

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE IN CATALUNYA

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A people is a fact of mentality, of language, of feelings. It is a historic fact, and it is a fact of spiritual ethnicity. Finally it is a fact of will. In our case however it is in an important sense an achievement of language.
Jordi Pujol (**Construir Catalunya** 1980)

INTRODUCTION

The politics of language returned to the centre of Catalan politics in 1997, with the Generalitat (the autonomous Catalan government) debating a new language law. The Linguistic Policy Law was eventually passed on 7 January 1998. It replaced the existing Linguistic Normalisation Law that had been agreed through a consensus of all political parties and with popular support in 1983. Reaching consensus this time proved much more difficult. The law's principal backers were the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC - the Catalan Socialist Party) and Convergència i Unió (CiU - the nationalist and Christian Democrat coalition led by president Jordi Pujol that has governed Catalunya since the first autonomous elections of 1980). These two largest parties in Catalunya held divergent views about the law's nature and impact; in particular on the obligations it imposes on private citizens and its likely impact on 'convivència' - the general mutual tolerance and respect which Catalan and Castilian speakers (many of whom are first and second generation immigrants from other parts of Spain) have for each other. Iniciativa per Catalunya - Els Verds (IC-EV - a party which was formed from

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the Catalan Communist Party and the Greens) and the small Partit per la Independència also supported the new law.

Two political parties, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC, a nationalist party) and the Partit Popular (PP, the right wing party which holds power in Madrid but is dependent on the nationalists for a majority), voted against the law, but for diametrically opposed reasons. ERC denounced it as a 'big lie which only covers up a pretend peace', since it left the dominance of Castilian unchallenged: in their view it was simply a conspiracy between the PSC and CiU. On the other hand, the Partit Popular opposed it because it discriminated against Castilian speakers and endangered 'convivencia'. One of its leaders even called for civil disobedience to the law, claiming that it was an 'Orwellian' measure that would turn schools into 'linguistic torture chambers'. Controversy has also dogged its implementation. In June 1998 Pascual Maragall, ex-mayor of Barcelona and socialist candidate for Jordi Pujol's post as President of Catalunya at the 1999 elections, declared that the new linguistic law was 'a mistake' (*Avui*, 29 June 1998). The law's attempts to increase the proportion of Hollywood films dubbed into Catalan ran into trouble with the Spanish Constitutional Tribunal as well as resistance from Hollywood studios and Spanish distributors. Conversely, several nationalists saw the new law as the flagship measure of the current parliament.

The language issue also featured in the 1999 Catalan elections, but by then all parties emphasised their moderation and desire to avoid polarising the issue. Pujol addressed a meeting in the metropolitan belt in Castilian, while both ERC and PP played down their opposition to the new law. The brief controversy over the Linguistic Policy Law was also surprising because the differences between it and the 1983 law were far from substantial.

LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CATALUNYA

In order to analyse these cleavages it is important to understand something of the history of Catalan nationalism, Catalunya's genesis as a stateless nation and the role of language in this process, especially as a focus of the search for the elusive 'fet diferencial' that sets Catalunya apart from the rest of Spain. There are many similarities to the Scottish experience, such as the uneasy relationship to Empire and the historical robustness of 'civil society' in developing a sense of national identity. There are also many differences. Since the 19th century Catalunya has been the industrial powerhouse of Spain, alongside Euskadi (the Basque Country), and, unlike Scotland after World War One, has not lost this position. Although many of the poorer

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regions of Spain have started to catch up economically, Catalan GDP is still around 20% above that of Spain as a whole. In contrast to the net emigration which Scotland has experienced for much of the last two centuries, Catalunya has been a magnet for immigration from rural Spain, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.

According to Pierre Vilar (1962) Catalunya shared with Milan the unusual experience of undergoing its own autonomous industrialisation, rather than being developed, or underdeveloped, by the impact of economic forces from outside. Industrialisation was strong and rapid, especially in Barcelona. The Bonaplata mill there was the first factory in Spain to use a Watt steam engine, and in 1848 the Barcelona to Mataro line became Spain's first railway. Barcelona's population doubled between 1825 and 1850, and more than doubled again by 1900, leaving a legacy, amongst other things, of explosive proletarian militancy.

