**Discussion**

The current study was designed to ascertain whether political orientation is a significant predictor of the language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in Palma de Mallorca (RQ1) and, if so, to explore what the relationship is between different political orientations and language attitudes toward both languages (RQ2). With respect to RQ1, results revealed a significant association between political orientation and the language attitudes of the population of Palma de Mallorca toward Catalan and Spanish. These results are in line with previous studies (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017; Castell et al., 2023; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014) and help us understand (1) why previous and current local governments have implemented certain language policies and (2) the reactions of the Balearic population to the implementation of these policies.

With respect to RQ2, results reveal several interesting findings regarding the association between political orientation and language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in Palma de Mallorca. First, there seems to be a clear division between progressive and conservative people in terms of language attitudes (Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014). People who self-identify as progressive exhibit positive language attitudes toward both Catalan and Spanish, with a stronger preference for Catalan, whereas people who self-identify as conservative exhibit very positive attitudes toward Spanish and not so positive attitudes toward Catalan. These findings seem to reflect the current political debate in the Balearic Islands regarding the status and the presence that each language should have both at a societal and political level. Those initiatives and language policies aimed at promoting the normalization of Catalan and its presence in the Balearic society tend to be supported by progressive governments, progressive political parties, and the progressive sector of the society (Amorós, 2017; Colmenero, 2018; Colom, 2023; Galvín, 2017). On the other hand, those initiatives and language policies aimed at expanding the presence of Spanish tend to be supported by conservative governments, conservative parties, and the conservative sector of the society (Gentili, 2013; Manresa, 2015; Olaizola, 2013). For instance, the current conservative government of the Balearic Islands, Popular Party (PP), supported by the far-right political party Vox, is working to implement free choice of language in the schools of the Balearic Islands (Bohórquez, 2023; Calleja, 2023; Ribas, 2023). This new language policy would give parents the possibility to choose the language in which they would like their children to study, which would imply a segregation of students based to the language choice. Both the PP and Vox, as well as the more conservative sectors of the society, see in this measure an opportunity to put an end to the imposition of Catalan and to be free to choose the language of instruction. Contrary, the progressive political parties of the Balearic Islands, as well as the progressive sector of the society, however, argue that this measure will only lead to situations of linguistic discrimination and inequality of opportunities. Furthermore, they consider it an attack on the linguistic legal framework established in the Balearic Islands more than forty years ago. This situation serves as an example of how language policy and language attitudes mutually influence each other.

This dynamic was also found in each of the six categories in which the statements on language attitudes were organized. In terms of language preference, progressive people like to listen to and use both Catalan and Spanish and enjoy it when others use either language as well. They also believe that there is nothing wrong with passive bilingualism and are happy with the idea of their children speaking both languages. Interestingly, however, they report feeling compelled to use Spanish in certain situations, but not Catalan. Conversely, conservative people exhibit a preference for listening to and using Spanish over Catalan and seem to enjoy it more when others use Spanish and not Catalan. They also believe that passive bilingualism is not appropriate if someone starts a conversation in Spanish and the other person responds in Catalan, but they believe that it is appropriate when someone starts a conversation in Catalan and the other person responds in Spanish. They also seem to express a preference for their children speaking Spanish over Catalan. Interestingly, conservative people do not seem compelled to use either Catalan or Spanish. In terms of language difficulty and enjoyment, people who self-identify as progressive consider that it is not unpleasant or boring to learn Catalan and Spanish and agree with the idea that both languages are beautiful. They also disagree with the idea that an outsider will find it less difficult to learn Spanish than Catalan. Contrary, people who self-identify as conservative agree more with the idea that it is unpleasant and boring to learn Catalan, but not Spanish. They also do not really consider the latter a beautiful language, but they do with respect to Spanish. Likewise, they also tend to believe that that an outsider will find it less difficult to learn Spanish than Catalan. In terms of language importance and usefulness, people who self-identify as progressive believe that both Catalan and Spanish can become important language in the European context. They also believe that both languages are as important as English and that it is worth learning both of them. Conversely, people who self-identify as conservative believe that only Spanish can become an important language in the European context. Likewise, they also believe that only Spanish is as important as English, and they value learning it over Catalan.

