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Language policy and the status of languages in contemporary Catalonia: a public debate

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Abstract

Language ideological debates are a constant feature of virtually all language contact situations, particularly in contexts of a conflictive nature. In this article, we analyse one recent debate about languages in Catalonia. In April 2016 a group of linguists and language professionals published a manifesto – the *Manifest Koiné* – that provoked an explosion of opinions in mass-media outlets in the region. In the article, we analyse both the content of the manifesto and the reactions that it sparked. Our analysis shows that in presenting the situation of Catalan in a rather pessimistic light, the manifesto finds itself in line with a long-solidified line of thought in the Catalan language imaginary. At the same time, the negative terms that are used to portray both Spanish and bilingualism in the manifesto are the points that gathered the strongest opposition during the debate. In addition, the single official status for Catalan in an imagined future independent state (the position implicitly endorsed by the manifesto) also was not supported in the debate. We conclude that these results are in line with the changing nature of the language ideological landscape that Catalonia has experienced over the last decades.

Keywords: language policy, language ideologies, official language, bilingualism, Catalonia

Introduction

In April 2016, a group of linguists and language professionals in Catalonia published a manifesto that would become popularly known as *Manifest Koiné*. Blunt and strongly worded, the text sparked a high number of responses in different media outlets with mixed reactions, both in favour and against. Many of the responses addressed a question that had already been the object

of public discussion in Catalonia at least since 2012, namely: in a hypothetical future independent state, what would be the optimal organisation in terms of officially declared languages? However, the *Koiné* debate went beyond this specific question and it brought forward several other language-related issues of a more complex nature. In this article, we provide both a general overview of the debate and the specific sociolinguistic complexities that it highlighted, looking first of all at the manifesto itself, what it actually said and how it framed the issues at stake. We then analyse the kinds of reactions that it generated: which statements sparked more agreement, which ones more disagreement, and which ones attracted less attention. With this in mind, our guiding questions are: 1) what did the *Manifest Koiné* say and how did it frame the language situation in Catalonia?; 2) what responses did the manifesto spark and how did commentators in the public media react to it?

In recent years, the political situation in Catalonia has emerged powerfully in the international arena, especially since October 2017. On the global scale, the case of Catalonia is typically read as one of a nationalist movement striving for self-determination and emancipation from Spain, so parallels are commonly drawn with cases such as Scotland or Quebec (Lecours 2018). In such a reading, language is frequently awarded a determining role in shaping support for Catalan independence (Frayer 2017), tacitly denoting the Catalan pro-independence movement as ethnicist or culturalist. As a matter of fact, however, linguistic and cultural issues have not been central in the debates about sovereignty and self-determination of the last decade. Granted, it is fair to acknowledge that they have also not been completely absent either (Atkinson 2018 and Sendra and Vila 2016 provide useful analyses of some of these debates). The discussion around the *Manifest Koiné* proved to be a very hot moment in the intersection between language and politics in Catalonia, and as such, it seems a very relevant point of entry to discuss such a connection.

Background

The debate sparked by the *Manifest Koiné* is one of many language ideological discussions that have taken place in Catalonia in recent times (see Woolard 2016 for more detailed analyses of some of them). Very frequently (although not exclusively), when language is discussed in Catalonia, two issues are at the centre of attention: the language of teaching in obligatory education (the so-called “linguistic immersion” programme in Catalan) (Erdocia 2020), and the sustainability of the language (whether Catalan is an endangered language

or not, and what policies and initiatives can be put in place to support the language) (Pujolar 2007). However, these are rather the surface layer of the debates, which can frequently turn out to be about more fundamental issues. These might include the meanings of “being” and of “speaking” Catalan, the connection between these two concepts, and the question of who can legitimately claim a stake on the Catalan nation and who cannot (Pujolar 2007). Often, not surprisingly, these debates emerge at moments of important social and political changes. In that regard, *Koiné* finds itself in direct connection to the increased demand for political independence of Catalonia, a movement that began consolidating itself in 2012 as a consequence of the combination of different phenomena. These include a persistent lack of recognition of Catalonia as a nation within Spain (apparent in the Spanish Constitutional Court ruling against Catalonia’s Statute of Autonomy in 2010), and a sense felt by many in Catalonia of a largely unfair redistributive system of the country’s wealth (Guibernau 2013).

