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Balancing Language Planning and Language Rights: Catalonia's Uneasy Juggling Act

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Abstract

In the 1980s language planning in Catalonia was carried out against a background of general consensus that major language recovery measures were needed in order to improve the linguistic and sociolinguistic situation of Catalan. Within Spain's new democratic system of autonomous regions Catalonia was keen to promote its own identity, especially through the use of Catalan. Demographic and social conditions favoured language reforms aimed at making Catalan the official language of the administration, promoting its use in public and, above all, in the education system. Non-Catalans, too, supported these language policies as they generally felt free to use Castilian whenever and wherever they chose to. The focus of this article will be on the debate about language planning measures resulting from the most recent legislation. As will be shown, Catalonia seems to have reached a point where language recovery and language promotion come up against an evolving sociolinguistic situation marked by changed demographic conditions and social attitudes. The debate about the 1998 Law of Catalan demonstrates that popular consensus can no longer be relied upon as previously. Instead, conflicting views about language and identity, and nationalism and autonomy, power and minority rights are being voiced as the promotion of Catalan above Castilian Spanish has come to be seen by some as an infringement of the language rights of non-Catalans. This time public discourse has been in a much more polemical, bi-partisan and politicised manner. The question arises as to how far a region within a multilingual member state of the EU can go in promoting monolingual language policies.

key words:

Catalonia
language planning
language promotion
linguistic rights

Introduction

The focus of this contribution will be on some of the issues raised in the late 1990s by the debate about the second major piece of language legislation in Catalonia. As will become evident, the consensus that accompanied much of Catalonia's language planning efforts in the 1980s has worn thin. Political, economic and demographic conditions have evolved significantly over the last 30 years resulting in changed social

attitudes and conflicting views on traditional notions of nationalism, devolution, language and identity and the way in which they interact.

Not only in Catalonia but in post-Franco Spain as a whole, the language debate has intensified and become more polarised than it was before, and it has become difficult to disentangle the linguistic and cultural from the parochial and party-political. This may be because certain fundamental questions concerning the long-term relationship between Spain's languages have never been clearly addressed on a national level. Until they are, tensions arising from different perceptions of linguistic rights and conflicting identities – at both national and regional level – will continue. At the time of drawing up the 1978 Spanish Constitution there were good reasons for devolving to the regions full responsibility for cultural, including linguistic, affairs, a process that took several years to complete. As a result, there is no national language policy, nor is there, at the national level, much evidence of a collective interest in maintaining and supporting Spain's multilingualism. There were also good reasons for being extremely careful and flexible in the wording of references to the legal position of the various languages, resulting at times in an extraordinary degree of ambiguity. The debate about language is one about which many Spaniards – everywhere in Spain – feel passionately. It has laid open the need to reconsider certain cherished notions pertaining to language and identity, and to less palatable issues related to language and power such as bilingualism, immigration and linguistic rights.

Traditionally, in sociolinguistic literature Catalonia has been treated as a linguistic minority area. It was described as atypical on account of a number of social indicators, and much emphasis was laid on the fact that the indigenous Catalan-speaking population represented the majority in the region. Today Catalonia is undergoing fundamental demographic changes which are in the process of turning the autochthonous Catalans into a social minority. Linguistic rights that were once claimed by this group are now increasingly being invoked by Castilian speakers.

Catalonia provides an interesting example of a region where devolution and language policies in favour of the regional language may have reached limits which, curiously enough, are not so much imposed by the national state but rather by demographic developments within Catalonia itself and also the transnational community, the EU, within which Catalans have aspired to gain status and influence.

Historical, political and sociolinguistic background to language legislation

It is not uncommon to see Catalonia discussed in terms of a minority. After all, for a considerable period of its history it has shared a number of characteristics typical of minorities in a centralised state: in terms of self-identification and identification by others, Catalans saw themselves as different in custom, tradition and language from the majority of Spaniards; yet they were denied recognition and autonomous status for themselves and their language. Several periods of severe suppression of Catalan resulted in the language being socially stigmatised, relegated to a diglossic position, its use limited to oral communication.

A number of traits, however, have contributed to making Catalonia an atypical minority. Its history, everybody agrees, is important. For instance, between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries the region was an economically and politically powerful Mediterranean state with a flourishing cultural and literary output. This provided later generations of Catalans with a 'Glorious Past' (Fishman 1971) to refer back to. Furthermore, Catalans remained the majority within their region so that they were only a minority vis-à-vis the whole of Spain. Catalan society has a long history of stubborn resistance to political and cultural assimilation which successive central governments tried to enforce, often using extremely repressive measures. The leading role played by the middle classes in promoting Catalan language and culture, especially in the last hundred years or so when they became the driving force behind cultural as well as political Catalanism, is another element which made Catalans an unusual minority. Of significance, also, was the relatively early standardisation of the language at the beginning of the last century which enhanced its linguistic status and facilitated later language planning efforts considerably.

