not only to publish news we generate, such as the creation of new exercises for the units, but also to share everything related to literacy and language teaching for adults with low levels of formal education. This includes reports with statistical data, events in the field, articles about research or new resources for LESLLA teachers. We have friends and followers from associations worldwide that work with language education for refugees and immigrants, but particularly NGOs from Spain and the different regional areas. Analysing individuals, the majority of our fans on our Facebook page are women from Spain and our Twitter audience also is also dominated by Spanish women.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

*A poc a poc* has already been in existence for three years, and during this period we have been able to talk to the teachers who have used it for their classes. Before publication we piloted some units to see how students and teachers responded. Observing the preliminary classes, we realised that teachers tend to not to use the teacher's book much, preferring to prepare classes from the student's book. This is a problem for our material because the real focus was the teacher's book, with sheets and detailed instructions on how to create oral activities.

In general, we found that teachers have a hard time using the oral support and that they need the student's book and the board for classes. In some ways this is understandable because teachers are "victims" of a lifetime of schooling, and it may be a great effort for them not to use all the written tools they have used throughout their lives, which are also used all the time by the society they come from.

We should perhaps consider the possibility of the teachers being LESLLA alumni who want to help people (voluntarily or for payment) and who have previously done teacher training, with expert support and supervision always available.

Finally, I would like to end the article by highlighting the need to have more published material for this type of learner. In fact, the reason why the authors began this project was that we found there was very little published material for teaching a second language to adults with low levels of formal education. The publications we found were either aimed at schoolchildren or contained too complex a level of language, with too many items to assimilate for the profile of learner we are talking about, or had work only on vocabulary, ignoring communication activities.

From our own experience, we know that the private publishing houses are generally not committed to publishing textbooks for LESLLA profile learners with few economic resources. We think governments and authorities should be the ones to invest in adult education policies.

If we want a cohesive society where nobody feels excluded, governments must support access to language classes for the most disadvantaged. It is not enough to think that this learning will happen by assuming that adults will interact with local people at some point. Reality shows us that there are many people who live and survive in language communities without interacting with the outside. This might be the case for women from African and Asian countries.

Last but not least, everyone also has the right to learn to read and write because literacy is essential in our society. Certainly in Catalonia, a figure of 23% of the adult population with a very low or no level of formal education is not a desirable one.

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