In terms of language policy and integration, people who self-identify as progressive believe that at least 50% of the subjects taught in school should be in Catalan, but not in Spanish. They also agree with the idea that Catalan must be a requirement to hold a job in the public administration, especially in the healthcare field. Moreover, they believe that it is necessary for people coming from Spanish-speaking areas to learn Catalan to fully integrate in the Balearic Islands. Contrary, people who self-identify as conservative believe that at least 50% of the subjects taught in school should be in Spanish. They also disagree with the idea that Catalan should be a requirement to hold a job in the public administration, especially in the healthcare field. Likewise, they believe that it is not necessary for people coming from Spanish-speaking areas to learn Catalan to fully integrate in the Balearic Islands. In terms of cultural and identity aspects, people who self-identify as progressive strongly believe that Catalan is an identity element of the Balearic Islands and that, therefore, it is the language that should predominate in the archipelago. They also believe that it is necessary to learn Catalan to fully integrate in the Balearic society and that all residents need to know, use, and study both languages. Contrary, people who self-identify as conservative express a much lower agreement with the idea that Catalan is an identity element of the Balearic Islands, and they do not consider that it is the language that should predominate in the archipelago. They also believe that it is not that necessary to learn Catalan to fully integrate in the Balearic society and that all resident need to know, use, and study Catalan. Finally, in terms of population trends, people who self-identify as progressive strongly believe that fewer and fewer people know Catalan, but not Spanish, and that, therefore, Catalan is in danger of disappearing in the archipelago. Likewise, they consider that people should put more effort into using Catalan and not Spanish. Conversely, people who self-identify as conservative do not really believe that fewer and fewer people are using Catalan, and that this language is in danger of disappearing in the Balearic Islands. Additionally, they do not believe that people should put more effort into using Catalan, but they overall think that people should put more effort into using Spanish.

Altogether, it could be argued that people who self-identify as progressive exhibit more positive attitudes toward bilingualism in the Balearic Islands, whereas people who self-identify as conservative do not. The analysis of the different statements in each category shows that even though progressive people have a preference for Catalan, in reality, they have positive attitudes towards both languages. Their preference for Catalan could be due to many reasons. For instance, the majority of people who identified as progressive had Catalan as their mother tongue, and previous studies have found that mother tongue is a factor related to the formation of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands. Accordingly, those who have Catalan as their first language (L1) show more positive attitudes toward this language, whereas those who have Spanish as their L1 show more positive attitudes toward this other language (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017; Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014; Tudela Isanta, 2021). Another reason why progressive people exhibit a preference for Catalan could be related to identity. While the present study did not explored how identity is associated with the formation of language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands, previous studies have found that identity can be a significant predictor. Ibáñez Ferreté (2014), for instance, reported the existence of two identity groups in Mallorca, the “Mallorcans” and the “non-Mallorcans”. The former include people born in Mallorca to Mallorcan parents, who speak Catalan, and identify with the island’s culture. The latter, on the other hand, are people from or born to people from mainland Spain, who speak Spanish, and whose culture has been imported from outside of the island. These two groups exhibited different language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish, the former exhibiting mainly positive attitudes toward Catalan, and the latter toward Spanish. The analysis of the different statements, on the other hand, revealed that conservative people tend to clearly exhibit positive attitudes toward Spanish and not toward Catalan, which could imply a desire to move towards a monolingual society with Spanish as the only official language.