When Spain became a democratic state Catalonia outgrew her minority position. As one of the 17 *Comunidades Autónomas* she enjoys a particularly high degree of autonomy and, in addition, for much of its time as an autonomous region she has exerted considerable political influence on the central government because Catalonia's support in the Cortes (the national parliament) was necessary to both socialist (PSOE) and conservative (Partido Popular) national governments (and the support given was clearly in exchange for a number of benefits for Catalan policies). Catalonia is also one of the economically most successful regions of Europe and has benefited considerably from Spain's EU full membership since 1986. The transition from dictatorship to democracy meant a return from official monolingualism to linguistic pluralism as the newly self-governing regions embarked on large-scale language planning policies aimed at recovering regional languages and promoting their official status and currency in the respective regions.

As can be imagined, centuries of imposition of Castilian Spanish as the only official language of the state had highly detrimental effects on Catalan: the number of its users fell steadily, especially of those who could read and write it. The language itself did not develop with the times to suit the requirements of a modern literate, scientific and technological society and as a result of this had become Castilianised in various ways through grammatical interference and lexical borrowing. Seen from a political viewpoint Catalan had been the symbol of opposition to the Franco regime and as such enjoyed a great deal of covert prestige. Therefore, when the opportunity arose, there was general support for its recovery and rise in status as the language of *Catalunya*, the new Catalan Autonomous Community, even by those who were otherwise less interested in Catalan politics.

Nation-building in multilingual Spain started several centuries ago, and centralist political, economic and social policies aimed at uniting the nation and keeping it united were pursued by successive governments – with some brief interludes – right up to the 1970s. For much of Spanish history, in both colonial and interior politics language has played a predominant role: Castilian Spanish was the only officially recognised language and its imposition was achieved by various means. Castilian became the

language of the social élites such as the nobility, government officials and administrators, the military and the Church, and the practice of national competitive examinations for government employees (which included members of the system of administration of justice, central government departments, the police, the military, teachers and others) which resulted in their being sent to work in different regions where they had to use Castilian in order to understand each other and the local population contributed effectively to this. Assimilation was successful not only because of intolerance and suppression of local languages but also because Castilian offered opportunities for the individual – Sue Wright in her essay about the role of language in nation-building in France talks about the “push of (language) legislation and the pull of personal advantage” (Wright, 1997) which operated in France, an apt metaphor that can be applied to the Spanish situation too. The principle of national affiliation was by territory and by language. It was an inclusive one, open to anybody who chose to join.

On the fringes of the Iberian Peninsula, however, nation-building had been less successful and never completed. Here, particularly in the Basque Country and Catalonia, forces other than purely centripetal ones were at work. Modern Catalanism as it had emerged by the end of the 19th century with its emphasis on common ancestry, language and culture followed an underlying philosophy which was not coherent with Spanish nationalism. Indeed, Catalonia’s claim to autonomous status (and, some would argue, independence) is based on the ethnicity principle for which the most powerful outward sign is a common culture and language which are different from the rest of Spain. As will become clear later, such an ideological stance can cause problems for a region with a linguistically and ethnically diverse community as it invites calls for language rights which are diametrically opposed.

The concepts of nationalism and Catalanism have played a powerful role within the Catalan context and they have been used by supporters as well as opponents of Catalan nationhood. Recent debate in Catalan society shows that this still holds true even though now there is less insistence on a causal relationship between language and national identity. Furthermore, Catalanism has always fed from political opposition against the imposition of Spanish, which encouraged Catalans to adopt “the role of the unjustly treated underdog” (Pym, 1999). Similar thoughts are expressed by Strubell i Trueta when he points to a “belief that, among other things, Catalan gained an inner strength by being illegitimately suppressed. The suppression of democracy and Catalan culture and language gave them strong links in the public mind.” (1998: 156). Given Catalonia’s history such a stand on national identity is not surprising. But it is backward-looking and based on negative experience, and this is likely to prove a hindrance when it comes to redefining modern Catalan identity within a democratic and pluralist state, and promoting it in an ethnically heterogeneous community.

Language planning in Catalonia: the Law of Linguistic Normalisation of 1983 and the 1998 “Law of Catalan”

The legal basis for recent language planning was laid down in three different types of legislation: the Spanish Constitution, the Catalan Statute of Autonomy and the Catalan Law of Linguistic Normalisation. The Constitution’s Article 3 is considered the cornerstone of the state’s linguistic policies as it declares Castilian Spanish to be the

official language, making it both a duty for all Spaniards to know it and a right to use it, and furthermore lays down that the other languages of Spain shall have official status in their respective Autonomous Communities. It is worth remarking here that few national constitutions declare it to be a *duty* for citizens to know the nation's language, and clearly this provision was not the result of accident. What the Constitution obviously does is to allow for the territoriality principle to be adopted while at the same time adhering to the personality principle at least with regard to Castilian Spanish. Several commentators on the Constitution have referred to the vagueness or ambivalence of its formulation of linguistic issues, a feature commonly seen as deliberate (e.g. Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 1991; England, 1993-94; Hooper, 1995; Hoffmann, 1996b; Mar-Molinero 2000). It should not be forgotten that the backdrop to language policies in the late 1970s and into the 1980s was formed by the then still fresh memories of fascist linguistic repression and centralist thinking. Legislation at all levels had to tread a very careful path. In their discussion of the Constitution, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (1991: 167) refer to the "spirit of compromise which pervades each clause", while England (1993-94: 291) suggests that language legislation from that time "has to be judged against the background of a climate of consensus and compromise between those seeking to promote regional languages and those whose instincts remained basically centralising, in line with the values of the old regime." Article 3 of the Statute of Autonomy constitutes the basis for Catalan language policy. It spells out the co-official status of both Catalan and Spanish and states the determination of the *Generalitat* (regional government) to ensure adequate knowledge of both languages and their normal and official use.

