

Sous la direction de

**Ksenija DJORDJEVIC LEONARD, Fabio SCETTI
& Jean Léo LEONARD**

**Sociolinguistique insulaire :
avantages et désavantages
d'être une île**



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Maria del Mar VANRELL – *Parlar bleda* in the Balearic Islands: Contact-induced change or a matter of sounding less peripheral?

Resumen

Durante las últimas décadas, al igual que ha ocurrido en las sociedades occidentales, las Islas Baleares han experimentado una diversificación excepcional en términos del número y origen territorial de los inmigrantes. El objetivo de este artículo es explorar el impacto de esta nueva situación sociodemográfica en el archipiélago balear a través del estudio del *parlar bleda*, una variedad de la lengua catalana hablada principalmente por los jóvenes que residen en zonas urbanas. Uno de los hallazgos principales del artículo es que, en lugar de tratarse de una sola variedad, estamos hablando de un conjunto de variedades que comparten diversas características. Estos rasgos incluyen la pérdida de /v/, el yeísmo, y la desvelarización de /ʎ/. Además, en Eivissa (Ibiza) se ha documentado la aparición de una variedad de contacto, utilizada en el contexto educativo. Junto con la descripción en profundidad de las características específicas de estas variedades, las futuras investigaciones deberán centrarse en la información social manifestada a través de su uso.

Palabras clave: Islas Baleares, catalán, *superdiversidad*, variedades urbanas, cambio lingüístico

Riassunto

Nelle ultime decadi, come avvenuto in generale nelle società occidentali, le Isole Baleari hanno sperimentato un'eccezionale diversificazione in termini di numero e origine territoriale degli immigrati. L'obiettivo di quest'articolo è esplorare l'impatto di questa nuova situazione sociodemografica nell'arcipelago balear attraverso lo studio del *parlar bleda*, una varietà della lingua catalana parlata principalmente dai giovani residenti nelle aree urbane. Uno dei principali risultati dell'articolo è che, invece di essere un'unica varietà, si tratta di un insieme di varietà che condividono diverse caratteristiche. Queste caratteristiche includono la perdita di /v/, lo yeísmo e la develarizzazione di /ʎ/. Inoltre, a Eivissa (Ibiza) è stata documentata la comparsa di una varietà di contatto, utilizzata nel contesto educativo. Oltre alla descrizione approfondita delle caratteristiche specifiche di queste varietà, la ricerca futura dovrebbe concentrarsi sulle informazioni sociali manifestate attraverso il loro utilizzo.

Parole chiave: Isole Baleari, catalano, *superdiversità*, varietà urbane, cambiamento linguistico

Résumé

Au cours des dernières décennies, tout comme dans les sociétés occidentales en général, les Îles Baléares ont connu une diversification exceptionnelle en termes de nombre et d'origine territoriale des immigrants. L'objectif de cet article est d'explorer l'impact de cette nouvelle situation sociodémographique dans l'archipel balear à travers l'étude du *parlar bleida*, une variété de la langue catalane parlée principalement par les jeunes résidant dans les zones urbaines. L'un des principaux résultats de l'article est qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une variété unique, mais d'un ensemble de variétés qui partagent plusieurs caractéristiques. Ces caractéristiques comprennent la perte du /v/, le yeïsme et la dévelarisation du /h/. De plus, l'apparition d'une variété de contact, utilisée dans le contexte éducatif, a été documentée à Eivissa (Ibiza). Outre la description approfondie des caractéristiques spécifiques de ces variétés, les recherches futures devraient se concentrer sur l'information sociale manifestée par leur utilisation.