Prior to the media discussion sparked by the *Manifest Koiné*, but already in the context of a growing demand for political sovereignty, a language ideological debate unfolded between 2012 and 2015. There were periods of higher and periods of lower intensity, but with one overarching question throughout the entire time: how best to manage the status of the different languages in a future independent Catalonia (Sendra and Vila 2016). In early 2012, the debate was initiated by an explicit call to include predominantly L1 (first-language) Spanish-speaking Catalans into the pro-independence movement. In one of the articles that sparked the debate, the author opened his piece by asking himself: “Would you support a politician that never ever spoke your language? Would you willingly take part in a project that gave signs of not loving the things you love the most, or even downgrading the things you love?” (Volas 2012).¹ In the article, the author called for Spanish to be embraced as an “own thing” (*cosa pròpia*) of Catalonia, and for a shift from seeing bilingualism as a threat to seeing it as a resource for Catalonia, a discourse also supported by the then leaders of Catalan pro-independence parties (Junqueras 2012). In fact, the support offered by politicians to this vision of languages in Catalonia became clearer as the debate moved on. Indeed, the electoral programme of the coalition of parties *Junts pel Sí* that would win the Catalan elections in September 2015 explicitly noted that Spanish would continue to be an official language in independent Catalonia (*Junts pel Sí* 2015: 74).

1. Our translation of the original in Catalan: “¿Vostè donaria suport a un polític que no parlés mai en la seva llengua? ¿S’apuntaria a un projecte que emetés senyals de no estimar les coses que vostè estima, o fins i tot, de menysprear les coses que vostè estima?”

Support for official bilingualism (with a range of nuances) was not restricted to some public opinion makers, political parties and their leaders, but it seems to have been a preferred option by the population of Catalonia at large not just recently, but since the 1990s (Branchadell 2015). However, according to Sendra and Vila's (2016) analysis of the 2012–2015 debate, the single point that generates most controversy amongst the opinions they analysed is whether or not Spanish should be awarded the status of official language in a future independent Catalonia. Some argue that it should, supporting a continuation of the current status quo or with some slight variation (e.g. putting in place a regime of asymmetrical official status, with Catalan enjoying some degree of primacy). Others insist that it should not, claiming either that only Catalan should be declared the official language of the future independent state, or that a regime without any single official language should be put into effect.

At any rate, it seems as though the question was indeed open for discussion, and when the *Manifest Koiné* was presented, the debate burst in a way that few could have predicted. The text, entitled *Per un veritable procés de normalització lingüística a la Catalunya independent* [For a Real Process of Linguistic Normalisation in Independent Catalonia]; Llengua i República 2016), was reproduced in several Catalan media outlets and was presented in early April at a high-profile event at the University of Barcelona. Short and politically loaded, the text calls for a more determined attitude by the Catalan-speaking population and the Catalan authorities in order to tackle the sociolinguistic challenges that the Catalan language will face in a future Catalan state. Not only because of its message, but also because of how it was presented, textually and discursively, the *Manifest Koiné* produced a real uproar of opinions in favour and against, as we shall see below. In just a single month, 387 items touching upon *Koiné* were featured in the media, including news stories, opinion items, interviews, personal blog entries and so on. This is nearly two-thirds of the total of 616 pieces (Sendra and Vila 2016: 37) that had appeared in the press during the entire period of the 2012–2015 debate. In what follows, we explain how we proceeded with our data analysis, elaborating first on our theoretical and methodological principles.

Theoretical framework, data and methodology

In our appraisal, we consider language policy as a necessarily complex and multidisciplinary social phenomena (Wodak and Meyer 2009). More specifically, our approach lies in Wodak's (2006: 170) conceptualisation of language

policy-making as opened to every public influence, including “‘bottom-up’ political initiatives through which a particular language or languages is/are supported”. From this perspective, the policy process is mediated through communicative practices in the public sphere. The public sphere is a participatory site in which a public body formed by a network of actors engage in negotiations and contestation over language policy choices (Somers 1993: 589). We consider the many reactions to *Koiné* as political communication comprising competing discursive representations of languages as well as embodying distinct views on institutional and legal settings governing language policy.

In contexts in which language is a major source of political strife, as in Catalonia, manifestos or other proposals to take action in language management play a key role in determining social and political groups’ positioning towards language. It is not only that manifestos generate controversies, public discussions extensively covered by the media, and even an uproar on social networking sites; manifestos can be used as instruments for agenda setting by interest groups. In a period in which a change in the legal status of Catalonia was a foreseeable scenario for some, the introduction of the “language problem” in the agenda as part of the “nationality problem” (Geertz 1973) was also a matter of political contest and competition. Against this background, public language debates can be considered as a means to dominate the meaning and prevalence of policy ideas. On this understanding, the mass-media debate becomes a mediated social activity in which contextual factors such as circumstances, actors, participants, roles and aims invest the discourse with authority and, ultimately, legitimacy (Martín Rojo and Van Dijk 1997).