Whereas the linguistic provisions of the national Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy recognise what is, in effect, widespread societal bilingualism, the aim of Catalonia's linguistic legislation has been to promote Catalan with a view to achieving a mainly Catalan-speaking region. In order to reach this objective language planning had to embrace both status planning and corpus planning. As regards the former, measures were taken to promote the use of Catalan in all spheres of public life, and special emphasis was laid on education. With respect to corpus planning, modern Catalan needed to be equipped linguistically so that it could be used appropriately (in terms of accepted standard pronunciation, grammar, lexis and register) for all written and spoken purposes. 'Linguistic normalisation' was the label chosen for the programme of language policies which had its legal basis in the 1983 Law of Linguistic Normalisation. The term expresses certain different, inter-linking aspects of status planning, namely the formulation of linguistic norms, the social extension of these for wider use, and the assertion that it should become 'normal' again to use Catalan.

The linguistic normalisation agenda was an extremely ambitious one as it had to take in a number of different areas (Hoffmann 1996a) and required a huge amount of resources for the provision, among others, of translations, glossaries and other terminological aids, the publication of educational materials, books and papers, the training of teachers and local government employees, subsidies for television channels, film productions, dubbing and subtitling of films, and others. The achievements reached must be considered a success. Catalan can be seen to be the official language; it is spoken widely in a large area, not only in Catalonia but varieties of it also (to some extent) in the adjacent or neighbouring areas such as Valencia, Aragón and the Balearic Islands,

whose own policies were both influenced and supported by the more assertive Catalan ones. Its promotion in the public sphere, in education and the media has resulted in an increase in the number of those who read it, speak it and write it, up by some 20 % in the period between the 1986 and 1996 censuses. Because of its similarity with Castilian, the intelligibility of Catalan has always been quite high (90% in 1986, 95% in 1996); the increases in those who read and speak it (from 64% to 84% and from 60% to 80% respectively) are clearly the result of linguistic policy. The figures for written competence are lowest (31% in 1986 and 53% in 1996) but likely to rise continually as all levels of the education services have adopted or are adopting Catalan as the language of instruction and interaction. Impressive as these figures may seem, one must remember that they include a large number of people who are L2 speakers of Catalan for whom Castilian Spanish is the main language. The statistics in this case are not a reliable indicator of active language use and this knowledge may well underlie the claim that Catalan still is in a “precarious position”, its survival by no means secure.

An important feature of Catalan language policy has been its insistence on public acceptance and co-operation. It was said that the objectives of the normalisation policy were to be achieved voluntarily and gradually, over a period of time and involving several intermediate stages. Thus, the normalisation campaign of the early eighties was designed to encourage all Catalans to speak more and better Catalan, and to drive home the message that the future of the language lay in the hands of everyone. The aim of ‘restoring Catalan to its rightful place’ has been achieved most successfully in the domain of public administration where Catalan is now used by all local bodies as a matter of course although services in Castilian are available if citizens demand them.

Considerable advances in the Catalanisation of the education system have also been achieved, especially in the areas of primary and adult education. Secondary schools with their much higher and more detailed demands on human and material resources are still engaged in the process of switching to Catalan as medium of instruction and the final area, higher education, is now being targeted. There are three factors that represent an obstacle to the introduction of Catalan as a medium of instruction in all schools in Catalonia. In the first place, there is the lack of confidence many non-native Catalan teachers feel in teaching their subjects in a language in which they themselves are not completely at home. Secondly, the demographic distribution of children from Catalan-speaking homes and Castilian-speaking ones is very uneven. Whereas in many rural areas the great majority of children may be part of Catalan-speaking families, in certain parts of Barcelona and other major industrial centres most children are from Castilian-speaking families and have little opportunity of mixing with Catalan-speaking children either in the school playground or in their neighbourhoods. And thirdly, many children from middle-class Catalan families go to (mostly Catalan-medium) private schools thus making the proportion of Catalan to Castilian speaking children in state schools even more unfavourable.

The promotion of Catalan in the field of education has met with less consensus than language policies in public administration. Whereas in the public domain one could continue to use Castilian if one wanted to, the aim in education is to have a wholly Catalan system where Castilian is taught as a foreign language. Not surprisingly there has been opposition to this policy from many Castilian parents who argue that their

constitutional right to use Castilian includes having their children educated in the language of their choice. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence showing that the majority of parents in Catalonia, those of indigenous as well as non-Catalan background, support the Generalitat's education policies. The criticism that is levelled at education policies tends to concern the amount of time and status afforded to teaching Castilian language and literature. More recently the teaching of history has been added to the list of contentious issues after a report which was debated in the national parliament revealed that in the history textbooks used in the autonomous regions of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country (who control their own education systems and therefore the syllabuses) there was little coverage of Spanish history – in some cases the name *España* did not appear at all. Quite a number of lobby groups and other associations exist, representing a variety of political and cultural backgrounds. Some of them were founded before the first round of language legislation, others are of more recent date as language issues continue to be part of public debate and were particularly so in the period leading up to the passing of the 1998 law.