Both economic autonomy and the degree of development had their limits however. The markets for much business were local rather than international, and while the Catalan bourgeoisie controlled industry in family businesses, they were slow to develop into public corporations, and money capital often came from outside. Local raw materials such as iron or coal were lacking. What eventually turned the Catalan bourgeoisie nationalist, the argument goes, was therefore not so much their desire to defend themselves against the wave of modernisation proceeding from Britain and France (as Tom Nairn's ideas might lead us to expect), but, on the contrary, their frustration and inability to drag a moribund and backward looking Madrid forward with them. This saddled Catalunya with what Giner has called 'arrested development' (1980, pp.8-9).

By the nineteenth century Catalan nationalism might be seen as an ideal type of Nairn's model. The petit bourgeoisie and intellectuals first set about the rediscovery of a Catalan literary, cultural and eventually a political tradition. The most important area of their activity was language. The use of Catalan extended beyond Catalunya to the Balearic Islands, Valencia and elsewhere, while Porta (1997) and others have argued it seems likely that in the area that is now Catalunya both Catalan and Castilian were in circulation. While other local languages in Europe withered away in the nineteenth and early twentieth century under the impact of the development of national state languages employed in public education, law and commerce, Catalan's role as a focus for national identity, far from dying out, was championed by young urban radicals and the bourgeoisie.

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Catalunya had backed the losing side in the War of Spanish succession and the consequence of its military defeat was the surrender of its autonomy to Madrid. After the Phillippe V's **Decreto de la Nueva Planta** in 1716, Castilian had become the language of the law, commerce, and, most important later on, public education. As with other non-state languages Catalan was oral and probably owed its remaining strength to the countryside. There were no standard rules for spelling or grammar. Thus began (initially inevitably but ironically in Castilian) the *Renaixença*: the virtual reinvention of modern Catalan as a written literary language through poetry and later prose, by the efforts of urban intellectuals. The **Institut d'Estudis Catalans** was established in 1907 and under its auspices Pompeu Fabra published the language's first grammar (1918) and dictionary (1923). However it never succeeded in producing a mass circulation national newspaper in Catalan and, since compulsory public education was controlled from Madrid, this reinforced the importance of Castilian as the means of written communication and learning.

Not until the 1880s did this nationalist endeavour take on a political form, and at first this was almost exclusively middle class, demanding industrial protection and various forms of integrated and autonomous Catalan government rather than national independence. Enric Prat de la Riba's **La nacionalitat catalana** only appeared in 1906, but by 1914 the first specifically Catalan administration, the *Mancomunitat*, was established. From then on Catalan nationalism took an explicitly republican turn and Spanish politics for the next half century was dominated by a ferocious battle between the authoritarian right, determined by force of arms to create a homogeneous Spanish state amenable to rule from Madrid, and its twin enemies: socialists and nationalists - what Franco labelled the '*rojoseparatistas*'- who sought a less centralised and more democratic polity. Within this battle, language came to occupy a central symbolic space.

The Catalan language suffered a series of repressions and revivals: it was suppressed by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in 1925, given official recognition (jointly with Castilian) by the Second Republic through the Catalan Statute of Autonomy of 1932-39 and finally proscribed by Franco in the bloody aftermath of his conquest of Catalunya at the end of the Civil War. It emerged again as a symbol of the political emancipation of Catalunya in the democratisation process after 1975. It is not possible to understand the contemporary debate without appreciating both the importance of the Catalan language to Catalan identity and the depth of repression visited on Catalunya by a dictator who hated Catalunya both for its republicanism and its nationalism.

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As Benet (1973) describes, Franco's victory in the civil war was followed by vicious repression. Oriol Pi-Sunyer (1980, pp.108-9) describes this as follows:

A totalitarian system attempted to control the totality of civil culture: it was not simply the Statute of Autonomy that was abrogated but any entity that might seem to pose a challenge to the state, whether a boy scout troop or a choral society.

The Catalan language was one of the targets of this repression. The public and written use of Catalan as a language was banned. Books in Catalan were publicly burned and pulped. Notices in public offices instructed the population to stop 'barking' and 'speak the language of the empire' or 'speak Christian'. Private mail was sometimes intercepted and items found written in Catalan destroyed. Over time (mainly after 1959) the repression of the language and Catalan culture became less intense, and its limited use, study and publication came to be permitted.