Legitimacy is a concept used by social scientists to find validity and justification for authority, rules, political order, the nation state and, more broadly, power. In Beetham’s (1991) view, a system is legitimate if there is some degree of shared beliefs, conformity and consent. He admits that legitimacy is not a stable “all-or-nothing affair”. Instead, legitimacy can be eroded and contested and, ultimately, it can vary between differing conditions. Along the same lines, Hurrelmann, Krell-Laluhová, Lhotta, Nullmeier, and Schneider (2005: 121) underline the dynamic dimension of legitimacy, arguing that it is “attributed and constructed in an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation”. In other words, legitimacy is conceptualised as a language-dependent notion shaped and reshaped by the exchange of arguments in a public deliberation. Legitimising discourse is then the institutionalised practice of justification (Van Dijk 1998), a prescribed context in which the participants promote, among other things, their language representations by imbuing their utterances with

evidence, authority and truth (Chilton 2004) for the purpose of influencing public opinion. In addition to that, legitimization – and delegitimation – also refers to the stance taken by actors and their supporters in relation to opponents with the intent to limit the permissible range of language options and to restrict the possible participants in the policy-making process (Tollefson 2015). With this in mind, our goals are: 1) to examine the stance taken by the *Manifest Koiné*; 2) to ascertain the patterns of (de)legitimation used by analysts and commentators in reference to the main points presented in the manifesto; 3) to determine the level of choice for options about the official status of languages in an independent Catalonia.

We analyse a corpus of 103 articles published in a month-long period starting on the 29 March 2016, one day before the launch event of the manifesto. Our final corpus was developed in the following manner: We began by using the compilation of press articles relating to *Koiné* provided by the database of the Direcció General de Política Lingüística of the government of Catalonia.² This database consists of an exhaustive collection of the most important printed and online papers in Catalonia as well as Madrid-based press. The compilation included different kinds of pieces in Catalan and Spanish from a wide range of both printed and digital newspapers (see Figure 1 for all the media). The items were of different types, including new stories, opinion pieces and interviews among others. The distribution of these types of story in the initial corpus of 387 items can be seen in Figure 2.

As this is a large corpus, we reduced it in two ways, by only selecting particular newspapers and by only selecting a subset of stories. First, we excluded provincial papers and only selected the top three online newspapers (*El Món*, *NacióDigital* and *Vilaweb*), based on circulation figures for March 2016 (from <https://www.ojdinteractiva.es/mitjans-digitals-en-catala>). Thus, the media that we include as part of our analysis are: three Madrid-based newspapers in Spanish (*ABC*, *El Mundo* and *El País*, the latter offering an online version in Catalan too); two Catalonia-based newspapers in Catalan and Spanish (*El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia*); and five Catalonia-based newspapers in Catalan (*Ara*, *El Món*, *El Punt Avui*, *NacióDigital* and *Vilaweb*). In the case of newspapers with bilingual editions (*El País*, *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia*), we analysed the version of the article in either Spanish or Catalan, as it had been compiled by the Direcció General de Política Lingüística (most frequently, in Catalan). Second, since our focus is on how language ideologies are legitimated by identifiable actors, we

2. See http://llengua.gencat.cat/ca/direccio_general_politica_linguistica/centre_de_documentacio/ (accessed 5 June 2020).

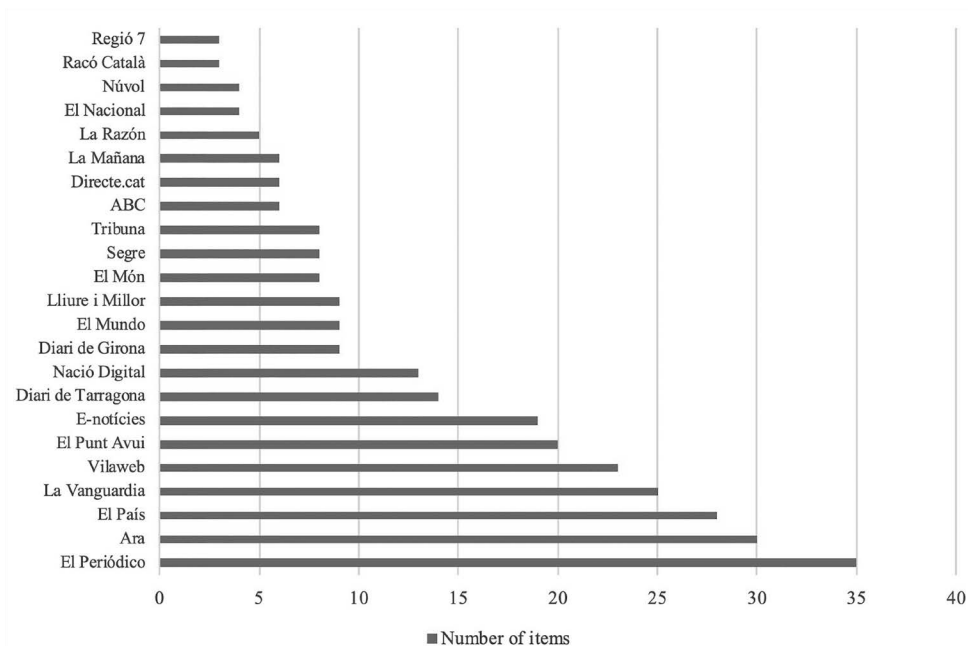


Figure 1. The number of items in each of the different media in the Direcció General de Política Lingüística database that mention *Manifest Koiné*, from 30 March to 30 April 2016