Mots-clés : Îles Baléares, catalan, *superdiversité*, variétés urbaines, changement linguistique

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the Balearic Islands⁵⁸ (see Figure 1 for a map of the Balearic Islands) have witnessed a significant increase in immigrant diversity, primarily fueled by the job opportunities afforded by mass tourism. While the labor market initially attracted mostly Spanish-speakers from various regions of Spain during the first tourism boom, recent years have seen the arrival of immigrants from more diverse locations (Miralles-Plantalamor, 2022), although these newcomers also tend to use Spanish as their *lingua franca* in interactions with locals. Since the 1970s, the population of the islands has nearly tripled, with immigration playing a pivotal role. While in 1970 the non-native-born population comprised 18% of the total, by 2014 this figure had increased to 41.25%

⁵⁸ The traditional names in English for the four main islands comprising the archipelago are, in order of size, Majorca, Menorca, Ibiza, and Formentera. However, here I will use forms that are consistent with the island's names in Catalan, namely *Mallorca*, Menorca, *Eivissa*, and Formentera, with corresponding adjectives.

(EULIB2014). This change has also affected the proportion of the population born in Catalan-speaking households, which has declined over the same period from 82% to 58%. Not all foreign-born residents have come in search of work: there is also a very substantial community of permanently settled expatriates from other parts of Europe, primarily Germany and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, seasonal tourism on a mass scale is a permanent feature of life in the Balearics, with over 16 million visiting the islands in 2022 from all around the world. In their dealings with expatriates as well as tourists, locals most often resort to Spanish for communication, particularly if they lack proficiency in other languages. The complex linguistic situation resulting from this special combination of factors – a phenomenon that has been labelled *superdiversity* (Vertovec, 2007) – has had profound linguistic and social consequences which are still underexplored.

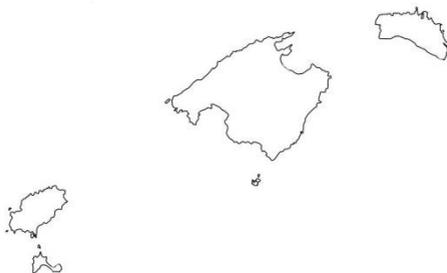


Fig. 1 – Map of the Balearic Islands showing Eivissa and Formentera in the west, Mallorca in the center, and Menorca in the east.

The aim of this paper is to examine one of the linguistic consequences of this *superdiversity* in the Balearic Islands, an

informal variety of spoken Catalan known locally as *parlar bleda*⁵⁹. This language variety, or set of varieties, apparently emerging from a process of structural leveling between Catalan and Spanish, was initially used by urban youth in Mallorca (Bibiloni, 2015; 2023). However, several of its features currently also seem to be present in Menorca (Pons-Borràs, 2016) and Eivissa (according to my observations). While various studies have attempted to describe the defining features of *parlar bleda*, its socio-indexical significance remains poorly understood. Through this paper, I aim to challenge the notion that insular spaces represent conservatism, backwardness, or stagnation, and instead, demonstrate that the islands' geographic isolation has by no means limited their exposure to social and linguistic diversity, and as a result the variety of Catalan spoken there, far from being stagnant, is in fact characterized by dynamic change.

After providing a brief social history of the Balearic Islands and outlining the sociolinguistic context, this paper will delve into the characteristics of youth speech varieties in Balearic Catalan on the three main islands, Mallorca, Menorca, and Eivissa (Ibiza), along with the social meaning that these features may convey. A final section will summarize the findings, also looking at how *parlar bleda* may differ from or align with youth varieties of Catalan spoken on the mainland and suggesting potential avenues for further research.

2. A brief history of Catalan in the Balearic Islands

Catalan was introduced to the Balearic Islands in the 13th century through the conquests led by King Jaume I of Aragon. Following

⁵⁹ According to Bibiloni (2023), the term *bleda* (which literally refers to the leafy vegetable 'chard') aligns with the three definitions provided in the Alcover -Moll dictionary: 1) an excessively delicate, pampered, or squeamish woman; 2) an effeminate or cowardly man; and 3) a person (mainly female) lacking good sense or being too gullible.

the capture of Mallorca in 1229, Eivissa and Formentera were taken in 1236, and Menorca in 1287. The Arabic-speaking population largely fled during the conquest, and the islands were repopulated by Catalan-speakers from Rosselló, Barcelona, and nearby regions (Veny, [1978] 1987; Burkard *et al.*, accepted). Consequently, the Catalan spoken in the Balearic Islands today is classified within the Eastern group of Catalan varieties (Veny, 1986: 31-38). Catalan quickly became the primary language of the archipelago, used across all levels of administration, culture, and social class.