Meanwhile the position of Catalan was profoundly affected by another development. The economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s brought many new industries to Barcelona. This drew in immigrants, not only from rural Catalunya but also from Aragon, Andalucia and elsewhere, to the sprawling industrial suburbs of the metropolitan belt around Barcelona. Most of these workers were Castilian speakers. Over three quarters of a million people arrived in the 1960s, fewer in the 1970s and by the early 1980s net migration was negative. As a result, according to the 1991 census, 4.09 million people were born in Catalunya, while 1.87 million were born in other areas of Spain. Many of those born in Catalunya were children of immigrants, so that in the 1990s surveys showed that less than half the population of Catalunya had Catalan as their 'mother tongue'.

Tables 1 to 4, based on the 1996 Centre of Sociological Research (CIS) survey on 'National and Regional Consciousness', describe the contemporary national and linguistic diversity of Spain. Table 1 shows the importance of language to national feeling across all of Spain, not just in Catalunya. This is the case despite the minority nature of national languages in Spain, as shown in Table 2.

However it would be wrong to equate the powerful sense of national or regional identity in contemporary Spain with the desire for independence or the break up of the existing Spanish polity. As Tables 3 and 4 show, only in the Basque country does a clear majority of people report feeling more Basque than Spanish, or say they are for independence.

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THE 1983 LINGUISTIC NORMALISATION LAW

As well as creating autonomous regions with their own governments, including the Generalitat in Catalunya, the 1978 Spanish Constitution recognised the languages of these autonomous regions. The Constitution described Castilian as 'the official language of the State' and established that 'All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it'. However the third clause of Article 3 also stated that 'other Spanish languages will also be official in their respective Autonomous Communities'. In 1979 Catalunya's

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Table 1
Which is the main factor which makes your autonomous community a nation?
(only those who prefer to refer to it as such)

Main factor:	Autonomous Community of Respondent				
	Andalucía	Catalunya	Valencia	Galicia	Euskadi
Its language	22	46	49	54	42
Its ethnic or racial characteristics	2	1	4	4	8
Its history	22	30	28	15	25
Its economic features	2	3	0	4	1
Its culture (customs and traditions)	19	14	17	15	18
The consciousness and will of the people	7	5	2	1	5
<i>sample size</i>	65	265	38	58	109

Source: CIS 2228 Authors' analysis

Table 2
Respondent's mother tongue
('the language you learned as a child in your home speaking with your mother')

Mother tongue:	Autonomous Community of Respondent				
	Balearic islands	Catalunya	Valencia	Galicia	Euskadi
Spanish - Castilian	37	55	54	29	78
Catalan	11	39	1	0	0
Galician	1	1	0	55	0
Basque	0	0	0	8	16
Valencian	0	1	39	0	0
Mallorquin / Balearic	47	0	0	0	0
More than one language	3	3	5	3	4
<i>sample size</i>	93	780	476	357	276

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Source: CIS 2228 Authors' analysis

Table 3
Respondent's description of national identity
('Which of the following phrases best describes you?')

	Autonomous Community of Respondent				
	Andalucía	Catalunya	Valencia	Galicia	Euskadi
I feel Spanish only	5	13	19	5	5
I feel more Spanish than Andalucian/Catalan/etc.	10	12	15	8	4
I feel as much Spanish as Andalucian/Catalan/etc.	68	37	54	44	36
I feel more Andalucian/Catalan/etc. than Spanish	13	26	10	36	30
I feel Andalucian/Catalan/etc. only	3	11	1	7	21
<i>sample size</i>	826	779	478	363	277

Source: CIS 2228 Authors' analysis

Table 4
Are you for or against independence for your Autonomous Community?

	Catalunya	Euskadi
For	34	44
Against	54	32
Don't know	11	16
<i>sample size</i>	775	276

Source: CIS 2228 Authors' analysis

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Statute of Autonomy established Catalan both as the 'llengua pròpia' of Catalunya ('Catalunya's own language') and as an official language with equal status to Castilian. It gave the Generalitat the duty to '... guarantee normal and official use of both languages' (Generalitat de Catalunya 1993, pp.12-13).