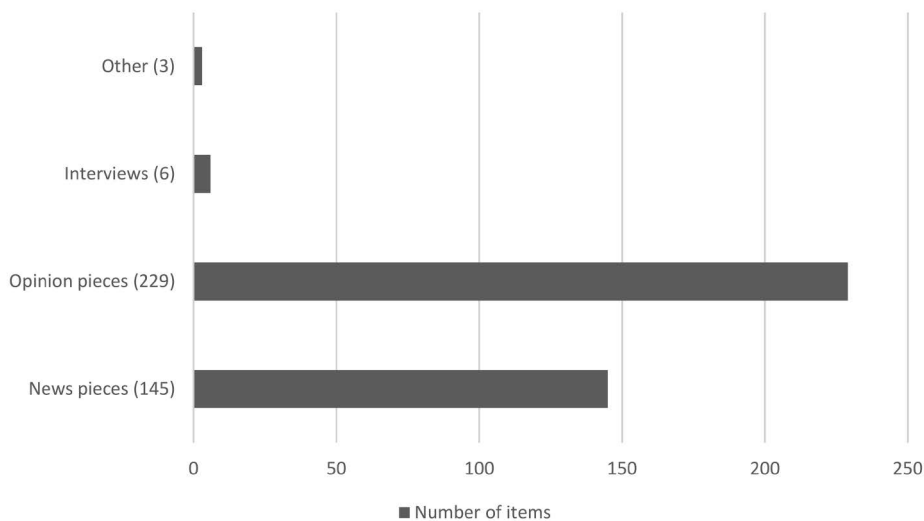


Figure 2. The distribution of the initial corpus of items into opinion pieces, news stories, interviews or other items

opted for personal or group perspectives and judgements about language and therefore we reduced the corpus to consist only of opinion pieces, including newspaper editorial articles, explicitly excluding news stories. This selection gave us a final corpus of 103 items.

Methodologically, we adopted a qualitative and quantitative approach for our text material. We proceeded in three parts. First, we used a content analysis technique (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) to inductively trace keywords and salient themes in the manifesto. This enabled us to schematise the fundamental ideas expressed in *Koiné* and to classify them for the next part of the analysis (see Table 1 for the classification).

In line with text analytical approaches to legitimisation (Hurrelmann et al. 2005; Schneider, Nullmeier and Hurrelmann 2007; Schneider, Hurrelmann, Krell-Laluhová, Wiesner and Nullmeier 2010), the second part of our analysis relied on legitimisation statements, a basic unit of legitimisation discourses. A legitimisation statement is an evaluative act that affirms or denies the legitimacy of a specific object of legitimisation. For the quantitative analysis, we considered each legitimisation statement found in an opinion piece in terms of the subcategory of *Koiné* to which it related, and coded it as expressing a positive (legitimation) or negative (delegitimation) assessment. Any repeated statements or statements that did not fit neatly into one subcategory were excluded from the quantitative analysis. Some articles had no statements that referred to our subcategories. It is important to emphasise that our aim in this part of the analysis was to obtain a comprehensive sense of the reactions generated by *Koiné*. To this end, we evaluated the level of acceptance (positive assessments) and rejection (negative assessments) in relation to the points stated in the manifesto.

In the third and final part of the analysis, we took a slightly different approach. In this part, we examined the debate around the options in connection to the official status of languages in a putative new state. The manifesto only vaguely alludes to the notion of officiality by proposing “the restoration of the status of territorial language to Catalan”, which was subject to several interpretations in the debate. Indeed, even if the text did not take an explicit stance in connection to the official status of languages, many commentators reacted to that very point in particular. Therefore, in the last part of the analysis we delve in the matter of official status of languages independently of the way in which this topic is framed in the manifesto. Since each opinion piece is likely to adopt only one stance towards the official status of languages, articles (not statements) are our unit of analysis for this part.

Analysis

The findings are organised into three sections. In the first section we analyse the *Manifest Koiné* and present the classification of its points for the second part of the analysis. The second section focuses on the reactions that the manifesto generated, and the last section deals with the discussion about different options in connection to officiality.