The official name of the second major piece of language legislation is 'Act No. 1, of 7th January 1998 on Linguistic Policy' (text published in Catalan, Castilian and English by the Generalitat), but it is generally referred to as the 'Law of Catalan'. It is more comprehensive in scope and more detailed with regard to specific measures than the 1983 Law of Linguistic Normalisation. Its main aim is to continue and strengthen the process of language recovery – by which is meant ensuring the presence of Catalan in the legal system and several social and cultural domains previously not included in normalisation legislation. In addition to its specific provisions the law contains a number of highly idealistic statements on the historical and present-day social situation of Catalan and the significance of Catalan for "the national formation and character of Catalonia, a basic instrument for communication, integration and social cohesion of citizens, regardless of their geographic origin..." (p.7). The reader is then reminded that Catalan should also be seen as a link with other Catalan-speaking areas outside Catalonia (especially Valencia and the Balearics), thus emphasising the significance of the language beyond its national frontiers. There follows a reference to historical and political events which have contributed to language shift, as well as present-day factors such as demographic changes and "the restricted scope that the language has, similar to that of other official languages of Europe" (p.7) where the trend is towards internationalisation. To the outsider this comparison with other European languages seems curious in its self-confidence. Catalans do not compare their language to other regional minority languages but rather to national ones with similar numbers of speakers, it seems.

The Act contains a long catalogue of measures designed to promote the use of Catalan in a wide range of public and private institutions, above all the legal system, cultural and economic concerns such as the media, publishing, cinema, music and entertainment, computers, advertising, employment and business, education at all levels including universities, and personal names/surnames and public denominations. It sets language quotas for cultural products (for example 25% of all major films must be dubbed into Catalan) and stipulates a system of fines (for instance, for distributors and cinemas that do not conform). Because of its numerous and detailed provisions the Law is likely to affect all citizens either directly or indirectly and for that reason reactions to it have

come from many quarters of Catalan- and Spanish-speaking society. The Act's statement that the Generalitat is committed to guaranteeing the linguistic rights of *all* citizens is obviously appropriate. However, it also indirectly spells out the dilemma facing Catalan language policy-making, because the safeguarding of the individual's language rights can be at odds with an overall aim of establishing the hegemony of Catalan.

Issues of language, identity and linguistic rights within a changing Catalan society

The debate about the second round of language legislation involved, as was to be expected, the traditional issues of language, identity and autonomy and their attendant questions on immigration (which in the Spanish context traditionally means from other parts of Spain, notably Andalusia and Galicia), minorities and linguistic rights. But this time discussions were much more polemical and politicised than previously as everybody appeared to join in and take sides, and they seemed to be doing so with the conviction that there was something significant to be gained. The forces at play were shown up quite clearly in the run up to the 1998 Act and provided for ample material in the press and other media. For example, for some time the Barcelona-based *El Periódico* ran an almost daily analysis of the emerging debate, often under the telling heading of *La polémica lingüística*. Not only the political parties on the left and right representing nationalist Catalan or national Spanish interests were heard, other groups in Catalan society, and outside it, also entered into the debate such as the Church, lobby groups acting for immigrants or for the preservation of the Spanish language, and intellectuals – notably writers, philologists, linguists and would-be linguists. Noticeable, too, was the increasing politicisation of Catalan sociolinguistic research itself.

The governing coalition, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), had been formed by two independent parties, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) and *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (UDC). Both these conservative/Christian democrat Catalanist parties were keen to reach the political consensus which had gone with previous language policy. But this time it was more difficult to attain. While the Generalitat government was accused of pushing their own agenda of achieving Catalan monolingualism under the cloak of “promoting social cohesion” other parties, notably the *Partido Popular* (PP), the conservative party in national government, took up the issue of linguistic rights, insisting that parents should be able to exercise their right to choose the language of their choice for their children's education. It seemed that in the course of the debate traditional political labels such as left, right and centre came to lose their significance to a large extent, and their constituents often appeared to be viewed as either Catalan or Castilian speakers and their identity defined on the basis of who speaks what language. Such polarisation of view disregards the linguistic and cultural reality of Catalonia where most Catalan speakers are equally competent in Castilian and where Castilian speakers who wish to learn Catalan find learning it quite easy as they “already have 80% of the work done” as the Catalan journalist Arcadi Espada puts it (1997: 246), i.e. linguistic similarities between the two languages facilitate language acquisition. The language rights issue even found its way into the US State Department's annual report on human rights, which was mentioned in the Spanish press because it included, talking about the situation in Catalonia during the Law of Catalan debate, a reference to “*discriminación contra los ciudadanos hispanohablantes y la*

imposición de una hegemonía lingüística a una población diferente” (El País 22 February 2000: “Discrimination against Spanish speakers and the imposition of a language hegemony on another section of the population”)

Equally fierce was the reaction to the proposed law on the issues of language quotas. Again the argument of violation of people’s linguistic rights was voiced but this time there was also opposition from those who would be directly responsible for providing certain cultural products in Catalan, coupled with threats not to distribute major new films in Catalonia at all. The issue was not so much the fear of additional costs, as government money is available for dubbing films which sooner or later are shown on government-subsidised television anyway. Rather, it appears that distributors feared that distribution would become too time-consuming and detailed a business and that government demands in Catalonia might signify “sacrificing international efficiency to the politics of regional identity” (Pym, 1999:82) – a development which might be copied elsewhere in Europe. It was precisely in this area that the main Catalan party in the regional government had to make concessions before the law could be passed.