The expansion of Spanish into Catalan-speaking regions began in the mid-15th century after the union of the Crown of Aragon with Castile. Despite maintaining separate administrations, Aragon and Catalonia gradually ceded political and economic influence to Castile, resulting in a decline in the status of their languages compared to Castilian⁶⁰. The 16th and 17th centuries, characterized by the *Siglo de Oro* ('Golden Century') of Castilian literature, corresponded with what is known as *La Decadència* ('The Decline'), during which Catalan experienced a gradual loss of prestige, though the impact was less severe in the Balearic Islands than in other Catalan-speaking regions. While Spanish took precedence as the language of authority and high culture, the dominant social groups retained their use of Catalan, particularly within religious contexts, as did the lower classes, who had minimal exposure to Spanish at that time.

When the War of the Spanish Succession broke out in 1701 Castile and France supported a Bourbon heir to the throne, while the Catalan-speaking regions, including the Balearic Islands, backed a rival Habsburg pretender. With the conclusive Bourbon victory in 1714, what was perceived to be disloyalty on the part of the Catalan-speaking regions was punished by the enactment of the

⁶⁰ I use the terms 'Spanish' and 'Castilian' synonymously here.

Nova Planta decrees, leading to the abolition of all institutions of self-government, full integration into what was increasingly called ‘Spain’, and the imposition of Spanish as the language of public administration throughout the realm. This was followed in 1768 by a decree mandating the use of Spanish in all primary and secondary education. Despite this, Catalan persisted in informal communication, resulting in a diglossic situation where Spanish was used formally and in writing, while Catalan remained prevalent in informal contexts (Romera, 2003: 361).

After General Francisco Franco’s rise to power following the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the language landscape underwent a significant transformation with the prohibition of Catalan and other regional languages in all social spheres, part of the regime’s goal of imposing a uniform ‘Spanish’ culture and identity on the population by eradicating social and linguistic diversity (Romera, 2003: 361). However, scholars (Veny, [1978] 1987: 79) argue that this policy did not substantially alter the sociolinguistic dynamics of the Balearic Islands, as Catalan remained predominant in private settings despite restrictions in public life. The situation underwent further changes starting in the 1950s, when the regime began to show a slight openness to so-called minority languages⁶¹. Finally, with Franco’s death in 1975 and a return to democratic government, Catalan was recognized as an official language alongside Spanish, its co-official status formalized in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. The status of the language was further consolidated in the 1983 Statute of Autonomy granting the Balearic Islands a degree of self-government which, with further legislation in 1986, included the right to establish language policies for the archipelago.

⁶¹ Minority, or better referred to as regional languages in Spain, include Basque, Catalan, and Galician.

3. *The current sociolinguistic context*

At the present time, Spanish is more widely spoken and understood in the Balearic Islands than is Catalan. Native Catalan-speakers generally have a strong command of Spanish due to their social interactions with Spanish-speakers and exposure to Spanish-language media. By contrast, the immigrant community – whether born inside or outside of Spain – tends to have full proficiency only in Spanish. A survey of language use in the islands carried out in 2014 (EULIB2014) confirmed this language distribution, with nearly all respondents reporting proficiency in Spanish but lower proficiency in Catalan, particularly in speaking and writing. However, overall proficiency in Catalan remained high, with a majority of survey informants reporting full mastery of listening and reading skills, and a significant percentage reporting a good command of in writing and speaking skills, with considerable variation across age groups.

The 2014 survey highlighted an intriguing trend: while individuals may possess some knowledge of Catalan, they do not necessarily use it on a regular basis. Particularly in various public settings such as commerce, administration, and services, Catalan is not frequently used, even by those who speak it at home. However, within households, the proportion of individuals using it exclusively or alongside Spanish is similar to the proportion of those predominantly using Spanish (around 47% in both cases). Despite this, intergenerational transmission of Catalan remains robust throughout the islands.