Manifest Koiné

Per un veritable procés de normalització lingüística a la Catalunya independent is a 1124-word manifesto. The text contains an introduction and three main sections and is undersigned by fourteen linguists and language-related professionals. In the short introduction, the professional profile of the signatories is presented: linguistic scholars, philologists, linguists, teachers, writers, translators, jurists and other language-related professionals. This part sets out the reason for the manifesto “the civic duty to express their position to the public opinion” and contribute with the constituent process taking place in Catalonia.

The text is divided into three main sections: *Constatem* (“we state”), *Denunciem* (“we denounce”), *Manifestem* (“we declare”). The first section, which is the longest one, sets the stage for the next two parts. It evaluates the state of Catalan from different perspectives. Catalan is defined as the endogenous language of the region but, unlike in other countries, its sociolinguistic situation does not comply with that of a “normal territorial language in its own territory”. The reasons argued are the adverse historical and political circumstances that Catalonia has undergone in the last three centuries, including the democratic period. This situation has resulted in the enforcement of bilingualism and the subsequent substitution and subordination of Catalan to Spanish. The current situation is depicted as worrying: the usage of Catalan is “extremely critical” in most domains and the language has experimented a process of deterioration in quality.

The second section is the shortest one and focuses on the idea of linguistic abnormality. Spanish, which is defined as an exogenous and immigrant language, is the default language in Catalonia. This dominant position of Spanish leads to the social isolation of Catalan speakers and a situation of endangerment that is not reflected in sociolinguistic surveys (implicitly: of an official nature), which are portrayed in the manifesto as distorting the actual linguistic reality of Catalonia. The situation of subordination of Catalan is the consequence of the bilingual regime that was sanctioned by the Spanish

Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy. This part of the text further concentrates on the so-called “pro-bilingual ideology”, which fails to acknowledge that the linguistic substitution is taking place and further conceals and legitimises the subordination of Catalan (the idea that explicit support for bilingualism is just a façade to support the subordinate position of Catalan to Spanish). The text points the finger at political groups imbued with this bilingual ideology and warns about their intentions to implement a similar bilingual regime in the Catalan Republic.

The last part focuses on the need to situate the “linguistic problem” within the constituent process of the Catalan state, as part of the “construction of a normal country”. A number of policy proposals are presented for Catalan: to restore its territorial status, to reverse its subordination to Spanish, and to promote the gradual recovery of its quality. It is important to underline here that the only allusion throughout the document to the question of officiality is about restoring “the status of territorial language” to Catalan. The text concludes that Catalan is an element for integration and that multilingualism is to be assumed as an aspect of individual and social richness.

In Table 1 we present the classification of the main points in the manifesto into four categories, each with a number of subcategories. The next part of the analysis is based on this classification.

Table 1. Classification of (sub)categories of points in *Manifest Koiné*

1. Categorisation of languages	2. Linguistic situation	3. Linguistic regime and bilingual ideology	4. Language and constituent process
1.1 Catalan as endogenous language	2.1 Subordination of Catalan to Spanish: social isolation and deterioration in quality	3.1 Political and linguistic dominance by the state / enforcement of bilingualism	4.1 Catalan as territorial language
1.2 Spanish as immigration language/ linguistic colonisation	2.2 Linguistic substitution: limited usage of Catalan	3.2 Denunciation of “pro-bilingual ideology” 3.3 Multi/plurilingualism as an individual and social wealth	4.2 Catalan as element for integration and social cohesion

Reactions to the manifesto

In this section we focus on the general patterns that emerge from our corpus in reference to the manifesto. Overall, we found 264 statements relating to the points in the manifesto in the corpus of 103 items. This gives an average rate of 2.5 statements per piece.

Drawing on our classification scheme (see Table 1), Table 2 shows a snapshot of articles grouped by their general stance towards the main points presented in the manifesto. The first and second groups represent articles with a higher number of positive and negative assessments respectively. For instance, articles in the first group (more positive assessments) either contain only positive assessments or include negative assessments but these are always fewer in number. By using this classification we consider that articles with more positive assessments agree or strongly agree with the manifesto and vice versa. Although this distribution is not meant to be a completely comprehensive account of the debate, it is indicative of overall tendencies. Results show that there is a balance between articles in agreement (48) and those in disagreement (52) with the manifesto.

Table 2. Distribution of articles by higher number of type of statement (positive/negative)

Type of article	No.
More positive assessments	48
More negative assessments	52
Similar number of positive/negative assessments	3
Total	103

A closer look at the media outlets in which these pieces were published reveals that frequency distributions are linked with variables such as where the press is based and the language of publication. In Table 3, we reorganise the articles from Table 2 in three groups. The first group is formed by the three Madrid-based newspapers in Spanish, although one of them (*El País*) offers an online version in Catalan. The second group contains the two Catalonia-based newspapers with editions in both Catalan and Spanish. In these first two groups, the position taken by an overwhelming majority of the articles was against the points in the manifesto (73% and 79% respectively). The third group comprises the five printed and online papers in Catalan. Here most articles (76%) are in favour of the manifesto. Thus, there is a stark difference between the position of articles in media outlets written only in Catalan and the other media whether they are Madrid or Catalonia-based.