The success of language planning in the eighties and most of the nineties can be attributed to a number of favourable circumstances, not the least important of which was the widely shared belief that regional autonomy should go hand in hand with the restoration of Catalan as a medium for national self-expression. Today, the position of Catalan is more secure than it has ever been in modern times. However, neither linguistically nor sociolinguistically can the language be said to have been fully recovered: linguistic adaptation in terms of language choice and switching tends to be mostly one way (from Catalan to Castilian Spanish), linguistic borrowing is mainly from Castilian Spanish into Catalan, and demographic trends point towards a disproportionate increase of Spanish over Catalan speakers. Even non-nationalist sociolinguists agree that “by any objective standards, Catalan is still a subordinate language in a process of ‘reverse shift’, with a long way to go towards normalisation in key social areas” (Yates, 1998: 207). Therefore language recovery and maintenance efforts must be ongoing processes. The new challenge in present-day Catalonia is that there are a number of factors at work which were absent in earlier times and which make a consensual language policy much more difficult to achieve. In the remainder of this contribution I will briefly refer to three such developments and their attendant issues which I feel are especially pertinent.

The first issue is a theoretical one. Nevertheless, it has repercussions in national and regional politics that are very real. It concerns the constitutional vagueness, hinted at earlier, which allows for conflicting ideologies to be espoused by different political camps or even sections of the bigger Catalan parties. The “territoriality principle” (“Catalan for Catalonia”) justifies the promotion of a (minority) language for a particular territory. In the case of Catalonia, this principle seems to form the basis for much of the Generalitat’s language policy and explains why the promotion of official bilingualism has been resisted in the past. This kind of “language and territory” ideology favours all-embracing language promotion and maintenance efforts, as the example of Quebec shows. It has also been claimed, for instance by Woolard and Gahng (1999) that policies following this principle have been successful in Catalonia in helping to change attitudes about language and identity to the extent that “Catalan is no

longer a private, ethnic language, signalling a claim to an ascribed Catalan identity” (p.327).

On the other hand, the Spanish Constitution and Catalan Statute of Autonomy also allow for the “personality principle” (“Use the language of your choice”) as first described by McRae, (1975) in that they, and subsequent language laws, guarantee the individual’s linguistic right to choose Castilian. In this ideology a close link is made between language and identity, and arguments in favour of this stand are often couched in highly emotive language, not only in Catalonia but in the context of discussions of other minorities as well. Both these principles have been considered as useful tools for promoting the recovery of endangered languages, but they are in direct conflict to each other (see Myhill 1999 for a full discussion with examples from various settings). The case of Catalonia demonstrates that the two principles are not seen as alternatives. On the contrary, they are both enshrined in language legislation, they are present in people’s minds, and they cause confusion as different camps insist on the legitimacy of either the one or the other. During much of the last century Catalan had an enormous defining weight. But nowadays only about half of Catalonia’s population are of Catalan descent and therefore the notion that “being Catalan means speaking Catalan” is both politically and socially untenable. I cannot see a solution to the conflicts created by following one principle of linguistic organisation with regard to Catalan and another, a conflicting one, with regard to Castilian, unless the Generalitat bases its language policy on a bilingual rather than monolingual organisation. Understandably, for the time being the regional government is unwilling to accept the price this would incur: an inevitable weakening of Catalan.

The second question is that of immigration. It is the problem that represents the greatest challenge to Catalan language policies. Traditionally “immigration” referred to large numbers of Spaniards from other regions moving into Catalonia, especially to the industrial areas, in search of work. Such immigration was particularly high in times of industrial expansion in the sixties and seventies and had the effect of increasing the number of Castilian speakers in an ethnolinguistically different region. The situation is exacerbated by demographic trends which show the birth-rate of indigenous Catalans to be Europe’s lowest whereas that of the immigrant communities is quite healthy. So the section of Catalan society which used to be a minority is now becoming a majority and Catalan is therefore under pressure from within as well as from outside to defend its position.

There is a further development that is likely to pose new challenges to the Generalitat’s commitment to safeguarding language rights. Just like other EU member states, only starting more recently, Spain has seen an influx of migrants from the Magreb, particularly Morocco. One of the most attractive parts of the country for these new immigrants is Catalonia. Local politicians are only just beginning to realise the problems this real minority poses to a society that has not yet embraced multiculturalism in the way their European partners have. Little has been reported so far about educational provision for the children of these people who between them speak several Berber languages, as well as Moroccan Arabic. Those who attend school in Catalonia are following mainstream Catalan-medium education. It can be assumed that their acquisition of Catalan will be more problematic than that of children whose main

language is Castilian Spanish, because they do not already know a cognate language. Outside school many of them probably have little need for Catalan, as social contacts outside their own immigrant community are more likely to be with children living mainly in the urban industrial areas where there is a high concentration of Spanish speakers. As long as they remain foreigners they may have no constitutional claim for language rights. But what will happen when they eventually ask for, and are granted, Spanish citizenship?