Nonetheless, a more recent study by Castell *et al.* (2023) focusing on young individuals (aged 15–29) suggests that Catalan in the Balearic Islands is going through a regression phase. Though the study shows high proficiency levels among this demographic group, the degree of regular usage is notably lower than expected across various contexts, with an increasing number of Catalan-speaking youngsters switching to Spanish. However, the study

notes factors that seem to militate against this trend, including specific contexts such as non-urban areas or workplaces in the public sector, the availability of opportunities to use Catalan (such as cultural or leisure facilities tailored to young people in Catalan), and the influence of teachers and instructors in higher hierarchical positions.

The relative presence of Catalan and Spanish in education, mass media, and cultural activities in the Balearic Islands is multifaceted (Burkard *et al.*, accepted). Since 1997, at least 50% of primary and secondary school subjects must be taught in Catalan, with individual schools determining the language balance based on local needs. In public tertiary education, while Catalan and Spanish are joint official languages, internal communication is exclusively in Catalan, although language use in the classroom is flexible. In the media, public radio and television channels exclusively broadcast in Catalan, though print news is primarily in Spanish (with a few exceptions). Cultural activities show a divide, with the internet, online gaming, music, and cinema largely in languages other than Catalan, while reading and theater lean towards Catalan usage.

4. Youth speech varieties of Balearic Catalan

In contrast to other Catalan-speaking regions, where studies on either urban speech or youth speech are abundant, the Balearic Islands have seen relatively little research focusing on these topics. The scarcity of studies on urban speech reflects a broader trend in traditional dialectology, inherited by variationist sociolinguistics, which has prioritized local and ‘authentic’ dialects, with data preferentially obtained from older informants viewed as ‘custodians’ of these varieties (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980). This bias may have perpetuated the misconception that rural speech is static while urban speech is dynamic. Though disproven, this assumption persists and is particularly pronounced in geographically isolated regions like the Balearic Islands. Additionally, the lack of research on youth speech may stem from

the common perception that it is transitory and non-standard, linguistic behavior to be disparaged as lazy or uneducated (Giménez García, 2022).

Rather exceptionally, in the case of Mallorca a good deal of data on the urban youth varieties of Balearic Catalan are available, thanks to work by Gabriel Bibiloni. In Bibiloni (2015), he described a process of structural leveling between Catalan and Castilian that he had detected in the speech of young Mallorcans resulting from the influence of Castilian on Catalan. In Bibiloni (2016), he set out a more precise characterization of *parlar bleida*. One of the phonetic peculiarities he noted was the develarization of lateral /l/, which Bibiloni conjectured originated during the post-Civil War period when Mallorcans first began to shift to Spanish, in part due to the large-scale immigration of Spanish-speaking immigrants. He suggested that women were the first to adopt the form, seen as a high-prestige variant, despite resistance from men. However, the phenomenon quickly spread through schools and to younger people. Consequently, speakers under 25 or 30 in Palma, the Mallorcan capital, now produce lateral /l/ rather than the velarized /l/ that originally characterized Mallorcan Catalan.

Bibiloni (2016) noted several other phonetic features characteristic of the urban speech of young people in Mallorca, including *betacismo*, the loss of distinction between [b] and [v] (<vaca> [b]aca ‘cow’), and *yeísmo*, wherein the sound [ʎ] of <ll> was replaced with [j] and [ɟ] or [j] in absolute final position (<lloca> [ɟ]oca ‘broody’, <gallina> ga[ɟ]ina ‘hen’, but <gall> ga[j] ‘cock’). Additionally, some speakers exhibited *yeísmo* when they replace fricative and affricate consonants [ʒ] and [dʒ] with [j] and [ɟ] (<Jaume> [j]aume ‘proper name’, <pujar> pu[j]ar ‘go up’, <adjectiu> a[ɟ]ectiu ‘adjective’, etc.). Other sociophonetic phenomena present in the urban speech of Mallorcan youth were the lack of voicing of word-final fricatives preceding word-initial vowels (<dues al·lotes> due[s] al·lotes ‘two girls’) and affrication of the initial /f/ (<xarxa> [tʃ]arxa ‘net’), even at the postlexical

level (<no xerris> *no* [tʃ]erris ‘don’t chat’) (Bibiloni, 2016: 130-131).