Next, Table 4 summarises the number and frequency distribution of statements and their classification into four categories. There are some variations when looking at the overall number of statements in the corpus: positive assessments in relation to the manifesto (156, 59%) are slightly higher than negative assessments (108, 41%). This is also true for three of the four categories (e.g. for the second category, the linguistic situation, 59 assessments

Table 3. Distribution of articles by newspaper

Newspaper	No. of articles	More positive articles	More negative articles	Positive = negative articles
<i>El País</i>	12	3	8	1
<i>El Mundo</i>	6	0	5	1
<i>ABC</i>	3	0	3	
Subtotal	21	3	16	2
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	11	1	10	
<i>El Periódico</i>	18	5	13	
Subtotal	29	6	23	
<i>Vilaweb</i>	11	10	1	
<i>El Punt Avui</i>	11	8	2	1
<i>Ara</i>	21	13	8	
<i>Nació Digital</i>	7	5	2	
<i>El Món</i>	3	3	0	
Subtotal	53	39	13	1
Total	103	48	52	3

or 78% were positive versus 17 negative assessments or 22%). These figures show then that overall statements in favour with the manifesto outnumber those against it. Note that these results (156 positive assessments / 108 negative assessments) are slightly different to those in Table 2, which are more balanced (48 more positive articles / 52 more negative articles). This is due to the fact that we use different units of analysis.

We look now at the number and frequency distribution of statements in each category to ascertain the level of interest that ideas in the manifesto attracted. The first three categories (categorisation of languages, linguistic situation, and linguistic regime and bilingual ideology) have similar numbers of statements, ranging from 68 (26%) to 76 (29%). When it comes to the fourth category, by contrast, there are many fewer statements about language in a hypothetical constituent process of forming a new state, with only 48 (18%) such statements. This pattern can be interpreted as indicating a general preference for discussing those linguistic issues that affect the prevailing linguistic regime rather than those of a political stage that has not taken place yet. This finding is important as it reveals that the debate revolved around perennial sociolinguistic questions rather than around the management of languages in a putative new state.

Table 4. Number and percentage of statements in the opinion pieces relating to each (sub)category of points in *Manifest Koiné*; together with the number and percentage of positive and negative assessments for each (sub)category

Points from <i>Koiné</i>	No. of statements	% of total statements	Positive assessments		Negative assessments	
			No. of assessments	% of subcategory	No. of assessments	% of subcategory
1. Categorisation of languages						
1.1 Catalan as endogenous language	19	7.2%	13	68%	6	32%
1.2 Spanish as immigration language/linguistic colonisation	49	18.5%	9	18%	40	82%
Subtotal	68	25.7%	22	32%	46	68%
2. Linguistic situation						
2.1 Subordination of Catalan to Spanish: social isolation and deterioration in quality	49	18.6%	37	76%	12	24%
2.2 Linguistic substitution: limited usage of Catalan	27	10.2%	22	81%	5	19%
Subtotal	76	28.8%	59	78%	17	22%
3. Linguistic regime and bilingual ideology						
3.1 Political and linguistic dominance by the state / enforcement of bilingualism	24	9.1%	11	46%	13	54%
3.2 Denunciation of "pro-bilingual ideology"	34	12.9%	21	62%	13	38%
3.3 Multi/plurilingualism as an individual and social richness	14	5.3%	14	100%	0	0%
Subtotal	72	27.3%	46	64%	26	36%
4. Language and constituent process						
4.1 Catalan as territorial language	33	12.5%	18	55%	15	45%
4.2 Catalan as element for integration and social cohesion	15	5.7%	12	80%	3	20%
Subtotal	48	18.2%	30	63%	18	37%
Total	264	100%	156	59%	108	41%

A disaggregated look at the data reveals substantial internal differences in terms of whether the individual points are supported or rejected. There are two subcategories that attracted greater interest among commentators, with 49 (19%) statements each: the assertion that population movements of Spanish speakers were used for political purposes, including linguistic assimilation (1.2), and ideas associated with the subordination of Catalan to Spanish (2.1). Assessments about the former subcategory are overwhelmingly negative (40 assessments, 82%) while, in turn, positive assessments appear to a similar degree in connection to the latter subcategory (37 statements, 76%). The data suggest then that, although bilingualism is considered to have a continuing negative impact on Catalan as can be seen in point 2.1 (noting also the high positive rate of point 2.2, on Catalan being replaced by Spanish), references to Spanish as an “immigration language” or talking about the Spanish L1 population as an “involuntary instrument for linguistic colonisation” are widely rejected. This brings us to the second relevant finding, which concerns considerations into the territorial origin of languages. Based on the previous two points, we can suggest that the strong endorsement of Catalan as an endogenous or “own” language (point 1.1), which enjoys quite a high positive rate (13 statements, 68%), does not necessarily correspond with an exogenous or foreign conceptualisation of Spanish. This holds true even if bilingualism is considered to be negative for Catalan.