Colomer (1986, p.261) and others have argued that the constitution is open to many interpretations and that such ambiguity may in part have been deliberate, thus allowing people with quite different views to support it (Ferrer 1984, pp.105). In particular, as we discuss below, just what a 'llengua pròpia' comprises is vague; it is unclear how it can co-exist with another official language; the consequence of having two official languages in one territory is not addressed and what is meant by the languages' 'normal use' is open to a wide variety of interpretations.

In 1983 The Linguistic Normalisation Law was passed by the parliament of the Generalitat with only one abstention and no votes against. It put into practice the Statute of Autonomy's recognition of Catalan. The law explicitly described Catalan both as ethnic - the fundamental essence of Catalunya - and as civic - the focus for an integrative and inclusive Catalan national identity. The preamble to the law argued that the precarious public position of Catalan was due to four factors: its loss of official status and proscription; compulsory education in Castilian; immigration; and finally the dominance of Castilian in the mass media, especially television. The Act described its aims accordingly as the protection and promotion of Catalan; to make its official use 'effective'; the 'normalisation' of Catalan in the mass media; and the spread of the knowledge of Catalan.

In general terms the four problems identified in the preamble to the law were to be dealt with by four solutions. The neglect and repression of the Catalan language were to be countered by its adoption as an official language, by the promotion of 'normalisation' and by the requirement to know and use it where relevant: for example in the process of government, in education and in commerce too. Compulsory public education was to become increasingly based on Catalan. Those who did not know the language (such as immigrants from elsewhere in Spain) were to be offered instruction. Subsidies were to tackle the power of Castilian in the mass media. The Generalitat was to promote Catalan both domestically and abroad.

Following the 1983 law a set of government bodies and institutions was set up to ensure the law was applied. The **Pla General de normalització lingüística** was drawn up in 1995 with two main objectives: to make sure

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Catalan was used in both public and private institutions and to protect the linguistic rights of all citizens (Webber and Trueta 1991; Leprêtre 1997; Romani and Strubell i Trueta 1997) .

PROGRESS IN THE NORMALISATION OF CATALAN AFTER THE 1983 LAW

In part because of the 1983 law, but more generally because of the counter-reaction to Francoist repression, Catalan has enjoyed a substantial renaissance. Not only is it more visible in aspects of every day life, but there is also an increasing percentage of the population who can not only understand it, but also read, speak or write it. The situation within Catalunya varies enormously: because it is a modern metropolis, and also the main destination of migrants from elsewhere in Spain, both languages circulate in Barcelona. However, in the rural comarques things are different; Catalan is what everyone speaks, and the local press is mostly in Catalan.

What is striking is the degree to which immigrants into Catalunya have learned Catalan, even within the shadow of Franco's repression, and despite the volume of immigration and the segregation of many immigrants into metropolitan belt ghettos where Catalan might never be heard. Giner suggests that the desire of the immigrants themselves to integrate, together with the class prestige of Catalan, explain this. 'Very roughly, in most recent times the situation has been this: the higher one went in the status, prestige and power social scale, the more frequently Catalan was likely to be the spoken language' (1980, pp.48-50). To this we might add the commitment of trade unions and workers' parties, including the Communist Party, to both Catalan autonomy and the Catalan language as an essential part of the struggle against Franco and in favour of a democratic Spanish polity. This commitment is shown in the support of the 1997 law by IC-EV.

Knowledge of Catalan is definitely expanding, as the figures in Table 5 suggest. Partly this is the result of education, with new cohorts of youngsters educated in Catalan. It has become more usual for businesses, public authorities and so on to prefer to communicate both orally and in writing in Catalan. Increasingly appointments for jobs in either the public or private sectors require evidence of proficiency in Catalan. It is also clear that Catalan is deeply embedded in popular culture.

Evidence of 'convivencia' comes from the 1996 CIS Study which asked bilingual respondents which language they used in a number of situations

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(Table 6). These figures suggest both a stronger role for Catalan, especially in the workplace, and a fairly bilingual social reality, sustained by tolerance for the other language.

Table 5
The increasing knowledge of Catalan

percentage of the population who can:	1996	1991 (age 3+)	1986 (age 3+)	1981
Understand	95	94	91	81
Speak fluently	80	68	64	64
Read	84	68	61	61
Write correctly	53	40	32	32

Sources: Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) and Catalan Cultural Council; Hall 1990 and Census results.