Alongside the broader studies by Bibiloni (2015, 2016), two experimental investigations have been carried out (Pieras, 1999; Simonet, 2010) focusing on two main areas: the realization of the alveolar lateral and the indexicality of various social identities associated with different variants of this segment. In a study on the perceptual classification of alveolar laterals, Pieras (1999) observed that Spanish-dominant bilingual speakers and Catalan-dominant bilingual speakers exclusively used light laterals when speaking Spanish. Notably, only older Catalan-dominant bilingual speakers produced the dark laterals characteristic of Catalan when speaking Spanish, suggesting this tendency is on the decline in Mallorcan Spanish, possibly due to a social stigma being associated with dark laterals, perhaps perceived as conveying low social prestige. In the second study, Simonet (2010) analyzed alveolar laterals in Catalan and Spanish produced by two groups of bilinguals and found that most bilinguals transferred phonetic features from their dominant language to their non-dominant one, regardless of the degree of habitual exposure to the latter. However, some participants did not exhibit distinct acoustic distributions for their laterals, possibly due to social or identity factors. Simonet suggests that dark laterals may index a local and rural origin (Simonet, 2010: 675).

Several recent experimental papers (Ramírez & Simonet, 2018; Rost Bagudanch, 2019; 2020) focusing on *yeísmo* in Catalan and Spanish in Mallorca have also provided valuable insights. Due to space constraints, I will concentrate here on Ramírez and Simonet (2018), which investigated discrimination of the /ʎ/–/ʒ/ contrast in Mallorcan Catalan among two groups of Catalan–Spanish bilinguals with different linguistic backgrounds: one group was Catalan-dominant and the other was Spanish-dominant. Participants completed a discrimination task involving pairs such as [ʎ]–[ʒ], [ʎ]–[j], and [ʒ]–[j]. The findings revealed that Spanish-

dominant bilinguals generally exhibited lower accuracy in discriminating sounds within the /k/-/z/ contrast compared to Catalan-dominant bilinguals. Catalan-dominant individuals, conversely, demonstrated high accuracy in discriminating pairs containing the sound [z]. However, participants of all linguistic backgrounds struggled to discriminate the [ʎ]–[j] pair.

Regarding Menorca, there are fewer works discussing urban varieties, but some highlight the innovative features characteristic of youth speech. For example, Pons Borràs (2016) examined *yeísmo* in Menorca from a variationist perspective, considering both geographical and generational differences. After conducting almost 300 surveys across various Menorcan towns, Pons Borràs discerned a tripartite division of the island comprising a western zone with no indication of change, a central zone showing incipient change, and an eastern zone where a change was underway. This eastern change was apparent only in informants under age 40, suggesting that *yeísmo* documented previously (Perea, 1999) may have reversed in the latter half of the 20th century, with the current change possibly resulting from Spanish influence.

In Eivissan Catalan's vowel system, two separate areas can be identified, Western Eivissan on one hand and the rest of the island, including Vila Eivissan, on the other (Veny, 1999: 47-58). Western Eivissan displays a seven-vowel system similar to Central Catalan, while Eivissan in the rest of the island exhibits an eight-vowel system akin to Mallorcan. Torres Torres (1983) observed a lack of contrast between mid-back vowels /o/ and /ɔ/ among young people in the Catalan spoken in the capital (i.e., Vila Eivissan) and the town of Santa Eulàlia des Riu. More recent research by Hamann and Torres-Tamarit (2023) has also focused on the acoustic realization of the vowel system. Their findings indicate neutralization of the contrasts between /o, ɔ/ in favor of /o/, and between /ɛ/ and /ə/ in favor of /ə/, resulting in a six-vowel system: /i, e, ə, a, o, u/. Limited exposure to Eivissan Catalan, due to its minoritization and language substitution in favor of Spanish, may

have facilitated this neutralization, especially considering the overlap in the realization of the two mid front vowel sounds (Hamann & Torres-Tamarit, 2023: 24-25).