Within the third category, the view on enforcement of bilingualism and, more generally, the linguistic and political dominance by the state (3.1) is almost equally distributed between positive and negative assessments (46% versus 54%). So opinion is divided on this issue. Perhaps reflecting the relative lack of attention in the manifesto, there are fewer statements about multi/plurilingualism (3.3) than other topics (only fourteen statements, or 5.3% of the total); nevertheless, it is always assessed positively. This indicates (to a limited extent) a general agreement to not consider multi/plurilingualism as a problem that might pose a threat to Catalan. The “pro-bilingual ideology” of some groups within the independence movement (3.2) is covered more often (13%), mainly with positive assessments (62% versus 38%). This is relevant as it means that a majority of views are in agreement with what the manifesto depicts as an uncritical assumption of what the authors of the text label “pro-bilingual ideology”.

As for the fourth category, only a small number of statements (6%) refer to the role of Catalan for integration and social cohesion in the new state (4.2), most of them positive (80% versus 20%). Along with the endogenous nature of Catalan (1.1, 7%), these notions have been used for decades to justify

measures promoting Catalan. This might explain the relatively little attention paid to those two subcategories in this debate. An alternative explanation for the low importance of these subcategories in the debate is their non-political nature. In this sense, a pattern that can be discerned from the data is that the politically charged points in the manifesto are among the most covered ones in our corpus. For its part, the proposal that Catalan should be the territorial language (4.1) is another topic which is frequently touched on (13%), but in this case, opinions are nearly evenly divided (55% versus 45%), similar to what we saw with 3.1. It would seem that when it comes to those points of *Koiné* where the future official role assigned to Spanish is unclear and where Spanish is linked to values such as imposition or enforcement, opinions are roughly evenly divided.

In summary, views on the points raised in the manifesto are divided. Our findings show that most of articles in newspapers published only in Catalan are in favour of the manifesto while the articles in the other media are against it. Results indicate that bilingualism is not uncritically assumed and that certain conceptions of Spanish as exogenous or immigrant language are widely rejected. In any case, the major part of the discussion centred on enduring and unresolved sociolinguistic matters which moreover are politically loaded.

Official status of languages

We move on to our third and final point of the analysis, namely the choice for options in connection to the official status of languages in a putative new state. Now, we concentrate on the matter of official status of languages standing on its own, independently from the way it is framed in the manifesto. In this part of the analysis, we take articles, not statements, as our unit of analysis. This is because each article can adopt only one position on officiality and, consequently, statements are no longer relevant for our purpose here. So, what are the main tendencies that arise from the discussion?

It is worth noting here that the manifesto does not specify what status, if any, Spanish should have; instead, it only alludes to officiality by proposing “the restoration of the status of territorial language to Catalan”. As seen in Table 4, figures show that 55% of statements explicitly referring to this point are positive and 45% negative. However, this was the subject of several interpretations during the debate. Indeed, even if the manifesto showed some ambiguity on the question about which language(s) should be declared official in a future independent Catalonia, many commentators took issue with this particular phrase, reading it as a support for a single official status for Catalan. This is because, while the text itself may have remained vague in connection

to the question of officiality, there were other instances (most notably, during the formal presentation of the text at the University of Barcelona) when the promoters' stance on that very question became crystal clear. Consider the following passage, voiced by one of the keynote speakers in the presentation: "I believe in the honesty of not shying away of that to which we aspire and which is fully just, legitimate, natural, and possible: one nation, one state, and exclusively its own language as the official language"³ (Martí i Castell 2016: n.p.).

With this in mind, it was perhaps inevitable that the *Koiné* debate revolved also around the question of the official status of languages in a hypothetical future independent state. We detected eight different stances that commentators in public media took during the debate (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5. Stances towards the official status of languages

Stances	No. of articles	% of total articles
1. No stance about official status of languages	43	41.7%
2. In favour of debating officiality	13	12.6%
3. In favour of Catalan as the only official language	3	2.9%
4. Against Catalan as the only official language	23	22.4%
5. In favour of equal official status of Catalan and Spanish	7	6.8%
6. Against co-officiality	7	6.8%
7. In favour of some kind of official recognition for Spanish	4	3.9%
8. In favour of no official status for any language	3	2.9%
Total	103	100%

Results show three main patterns. First, while most articles (58.3%) include statements about officiality (albeit in many different forms), a significant part does not touch upon that matter (41.7%) and focuses on themes other than the official status of languages. Secondly, most of the articles (22.4%) in which a specific stance towards officiality is taken express a position against Catalan being the only official language. In fact, only a very small part of the articles (3%) are in favour of Catalan as only official language. Thirdly, to a lesser extent, some articles (12.6%) are in favour of opening a debate to further discuss the issue of officiality, expressing the view that this is a worthwhile discussion that Catalan society should have.