Table 6
Language used in everyday life
(Catalunya respondents only)

	Castilian	Catalan	Both	<i>sample size</i>
Speaking with people who you live with	49	43	8	723
Relating to your friends	38	35	27	723
In shops	36	47	17	723
Answering the telephone	47	46	7	722
Asking a stranger something in the street	44	43	13	721
At your place of work or study	34	38	19	721
At a government office	40	45	15	719

source: CIS 2228, authors' analysis.

However, although the 1983 normalisation law proposed that Catalan and Castilian should both be 'official languages' this has not always undermined the dominance of Castilian. This is especially true in dealings with the police and judiciary; virtually all the documentation of the *Policía Nacional* remains

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in Castilian and the Department of Justice estimates that 95% of court proceedings are in Castilian.

Like Scotland, Catalunya has its own press, all of which, with the exception of **La Vanguardia**, has developed since the fall of Franco. In 1997 the latter paper sold just under 200,000 copies daily, about 10,000 less than its rival, **El Periódico**. The Barcelona edition of **El País** (the only Madrid-based newspaper with a significant circulation) sold 57,000 and **Avui** (until recently the only Catalunya-wide paper published in Catalan and with a more explicitly nationalist line) 33,000. In October 1997, under the advertising slogan 'Tal com som/Tal como somos' ('Just like we are' in Catalan and Castilian) **El Periódico** launched a Catalan edition of the paper, so that it now appears with identical copy but in two languages. This was both a commercial and political success. Within weeks, around two fifths of **El Periódico**'s circulation was taken by the Catalan edition.

Two television channels, TV3 (established 1983) and Canal33 (1988), both subsidised by the new Catalan government, broadcast full time in Catalan, as well as several radio stations. A survey in October 1996 showed that while 52% of respondents usually watched TV3 rather than the national TVE1, only 6% had seen a film or video and 22% bought a book in Catalan in the last three months. Support for publishing in Catalan, and for translation of works into the language, meant that by 1995 some 5,000 works were appearing annually.

THE DEBATE OVER NORMALISATION

The evidence presented in the previous section makes it clear that Catalan has made a strong recovery from the repression of the Franco years. Everyone agreed that 'normalisation' of Catalan was necessary to liberate it from the legacy of Franco. But this begs the question of what the achievement of 'normalisation' would actually comprise. Beneath the civic commitment to bilingualism lie very divergent ideas about its nature, purpose and consequences.

For some the essence of normalisation lies in ensuring that citizens have the right and opportunity to use Catalan, and the development of its use will be driven by choice. As long as public education includes both Catalan and Castilian, and there are measures in place to defend language diversity against the corrosive effects of globalisation in the media and information industries, then normalisation means the right to choose to use Catalan. To promote the further 'catalanisation' of society would inevitably threaten the

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civil rights of those whose first language was not Catalan, making language a means of social exclusion from citizenship rather than inclusion. It would endanger 'convivencia' by erecting a division between indigenous Catalan speakers on the one hand, and immigrants to Catalunya from the rest of Spain for whom Catalan is only a second language, or between those who have come through the education system after the introduction of Catalan and know how to write it correctly, and older Catalans who may know it only as an oral language.

For many Catalan nationalists, however, both in Pujol's party and in the ERC, the impressive recovery of Catalan has been 'stalled' not only by the material forces of globalisation of the modern economy but also by pressure from Madrid. This means that formally equal rights for the two languages, with an emphasis only on choice and bilingualism leaves Catalan fatally unprotected. As long as Castilian remains the only official language at the level of the Spanish state in practice this means the subordination of Catalan to Castilian. 'Living in Catalan' is still impossible when watching the latest film or dealing with the police means using Castilian.

According to this argument 'normalisation' can only be achieved if Catalan enjoys the same sort of hegemony in Catalunya that state languages enjoy elsewhere. Only if it is the language which many people are obliged to speak, in various contexts, is it the language that people can normally use. For some (Branchadell 1997) this implies not only subordinating the civil rights of individual Castilian speakers to the needs of the Catalan language, but also requiring those parts of the Spanish state which deal with Catalunya to do so in the language of Catalunya. For this group, bilingualism could ultimately lead to the dominance of Castilian: the full normalisation of Catalan therefore requires restrictions in the use of Castilian.