Parallel to this ongoing change, which has reached an advanced stage in urban areas, a significant shift was noted in 2018 among young people aged 18–20 towards a phonetic system which diverged from traditional Eivissan Catalan, as documented by Vanrell (2023), by exhibiting a simplified vowel system and certain traits reminiscent of Valencian Catalan. This shift was detected when a questionnaire was distributed among secondary school teachers in Eivissan schools which asked them to characterize the features of their students' Catalan. The teachers' responses, a selection of which are reproduced below in (1)–(3), revealed that in more formal or scripted contexts, young people tend to use a dialect closer to Valencian Catalan than to traditional Eivissan.

(1) [...] Interestingly, among my few Catalan-speaking Eivissan students, their speech does not reflect the characteristics of our local dialect; instead, they often reproduce a mixed model, drawing heavily from various dialectal varieties, particularly those of the Valencian Community, lacking neutral vowels and exhibiting a perfect match between spelling and pronunciation [...].

This linguistic pattern appears to be used regardless of whether the speakers' first language is Catalan or not.

(2) In formal classroom settings or during reading activities, both groups, whether native speakers of Catalan or speakers of other languages, tend to assimilate and pronounce words similarly, adhering to a model closer to Valencian.

Several teachers speculated about the possible reasons for the emergence of this new variety or style.

(3) I would argue that the cause is multifaceted, but primarily, I would emphasize two factors: 1) the majority of students have Spanish as their first language. Consequently, when they speak or read in Catalan, they adopt the Valencian phonetic model, which aligns with Spanish, particularly concerning [unstressed] vowels. In response, students who are native Catalan speakers, recognizing their minority status, tend to alter their phonetics to assimilate to the majority, possibly influenced by a sense of self-deprecation; and 2) the majority of teachers in schools and institutes use this pronunciation, which resembles Valencian.

As suggested in comment (3), it could originate from a variety that developed within the group of speakers whose L1 is not Catalan. However, comment (2) suggests that it has evolved as a strategy of interactional accommodation between the two groups. It is noteworthy that not only students but also some teachers reportedly use this variety. But perhaps this is unsurprising given that roughly one third of the teaching staff in Eivissan secondary schools are of Valencian origin (see figure 2), a reflection of the traditionally strong social and commercial ties between Valencia and Eivissa (the two locations are also geographically relatively close).

Conclusions and future research

This paper has explored the social and linguistic consequences of *superdiversity* in the Balearic Islands, a region traditionally viewed as isolated, but which has undergone significant demographic and social changes in recent decades, largely driven by mass tourism. One example of the linguistic consequences of these changes is *parlar bleada*, a variety of spoken Catalan that is believed to have emerged from contact between Catalan and Spanish, particularly among urban youth.

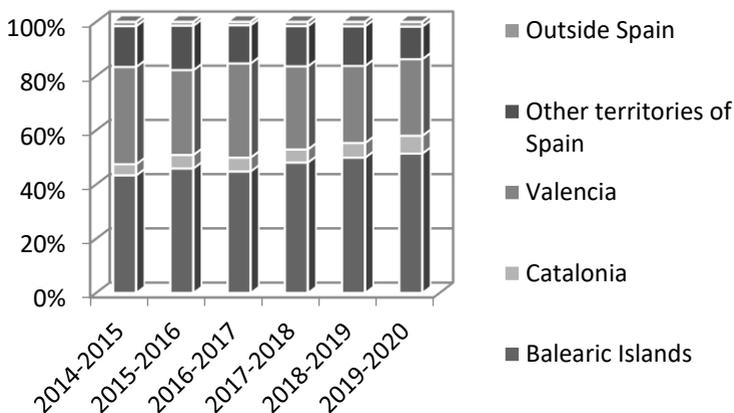


Fig. 2 – Origin of teaching staff in secondary schools on the island of Eivissa. (Source: Direcció General de Personal Docent, 2020).