3. Our translation from the original in Catalan: "crec en l'honradesa de no amagar allò a què aspirem i que és del tot just, legítim, natural i possible: una nació, un estat i exclusivament la llengua pròpia com a oficial".

In closing, the debate included a gamut of different positions on the question of language officiality, but a considerable part of articles did not comment explicitly on that very question. In addition, contrary to what the manifesto seems to advocate, the rejection of the exclusive officiality of Catalan is the most common option. Thus, the manifesto was certainly successful in bringing the issue of officiality to the public agenda but the findings show that the position adopted in the manifesto did not enjoy ample support.

Conclusions

In this article, we have explored a language ideological debate that took place in Catalonia in April 2016, at a time when the region was well on its way towards attempting a political rupture with Spain, in October 2017. Prior to the *Koiné* debate, language ideological matters had been present in the pro-independence movement only to a limited extent. The *Manifest Koiné*, however, brought language-related issues strongly to the fore of the public discussion, as we have seen. In the article, we have attempted to provide a general overview of the debate by addressing two main questions: what did the *Manifest Koiné* say and how did it frame the language situation in Catalonia?; and what responses did the manifesto spark and how did commentators in the public media react to it?

As for the first question, we have seen that this is a short and sharp manifesto, a text that presents the language situation in Catalonia in rather sombre ways. According to the promoters of *Koiné*, if action is not taken urgently in order to remedy the current situation of subordination of the Catalan language, its future is at high risk, and the long-term sustainability of the language is highly compromised. As such, the text connects with a by now strongly solidified line of thought in Catalonia, a line of argument that can be traced back several decades (Argente et al. 1979; Rafanell and Rossich 1990). From that perspective, we side with Woolard and Frekko (2013) in noting that language ideological debates in Catalonia seem to continue to revolve around similar issues as they did decades ago and, as a result, one might have the impression that little has changed since then in sociolinguistic terms.

Far from that, however, and also as Woolard and Frekko point out, there are some signs indicating that things have indeed changed in connection to how language-related matters are conceptualised in public debates in Catalonia, and the reactions sparked by the *Manifest Koiné* (our second question) point to some of these changes. In short, while there is general consensus in the public debate with the view that Catalan takes a position of subordination to

Spanish, and that this is negative for the future of the language, there is far less consensus with portraying Spanish exclusively as a language of immigration. In addition, the idea that the Catalan-speaking population has become bilingual by force, including by the use of immigrant Spanish-speaking population as an “involuntary tool of linguistic colonisation”, gathered the highest degree of opposition in the debate. And while there is agreement amongst public commentators on the denunciation of the so-called “pro-bilingual” ideology as a cover to support Catalan’s secondary position to Spanish, opinions are divided when it comes to seeing the bilingualism of the Catalan-speaking population purely as a result of political subordination.

Finally, reactions to *Koiné* were also framed in connection to what languages should be declared official in an imagined future independent Catalonia. This is despite the fact that the manifesto remained rather vague on that matter, although the position taken by the promoters of the text on that question became clearer during its presentation, as we have seen. In addition, chronologically, the text appeared at a time when this very same question had been the object of some substantial debate (see Sendra and Vila 2016), so it seems inevitable that *Koiné* was read as part of that discussion too. On the question of officiality, then, it seems clear that those participating in the debate rejected the view that only Catalan should be declared an official language in a putative future independent state. Many were of the opinion that debating the question of officiality was a discussion worth having. And while, from the debate itself, it remains unclear what position Spanish should take in a given future scenario, it seems obvious that it should be awarded some degree of officiality, which goes in line with more general trends in the public opinion on that matter (Branchadell 2015). In short, the support for the idea of “one nation, one state, one language” hinted at by the manifesto and endorsed more explicitly during its presentation seems to be very limited.

All in all, the *Manifest Koiné* succeeded to a great extent in bringing forth language-related matters within the pro-independence movement in Catalonia, even if for a short while. Because of its nature, it seems understandable that the text could not be as nuanced as possible, but the rejection, during the debate that followed, of an altogether negative view of both Spanish and bilingualism depicted in *Koiné* are important signs of the changing nature of the language ideological landscape that Catalonia has experienced over the last decades (see Woolard 2016). As such, it seems important to continue tracing the development of these changes, with a particular view on how language ideological shifts might be connected to the political developments in the region.

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