Catalan language policies have been charged with being socially divisive. Normalisation has been most successful in the domain of public administration where Catalan is now the language used by all local/regional official bodies. Civil servants must sit language examinations and the School of Public Administration provides classes in Catalan for those who move from other parts of Spain to take up posts in Catalonia. The same will now apply to those who work in the legal services, one of the next targets for Catalanisation in the 1998 Law of Catalan – which, however, is finding a good deal of resistance by those involved as the system of administration of justice is controlled by central government and, many claim, a language requirement would, again, discriminate in favour of autochthonous Catalans. A concomitant of these policies has been that access to white-collar jobs have become increasingly restricted to those with fluency in Catalan. Obviously, native speakers of Catalan – many of whom come from middle-class backgrounds – have gained most from Catalanisation. The emergence of a “Catalan class” with its strong connection between language and class has not gone unnoticed amid claims that this situation pushes disproportionately high numbers of non-Catalan speakers into low-status occupations.

The above-mentioned demographic trends and increasing insistence on the individual’s linguistic rights are also behind more recent attempts to bring about a redefinition of “Catalanness”, i.e. one that loosens up the close connection between language and national identity. Too much insistence on that bond is likely to alienate those whose first language is not Catalan, and it may encourage them to insist that their linguistic rights take precedence over Catalan self-ascription. A related issue concerns the relationship between Spanish and Catalan identity. There is no reason to believe that the two are mutually exclusive as much of the polemic about the recent language legislation seems to suggest. The non-autochthonous population have their linguistic and cultural roots elsewhere and they are likely to define their identity in terms of Spain and Castilian; yet at the same time they might be sharing feelings of belonging to their new *patria chica*, the part of Catalonia where they have settled and feel at home. But in the context of the language debate the conflict between personal effort to conform and what is perceived as official imposition of hegemonic Catalan can lead to resentment and polarisation of positions.

In fact, the conservative governing coalition CiU had to tread very carefully in its pursuance of a greater degree of autonomy in general and implementation of its language policies in particular. The Law of Catalan was a watered-down version of the original bill but still some argued that those who promoted Catalan had become fanatical and overbearing, whereas others claimed that not enough was being done to improve the precarious position Catalan finds itself in. It appears that the official answer to the question “Who is Catalan?” is: anyone who lives and works in Catalonia.

Nonetheless, language as part of national identity still figured strongly in the Law of Catalan. Why else would the regional Government, in the introduction to the Law, suggest that the use of Catalan as Catalonia's own language would help create national cohesion?

After the passing of the Law of Catalan public debate seems to have turned to the wider issue of Catalanism. It was discussed in the press and became the subject of books on contemporary Spain (e.g. Tusell, 1999) and, in the period before the 1999 regional elections in Catalonia, found a prominent place in party political manifestos. It is noticeable that the question of Catalanism and nationalism are now often treated from a political perspective with relatively little reference to linguistic issues. It may be of some interest to take a brief look at some of the main political parties' attitudes on what, for them, constitutes Catalanism – since it is they who formulate and enforce linguistic policies, and it is they who want to appeal to the electorate who ultimately determine the success of these policies.

The CiU, who again won the election, begin their manifesto (a bilingual publication) with a long statement on Catalan identity¹ which in its opening sentence takes territory and people as one (“Catalonia, we the Catalans, characterise ourselves...”) and then lists the traits by which traditionally they have characterised their distinctness, such as language, culture and traditions; it then adds a number of features such as social cohesion and a strong sense of community and affirm that Catalan identity is something dynamic and responsive to the needs of people. With their emphasis on inclusiveness such words are clearly designed to appeal to native as well as non-native Catalans. There are just two lines on the question of language in this 24-page document, so as to state in general terms that the party will encourage the knowledge and use of Catalan which they see as an essential characteristic of Catalonia (note – not ‘the Catalans’)².

Catalanism is present in one form or another in all Catalan parties and groupings, since they are all conscious of the fact that it would be impossible to attain power in the region unless they projected a pro-Catalan image and proposed differentiated local policies. For instance, the *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*, (PSC) tries hard to project itself as a Catalan party, independent from its sister party in Madrid, the PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*). They have been gaining ground recently, particularly in the large towns of the industrial belt around Barcelona, many of which like the capital itself have PSC local councils and mayors. Their moderate approach is neatly summed up in their declaration that “*En España conviven cuatro naciones, cuatro lenguas, cuatro culturas*” (“In Spain four nations, four languages, four cultures live side by side”), and the PSC leader, the highly successful former mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall, speaks of “*un pacto cultural entre los catalanes de siempre y los nuevos catalanes*” (“a cultural pact between time-honoured and new Catalans”) (El País, 25 June 2000). The Catalan Socialists see themselves as a kind of buffer zone party between the autochthonous and the immigrant sections of Catalan society and they are trying to make inroads into the nationalist territory occupied for twenty years by the Catalan president, Jordi Pujols, but without losing its traditionalist adherents.