THE 1998 LAW

In 1997 *Convergència i Unió* eventually brought forward proposals for a new language law, designed to reinforce the 1983 law and continue the development of Catalan. This was partly to address the concerns of language nationalists who felt that the 1983 law did not go far enough. Partly it was for political reasons: CiU's alliance with the PP in Madrid left it exposed to criticism from its own more nationalist support. Although there was substantial public consultation over the new law, and consensus that it should follow the model established by the 1983 law, the original version was drafted by linguistic nationalists within the CiU. Among the controversial

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measures were the preamble which suggested that one of the factors which rendered the position of Catalan 'precarious' was the 'successive waves of migration of recent decades'. The new law was to propose a 'duty to know' Catalan on citizens in Catalunya; to make Catalan the 'preferred' language of public authorities in Catalunya; to promote Catalan further in education; to impose sanctions on businesses which did not use Catalan; to impose quotas on broadcasting; and to impose new requirements to label goods in Catalan.

Reactions to the new law reflected different attitudes to 'normalisation'. Foro Babel, a grouping of intellectuals committed to bilingualism, argued that while the 1983 law was genuinely bilingual the new law in practice prioritised Catalan by making it the preferred language of the state and by imposing sanctions and a 'duty to know' Catalan on citizens. They argued that 'every citizen of Catalunya has the right to freely use either of the two languages, both in their private relations and in their relations with political institutions and with the public administration' (*El País* 30 April 1997). On the other side L'Associació per a les Noves Bases de Manresa issued a manifesto, **Per a un nou estatut social de la llengua catalana**, through which a group of 350 intellectuals argued that it was indeed necessary to move forward from the bilingualism of the past (*Avui* 17 April 1997).

However, even those who wished to see the position of Catalan strengthened did not always see the new law as the best way to proceed. Some argued it could be counterproductive, while Angel Colom (the leader of the nationalist Partit per la Independència), declared that it was important not to alienate young Castellanohablantes who took a pragmatic approach to the use of language, but nevertheless felt themselves to be fully Catalan. The PSC opposed both sanctions and quotas, suggesting that they might endanger linguistic 'convivència', queried the interpretation of the 'duty to know', and condemned the way 'immigrants' were portrayed as a threat to the language.

Beneath this political heat, there was little evidence of mass popular interest in the new law. In March 1997 *La Vanguardia*'s regular political opinion poll showed just 31% of voters thought the new law was necessary, compared to 58% who thought it was not. However in the course of the year some of the activities of the PP government in Madrid (such as the proposal for a unified history curriculum for Spanish schools) probably encouraged support for the new law by suggesting that, for some people, Catalan culture still constitutes a 'threat' to Spain. In part as a result of this, in part as a result of the complex tactical politics of alliances and schisms, the climate of debate surrounding the new linguistic law heated up. The PP went as far as to hint for the first time that they might not only abstain but vote against it.

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It is possible that these sorts of developments explain the gradual shift of popular opinion in Catalunya towards the new law from one of overwhelming apathy to grudging support. By November, 43% thought it was needed, 37% thought it was not, while 20% were not sure. Just over 50% said it would not be a good thing if the new law were approved solely on the basis of nationalist votes (**La Vanguardia**, 8 November 1997).

CiU was concerned to maintain the support of the PSC for the law, since its opposition would make it difficult to claim mass popular legitimacy for it. Conversely, the PSC was not in a strong position to oppose it, because it had problems of its own such as the aftermath of corruption scandals. In the end many of the more controversial aspects of the new law were dropped, reformed or fudged. The outstanding feature of the final 1998 measure is how similar it is to the 1983 law on which it was based. This did not stop both the PSC and CiU from making strenuous claims that the new law ushered in substantial changes, albeit for diametrically opposed reasons. CiU was keen to show that the new law represented a new stage in the normalisation process and proved its commitment to it. The PSC wanted to show that it had turned CiU away from the influence of militant language nationalism to a more pragmatic approach to bilingualism.

