

## Learning Catalan in Sitges: a personal journey



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**A**s English speakers, we are perhaps not the most celebrated linguists in the world. The fact that *L'Eco de Sitges* includes these pages for us says something generous about this community. If you are reading this article, perhaps this is something for you!

In December 2025, I sat in an online queue to secure a place on the free Council Catalan Course, which I had thought about doing so many times before. I realised at that moment how much I wanted to learn the language.

I arrived in Barcelona at the end of 2018, and by Summer 2025 my Castellano was finally at a level where I could take on something new. The course is taught in Spanish, not English, which felt nerve-wracking, but curiosity, I have learned, is usually worth following.

It wasn't nearly as complicated as I had made it in my head. Like most things. I sat down at my laptop and searched for CPNL. You can navigate the website in

English, which helps significantly. I completed a short form evaluating my level - I was most definitely a basic beginner. I had tried previously to get on the course in September, but it was full. However, I was determined. It was time!

During the Autumn, knowing that I was going to embark upon this course, I started listening more carefully to Catalan words, reading them, looking them up, actively participating in learn-

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ing more about the language. As daunting as it felt, it was also exciting. Opening up a whole new level of integration into the community I have chosen to live in.

Once my place was secured, I received a confirmation email with instructions on which books I would need and how to prepare. The commitment was real,

four hours a week, Mondays and Wednesdays from 16h to 18h, at the OC de Sitges, Centre de Normalització Lingüística de l'Alt Penedès i el Garraf (CPNL). To register, visit [www.cpnl.cat](http://www.cpnl.cat).

A friend joined too, and we were the only two English people in the class. I'll be honest, four hours a week plus homework is a significant undertaking. I felt challenged, but the fact is, I enjoyed every class. The course teacher, Laura Verdejo Sánchez, is warm, welcoming, funny and totally supportive. Her focus is on people being able to communicate with each other, and she does it so very well.

The course requires a 75% attendance record to receive certification. Receiving that certificate was so rewarding, something I had done for myself and for my community. To integrate more, to understand more, to demonstrate respect for the place in which I live and to feel more at home.

By the end of the first three months, the class was bonded. A wonderful mix of nationali-

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**Catalan session in Escola d'Adults.**

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ties, Italy, Cuba, Colombia, Pakistan, Germany, Venezuela, Perú, England, Guatemala, California, Argentina, Uruguay, Ukraine, all committed to learning the local language.

Since completing Basic Level 1, I include a little Catalan in my daily interactions with neighbours, shopkeepers and service providers, as well as in my professional interactions. The response is so positive and the sense of recognition within the community is real. I wonder why it took me so long.

The free Council Catalan Course is so much more than a language course. It brings people together, opens up a dialogue beyond words, and nurtures respect and cohesion between cultures.

I am now a few weeks into Basic Level 2. I still have a lot of learning to do. I am far from fluent, yet I understand so much more. There are two more English people on the course now. *A poc a poc!*

Maybe you will sign up for the next one? I highly recommend it. *Molt bé!*