Following a concise social history of Catalan in the Balearic Islands and a description of the current sociolinguistic landscape, we have reviewed various studies focusing on the features of *parlar bleada* and other urban youth varieties of Balearic Catalan. Notably, while Bibiloni (2015) recognizes that urban youth varieties like *parlar bleada* encompass not only specific phonetic traits but also aspects of syntax, phraseology, and semantic structures, the majority of studies primarily investigate pronunciation-related features.

One of the most significant findings from this paper is that rather than a single distinct urban youth variety, there exist a diverse range of varieties with shared characteristics, observed most notably in Mallorca. These traits include the loss of /v/, the replacement of /k/ with [j], [j], and [ʃ], and the replacement of /z/ and /dʒ/ with [j] and [ʃ] (known as *yeísmo*), alongside the develarization of /h/. Young Catalan-speakers in Menorca (and also Eivissa) also exhibit *yeísmo*.

Finally, the speech of young people in Eivissa shows a simplified vowel system and the emergence of a contact variety resembling Valencian Catalan which mainly appears in educational settings. Nonetheless, while these observational results are compelling, conclusive instrumental studies are still lacking.

Regarding the origin of these innovations, the evidence found is not entirely conclusive. While it has been assumed from a prescriptivist perspective that most of these changes are exogenous (Bibiloni, 2015; 2016, among others), there are also indications that endogenous pressures might also be at play. Firstly, although it is generally accepted that Catalan /l/ is darker than Spanish /l/, lighter realizations of Catalan /l/ are documented in specific local Balearic varieties such as that spoken in the town of Felanitx in Mallorca (Bibiloni, 2023: 27). Secondly, along the same lines, while *yeísmo* is often attributed to direct influence from Spanish, there is evidence of its presence as early as the beginning of the 20th century in specific communities in Mallorca and Menorca. For instance, Alcover (Perea, 1999) documents the existence of *yeísmo* in Maó in 1906. Finally, according to Montoya (1998: 86), the seven-vowel system of Western Eivissan may have influenced the speech of certain working-class neighborhoods in the capital, which were thus in close contact with Vila Eivissan. The /ɛ, ə/ to /ə/ neutralization that we see in Vila Eivissan, then, could be the result of hypercorrection as a response to the speech of these specific popular districts. However, this does not rule out the possibility that the change might also have been strengthened by the limited exposure of younger speakers to Eivissan Catalan relative to Spanish.

Regarding the existence of *parlar bleda* beyond the Balearic Islands, there are indications that certain linguistic features, like the devalarized /l/, may have also emerged in cities such as Barcelona and Valencia during the 1950s and 1960s (Bibiloni, 2023: 15-17). Traits such as vowel system simplification and *yeísmo* have been reported to be currently present in these cities (Carrera-Sabaté &

Borràs-Comes, 2023; Cortés *et al.*, 2019; Calvo, 2021), albeit to varying degrees. However, the social significance of these features may differ between the mainland and the Balearic Islands, although research on this topic is limited. While velarized /h/ in the *parlar bleda* of the Balearic Islands may index a rural identity (Simonet, 2010: 675), its meaning in mainland varieties remains unclear. Additionally, a new contact variety in the school context of Eivissa may serve as an accommodation strategy between L1 Catalan-speakers and speakers of other languages, potentially influenced by demographic shifts on the island.

In conclusion, while *parlar bleda* is often linked solely to contact-induced changes, evidence suggests that certain structures within specific subvarieties of Balearic Catalan may have facilitated unique developments. Therefore, it may be more accurate to view these developments as *facilitated* by contact rather than *caused* by it. Moreover, it is important not to overlook the socio-indexical significance of these new linguistic structures. It is plausible that what began as an urban contact variety has evolved into a means of negotiating social roles and fostering a more inclusive collective identity. Future research should seek to further characterize the urban youth varieties of Balearic Catalan that have emerged over the last 60 years and capture their socio-indexical meaning for both those who speak them and those who speak other varieties of Catalan.

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