THE 1998 LINGUISTIC POLICY LAW

The law presented a similar list of reasons for the weakness of Catalan as the 1983 law. Education was no longer explicitly mentioned - since compulsory schooling is now in Catalan - and explicit reference to Castilian in the discussion of the mass media was dropped: instead globalisation of the culture, information and communication industries was cited as the problem. The preamble was rewritten to portray immigration in a much more favourable light, so that it was now presented in terms of its social and economic origins rather than the responsibility of the immigrants themselves. Developments in technological, political, economic, legal and cultural contexts were given as reasons to modify and update the 1983 law. The latter was described as having produced important changes for the language, but 'the generalisation of its knowledge has not always produced a corresponding increase in its public use'.

A new paragraph made a clear break with language nationalism both by insisting that Catalan culture was not synonymous with the Catalan language, so that contributions to it also came from those who used Castilian, for example, and by referring to those whose mother tongue was Castilian as

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'Catalans', suggesting the use of a territorial rather than linguistic definition of national identity.

The law promised equality between Catalan and Castilian - implying that bilingualism is fundamental and that normalisation comprises essentially the opportunity to use Catalan - while it also suggests that such equality presupposes that all citizens of Catalunya will acquire a knowledge of Catalan - implying that they have an obligation to know and learn it. The preamble also stressed that any sanctions in the new law were to apply only to institutions or public officials in the course of their duties.

The Preliminary Chapter set out general principles such as the aim of the law to achieve equality of linguistic rights, and to promote and normalise Catalan for all citizens, especially in public administration, the media and cultural industries, and the social and economic world. It also aims to clarify some ambiguities of the 1983 law, especially the terms 'llengua pròpia', official language and linguistic rights.

Article two defined the 'llengua pròpia' as:

the language of all the institutions of Catalunya, especially the Generalitat's administration, local authorities, public corporations, public enterprises and public services, the means of mass communication, education and the designation of place names .

The 'official languages' are defined as follows (Article 3):

Catalan and Castilian, as official languages, can be used without distinction by citizens in all their activities, public and private, without discrimination. Legal acts undertaken in either of the two languages have full validity and effectiveness, with reference to language.

'Linguistic rights' (Article 4) means that everyone in Catalunya has the right to know both languages and express themselves freely in either one; be served in either language and not be discriminated against because of the official language which they use.

These definitions hardly settle any of the controversial issues in the debate over normalisation. What special treatment appears to be given to Catalan as a 'llengua pròpia' in Article 2 is qualified by the assertion in Articles 3 and 4 that Castilian has joint and equal status as an official language. As they stand no citizen could be compelled to do anything in one language or the other. In practice, their interpretation is likely to follow that of the 1983 law. There is

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not space here to set out all the details of the law (which interested readers can consult in a paper published last year (Gore and MacInnes 1998)), but the bulk of the measures stayed close to the 1983 law: requirements for both the public and private sector to be able to deal with clients in both languages, support to encourage greater knowledge and use of Catalan in commerce and administration, subsidies (and quotas to go with them) in broadcasting and publishing. The new law allowed the government to set quotas for the proportion of films shown in Catalunya to be dubbed in Catalan rather than Castilian. Following negotiations with film distribution companies, the government issued a decree which required these companies to pay compensation should they fail to meet the quotas. The decree was declared unconstitutional, on the grounds that the law set out the principle of quotas, but did not provide for the mechanism of compensation payments.

CONCLUSIONS

The debates around the politics of language in Catalunya point to the fact that the Catalan language is a 'key symbol' (Conversi 1997) in Catalan nationalism. For Catalan nationalists, the Catalan language is not only a symbol of resistance to autocracy or over-centralisation from Madrid, but also a guarantee of the civic as opposed to ethnic character of Catalan nationalism. It is seen as a tool of integration for those who came to Catalunya during the Franco years. It is often said that anyone who speaks Catalan is a Catalan: it need not be a matter of descent or place of birth. Thus they see the protection of the health of Catalan - in the face of the power of Castilian and the threat from the globalisation of culture - as a major concern of the Generalitat in just the same way as the French watch over their language. On the other 'side' of the debate, the Partit Popular does not feel this is a matter in which the government can intervene; language is a 'free choice' of those in civil society. The PSC sees this liberal analysis as overlooking the legacy and continuing power of Madrid. Catalan needs protection, but too strong a promotion might imperil 'convivencia'.