Other, smaller parties are making similar efforts, adapting their traditional message and bringing their messages up to date. This is the case, for example, of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC – *esquerra* meaning “left”). This is an old radical nationalist and left-wing party that was quite successful during the First Republic and provided the first three Presidents of the Generalitat. One of its leaders, Joan Puigcerdós, recently claimed that for the present generation of Catalan people economic and political issues were more important than questions of language and culture³. Nowadays most ERC members align themselves with the *soberanistas*. They say that they are in favour of a new model of Catalanist consensus, and they propose a wide-ranging three-prong coalition (CiU, PSC and ERC).

Catalanismo, the acknowledgement that Catalonia is a political and cultural entity, is also the word used to refer to Catalan nationalism in a broad sense – “putting Catalonia first”, perhaps. Ever since *catalanismo* (the idea and then the term itself) began to gain currency in the 1860s, it has included a variety of different tendencies (see Hughes, 1996: 311 ff; Tusell 1999: 132). As a doctrine, Catalanism has never been monolithic, and different attitudes have prevailed at various times. Today it can be characterised as *posibilista*, a tendency in Spanish politics dating back to the 19th century and also a term for inclusiveness or pragmatism as a political attitude, as expressed in the motto “*tant com se pugui*” (“as much as we can”) to describe the aspirations of *catalanistas*.

The question of Catalanism has become a topical one again because Jordi Pujol, the President of the Generalitat and leader of CiU, is retiring. Who will follow him, and therefore what stand in Catalan nationalism will such a person represent (so that CiU continues in power)? Issues of language and identity are at the basis of much of the discussion. Within the CiU there are said to exist two different stances on Catalan nationalism, sometimes called *nacionalismo cultural* and *nacionalismo identitario*, both being defined in terms of identity (Valls, 2000). For the former tendency, Catalans are defined mainly as people whose ancestors were born in Catalonia, often recognisable by their Catalan surnames. A minority of CDC (*Convergència*) and most of UDC (*Unió*) members ascribe to *nacionalismo cultural*. This group straddles the two parties, and its members are sometimes known as *soberanistas* (their opponents claim that at heart they would prefer Catalan independence). On the other hand, those who stand on the 1978 Spanish Constitution are called *convergentes*. They present themselves as more inclusive and pragmatic, and they constitute a majority in the CDC party. For them, Catalans are those either born or living in Catalonia who see themselves as Catalans, no matter who their forefathers were. The tendencies therefore cut across party lines in the CiU coalition.

Both groups are nationalist and conservative, as they have always been, and reject formal independence from the rest of Spain. A significant development is that nowadays they emphasise self-government less than shared sovereignty within a European framework: *interdependencia sin interferencia* is their formula. The leading contenders are positioning themselves for the time when Pujol’s successor will have to be chosen, and it is fairly clear that, within the confines of the much bigger ground of what they have in common on general policy, they are at the opposite extremes in their views on Catalan nationalism and identity, ranging from the purist to the more moderate who accept that many Catalans feel Spanish first and Catalan second.

From the above it should be clear that within the Catalan context labels such as left, right and centre, nationalist, socialist, republican and traditionalist, and even terms such as minority and majority, have their own particular associations. Those opposed to linguistic minority rights cannot automatically be labelled as traditionalist, rightwing and nationalist, just as progressive left-wingers are not the prime movers of individual linguistic rights. It is important to keep this in mind when attempting to compare the Catalan situation with linguistic minorities elsewhere.

A third dimension that has come into play in Catalan society and affected issues of language is Europeanisation. Like the rest of the country Catalonia has benefited quite considerably from Spain's quasi-federal pluralist system which suited her well for membership of the EC. Since becoming a member in 1986 Spain has been a net economic gainer and for Catalonia in particular membership has brought a combination of financial and political advantages which have allowed the region to circumvent national Spanish interest. As a result of direct lobbying for EC funds and political influence Catalonia has been successful in forging new supranational political and economic links with other influential EC regions (see Mar-Molinero 2000).

On the linguistic side, EU membership has given Spanish more prominence within Europe. At the same time, the Catalans have become active members of a number of European institutions concerned with the promotion of minority languages and the protection of linguistic rights while also trying to achieve greater prominence for Catalan in certain forums. However, the Catalan language did not gain the enhanced official status within European institutions that they had hoped to achieve. The satisfaction of having Catalan as the one of three official languages at a major international event such as the Olympic Games in 1992 appears to have been a one-off affair, much to the indignation of many a Catalanist who would argue that Catalan is now on a par with other minor EU languages and that therefore more recognition is merited. "Linguistic representation may buy cost-effective symbols at local level; it may stop politics becoming violent; it may help oil the wheels of decentralisation and provide engaging public debate. But to gain greater status and actually compete, it seems our languages still need a State" (Pym 1999:82). Pym is making a general sociolinguistic observation here, perhaps with a hint of lament about it. In view of the EU's already quite complex language policy, it is easy to understand why this institution is not keen to assign special status to Catalan, as it might mean opening a Pandora's box.