Second, and in relation to these findings, the association between political orientation and language attitudes in Palma seems to be especially true toward Catalan and not so much toward Spanish, which seems to be more neutral. These findings are in line with previous studies that have found a general consensus around the idea that Catalan is the authentic language of the Balearic Islands and an essential component of its identity, whereas Spanish tends to be perceived as a mere language of communication, with no specific value attached to it (Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014; Tudela Isanta, 2021). This situation reflects Woolard’s (2007) concepts of authentic language and anonymous language. Essentially, an authentic language or linguistic variety is defined as one that is related to an identity and sentimental aspect. Authenticity, then, is understood as a value attached to a language or variety in its association with a particular community and as an expression of its spirit. In the specific case of the Balearic Islands, and based on current and previous findings, Catalan would be considered the authentic language. An anonymous language or variety, on the other hand, is one that is not related to a specific identity aspect and has based its legitimacy or linguistic authority on the ideological construct of anonymity. Anonymous languages or varieties are usually the hegemonic ones in the public sphere and, therefore, become a common language, a language of nowhere, universal and non-ethnic, a neutral language. In the specific case of the Balearic Islands, and based on current and previous findings, Spanish would be considered an anonymous language.

Third, results also revealed two trends related to political orientation that have not been identified by prior studies on language attitudes toward Catalan and Spanish in the Balearic Islands. The first one has to do with the people who self-identified as centrists. The analysis of the responses to the different statements showed how the responses of this particular group aligned with different political orientation depending on the nature of the statement. Consequently, when the statement was more related to language attitudes, such as ‘It is boring to learn Catalan’, the responses of people who self-identified as centrist closely resembled the responses of those who identified themselves as more conservative (center-right and right). In fact, their level of agreement or disagreement with certain statements was even greater than that indicated by those who identified themselves ideologically as center-right and right-wing. Conversely, when the statement was more related to language use, such as ‘I try to use Spanish whenever I can’, the responses of people who self-identified as centrist closely resembled the responses of those who identified themselves as more progressive (far-left, left, and center-left). This pattern exhibited by centrists could be due to the fact that the majority of those who self-identified as centrists have Catalan as their L1 and, as previously mentioned, those who have Catalan as their first language (L1) show more positive attitudes toward this language (Aguiló-Mora & Lynch, 2017; Calafat Vila & Calero-Pons, 2019; Ibáñez Ferreté, 2014; Tudela Isanta, 2021). These results, therefore, could be indicating a need to distinguish more clearly between language attitudes and languages uses. Perhaps these two concepts are not as closely related as one might think, at least in cases where people’s political orientation is not as sided.

The second trend observed has to do with people who identified themselves ideologically as center-left. The analysis of the different statements revealed how, on many occasions, the responses of those who self-identified ideologically as center-left closely resembled the responses of those who self-identified ideologically as centrist or more conservative (center-right and right-wing). One possible explanation for this pattern may have to do with neutrality, that is, as political orientation moves toward the center, language attitudes become more neutral and less sided. Essentially, they become less influenced by political orientation. Contrary, as political orientation becomes more extreme, either to the left or to the right, attitudes toward one’s own languages become more acute and no longer neutral. That is, the more left-wing or right-wing one’s political orientation is, the less neutral one’s linguistic attitudes are, always in favor of the language of preference. This would explain why people who self-identified ideologically as center-left showed a much lower level of agree with statements such as ‘Spanish is more important than English’ or ‘It is worth learning Catalan’, compared to people who identified themselves ideologically as center-left or far-left. With respect to the first one, it is possible that people who self-identified as center-left consider the role of English as an international language and its importance around the world from a more neutral stand-point, without letting their political orientation bias their attitudes. That is why they do not consider that Spanish is more important than English, contrary to what those who self-identified as more conservative for this study indicated. With respect to the second statement, it is possible that people who self-identify as center-left are comparing the potential benefits of learning Catalan for the future (economically, professionally, etc.) to the potential benefits or learning Spanish, or even English, from a more neutral perspective. And that could explain why their level of agreement with this statement is much lower compared to that indicated by those who self-identified ideologically as left and far-left. It is worth noting that this increment of neutrality in the language attitudes of those who self-identify ideologically as center-left goes in both directions, that is, it affects both Catalan and Spanish.