Bilingualism is a positive sounding concept, difficult to disagree with. However, as usual the devil is in the detail. Both 'sides' in the debate over the 1998 law tend to argue that the strength of their language need not threaten the other while simultaneously implying that the strength of the 'other' language does indeed constitute such a threat to their own. For language nationalists, promoting Catalan simply defends it against the dominance of Castilian and need not infringe the rights of Castilian speakers, while the unregulated use of Castilian is seen as potentially undermining the

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normalisation of the use of Catalan. Conversely for many in Foro Babel, measures taken to 'Catalanise' civil society are seen as a threat to the civil rights of Castilian speakers, but less attention is paid to the impact of Castilian's position as the sole official language of the Spanish state.

For those who are not bilingual already, the politics of language are very much zero sum. To turn a formal right to use a language into a practical ability to do so requires that one's interlocutor at least understands it: everyone has to command both languages. My 'right' to 'use' one implies your 'duty' to 'know' it. The 1983 law stated that citizens have the right to be served in Catalan in the public services. Not only did that imply that those in public service who did not already know how to speak, read and write Catalan had to learn how to do so, but it also implied that, if the definition of 'public' was widened, then, in effect, competence in Catalan was a prerequisite for living in Catalunya. This is often defended, in turn, by the argument that each nation-state has its own language: what difference is there between people in Catalunya being required to conduct their business in Catalan and citizens of, say, France using French?

The difference, of course, is that Catalunya is still part of the Spanish state. This implies two things. If Catalan becomes the preferred language in Catalunya, then a subtle but powerful social and economic frontier is erected between Catalunya and the rest of Spain. Since almost all Catalan speakers are also Castilian speakers, they can move within both a labour market and cultural space bounded by the entire Spanish state. But few Spaniards beyond Catalunya speak Catalan. Accordingly their ability to participate on an equal basis in the Catalan labour market depends on their ability to continue to rely on the use of Castilian.

The second implication is less often explored. Under this logic complete normalisation implies an independent Catalan state, for if we argue for the right of the Generalitat to protect Catalan because it is the right of Paris to protect French, then it follows that it is the right of Madrid to protect Castilian. If it is such protection that threatens to undermine Catalan, it follows that the latter's long term future requires an independent state to protect it. It is often pointed out that Catalan is spoken by more people - about 8.5 million - than other, better known, languages such as Danish, Finnish or Norwegian, and by almost as many as speak Swedish, Greek or Portuguese. 'It is the only European language of this importance ... which is not the official language of an independent state' (Hall 1990, p.9). However this rather mechanical association of states and languages may obscure, rather than facilitate, analysis.

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As Colomer (1996) and others have pointed out, there are upwards of 4,000 known languages (depending on how we define them) but less than two hundred states. This fact alone should make us wary of too direct a connection between language, state and nation. Why should we assume that bilingualism leads eventually to a unilingual state based on the language of the nation which dominates that state? At the very least the persistence of bilingualism in most nation states (paradoxically, perhaps, the most unilingual state in Europe - the United Kingdom - is also one of the most multi-national) suggests that there is no such tendency. As Colomer argues:

The persistence and widespread character of linguistic pluralism seems to contradict the usual objective of the linguistic policy of 'nation' states, which tends to impose only one official language. Multilinguistic reality contradicts the fatalistic opinion according to which a multilingual community cannot survive very long like that and must end up becoming uni-lingual in one or other language (1996, p.19).

Indeed, it may be that it is this sort of mechanical connection that is far too easily made between language and statehood that obscures a better analysis of the evolution and future prospects of the Catalan language. What is striking, surely, is the vibrancy of the Catalan language, given that it was only finally codified, in terms of vocabulary and grammar, in the first quarter of this century and that for the following half century it was persecuted and proscribed. This suggests that it is civil society, rather than the state, that both bestows its strength and will determine its future. Language planning, of the kind contained in the 1983 and 1998 laws, may have an important role to play, but the controversy over the 1998 measure suggests that popular opinion sets a definite limit to how far it is legitimate for the autonomous government to intervene. 'Normalisation' of the status of a language will perhaps be as complex and contradictory as national identity itself: shifting between the desire to be able to 'live in Catalan' and respecting the linguistic rights of both Castilian-using and Catalan-using citizens of Catalunya

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A range of information on the progress of Catalunya and its language is available from Sheffield University's Catalan links homepage:
<http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/D-H/hs/catlinks.html>