As one of Europe's most successful economic regions, Catalonia has been drawn into globalisation trends as well. In economic and political terms globalisation has brought new methods of industrial production to the region, and this in turn has been accompanied by transfer of powers from the national to regional centres. The resulting linguistic and cultural impact has been internationalisation and its concomitant spread of English. As elsewhere, there has been an upsurge in demand for English language tuition at all levels. English has long replaced French as the first foreign language in the school curriculum throughout Spain, and it is offered at ever earlier stages. In Catalonia, the new trend has put English and Spanish in direct competition for teaching time in an education system which increasingly uses Catalan as medium of instruction, with the

result that Spanish is often given the same, or even less time as English. Reports that youngsters from Catalan and Castilian-speaking background alike feel that they leave their Catalan schools with insufficient competence in written Castilian and knowledge of Spanish literature are not missed by those who oppose further promotion of Catalan.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that language planning in Catalonia over the last thirty years has brought considerable achievements in terms of reversing language shift. Catalan has gained status as well as users and a large part of the Catalan government's Catalanisation policy, which must be said to have been carried out skilfully in its insistence on consensus and negotiation, has encountered widespread support. The new factor in Catalan language politics today is that a growing number of Catalans learn Catalan as a compulsory element of their education or for social and economic purposes – “money speaks Catalan” as some cynics would have it. Therefore, increasingly, Catalan is used as a second language by both children and adults with a non-Catalan family background. As a result the traditional view that use of Catalan is a reflection of Catalan authenticity or a symbol of Catalan identity no longer holds true in the same way as it did earlier.

We have seen that concepts of language and identity – territorial, linguistic and cultural – and their attendant issues play a considerable role in public discourse and that they are given conflicting interpretations. At one end of the spectrum are those people (for instance linguists like Gregorio Salvador 1987) who view language primarily as a tool which becomes all the more powerful as the number of speakers who use it is increased. At the other end are those for whom language is, above all, a powerful symbol of identity. Of course, both views are valid and can be said to apply simultaneously, but to differing degrees depending on the particular circumstances of a language. The conflict arises when languages are in competition with each other within the same territory and the inhabitants of the relevant region do not agree on a common hierarchy of status. In Catalonia there are those who rank Catalan above Castilian, those who accept equal status for both, and those who see Castilian as the language with the higher status. Both the Spanish Constitution and the Catalan Statute of Autonomy are ambiguously worded on the question of languages and therefore do not provide an objective reference point when it comes to deciding cases of alleged infringements of language rights.

What is at the heart of the language issue is that Castilian has the whole Spanish state behind it. This will always ensure its survival. In the case of Catalonia it is uncertain whether the *Estado de las Autonomías* model, which allows the region to pursue its own cultural and linguistic policies, is sufficient for this purpose. Recent experience of the language debate in Catalonia shows that the way to achieve language promotion is not by confrontational policies or by creating conflicts of allegiance in the minds of bilingual speakers. One could argue that it is no longer necessary to implement language policies in order to support Catalan identity – this identity is already quite well established and for many Catalan-Castilian bilinguals their linguistic and cultural ascription is probably a similarly hyphenated one. From a purely sociolinguistic perspective, efforts to counteract language shift require ‘affirmative action’ or ‘pro-active language policies’ (Strubell i Trueta, 1998: 176), i.e. a form of positive

discrimination. Such an approach can only be successful within a democratic framework, supported by general consensus. However, language planning in Catalonia seems to have reached a point now where such action no longer commands that consensus, as a substantial proportion of the population are beginning to have doubts as to how far they are prepared to follow official monolingual language policies. It may well be that the Catalans will need to lower their goals in the light of changed social circumstances. At present, it seems that Catalonia is juggling with quite a large number of balls – languages, new and old minorities, conflicting ideologies that pitch territory against individual rights, competing ideas about Catalanism, divided loyalties towards Madrid and Europe – and they are all in the air. Not an easy act.

Notes:

- 1 *“Catalunya, els catalans, ens caracteritzem i, alhora, ens diferenciem pel fet de tenir una llengua pròpia, una cultura, unes tradicions, un territori, un dret propi. Però també pel nostre esforç de cohesió social, de ser un sol poble, per la bona convivència entre els 6 milions de catalans, pel fet de cultivar un fort sentit de comunitat o per defensar una manera de ser social i política. Hem concebut la identitat i el caràcter diferencial com quelcom dinàmic i hem estat capaços de fer-los evolucionar per donar resposta a les necessitats de les persones en cada moment”* (p. 5). “Catalonia, we the Catalans, characterise ourselves and at the same time see ourselves as distinct because we have our own language, culture, traditions, territory and laws. And also because of our efforts towards achieving social cohesion, being one people, living successfully together as 6 million Catalans, because we cultivate a strong sense of community and because we defend our particular social and political way of life. We see our identity and different character as something dynamic, and we have been able to make it evolve in response to the needs of people at every stage.”
- 2 *“Fomentarem el coneixement i l’ús social del català, com a element fonamental per al desenvolupament de la personalitat catalana”(p.14).* (“We shall encourage the knowledge and use in society of the Catalan language as a fundamental element of the personality of Catalonia”).
- 3 *“... centran su catalanismo más en asuntos económicos o políticos que en los de tipo cultural o lingüístico”* (“they focus their Catalanism on economic and political issues, rather than questions of culture and language”), quoted in *El País*, 25 June 2000.

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