

[Working Papers 18

**[The origins and evolution of language
secessionism in Valencia. An analysis from the
transition period until today**

Vicent Climent-Ferrando

2005



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today**

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Translator and Political Scientist

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1. Introduction

Over the last few years, one of the most widely discussed issues in Catalonia has been the recognition of Catalan at European level. From public institutions to academia or civil society, there has been a general consensus

that the European Union should elaborate a thorough language policy that is respectful of Europe's linguistic diversity, including Catalan.

Despite this fight for recognition, the Treaty establishing a European Constitution, approved on June 18th and signed on October 29th 2004, does not include any substantial improvement in the EU¹'s language policy. However, it is worth pointing out Article IV-448(2), which envisages the possibility of translating the Treaty into any non-official language. It should be noted that this translation does not have any legal value since it is neither an official nor a Treaty language of the EU².

Even though the translation of the Treaty does not confer legal value, Spanish regions with an official language other than Spanish submitted their own translations to the Spanish Government, who is in charge of handing them over to the European Council. Despite the fact that Catalan is spoken in three Spanish regions (Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands), only two of them (Catalonia and the Balearic Islands) submitted a common translation under the name of *Catalan*. In an attempt to differentiate Valencian from Catalan, the *Generalitat Valenciana* [government of Valencia] submitted its translation independently to the Spanish Government. By acting independently, the *Generalitat Valenciana* aimed to differentiate their *Valencian language* from Catalan.

Although the translation submitted by the *Generalitat Valenciana* was identical to that of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, they refused to submit it under the name of Catalan. To quote the president of Valencia: "*The name of the language in Valencia is Valencian...It is non-negotiable*"³. A long-standing conflict on the issue of language in Valencia, sparked by social and political groups, was resurfacing. Ever since the end of the Franco era, these groups have created a social, political and editorial network from which they have

¹ On December 13th 2004, the Spanish government presented a Language Memorandum to the EU, which claimed semi-official recognition of Catalan, Basque and Galician in the EU. At the time of writing this paper (February 2005), such Memorandum has not yet been approved.

² Refer to article IV-448 for a full list of official languages of the EU.

³ Press conference delivered by the President of the *Generalitat Valenciana* on November 11th 2004.

attacked the unity of the Catalan language. The social movement based on an extremist anti-Catalan attitude is known as *blaverisme*.

The *Generalitat Valenciana's* refusal to submit one common translation of the Constitutional Treaty is a clear indication that this conflict is not about language: if it were about language, the fact that both governments submitted the same translation would suffice to solve it. The conflict is in fact about politics and identity, as we shall see in this paper.

For this reason, the issue of Catalan in Valencia will, therefore, be tackled not only from a linguistic point of view but also from a political one. What are the main elements of this conflict? What types of arguments are used? These are the questions that will be answered.

The aim of this paper is twofold: firstly, it will identify the roots of the conflict, its participants and the way their message has been transmitted to the Valencian people and secondly, it will give an overview of the evolution of the message in order to analyse how it has developed over time.

A classification of the *secessionist* arguments used to defend the independence of the so-called *Valencian language* will also be provided. This classification will be key to validating the hypothesis upon which this paper is based: out of the four lines of argumentation used by the secessionists – the **linguistic**, the **historic**, the **identity** and the **juridical** lines of argumentation – only the latter two prevail. This is so for one reason: by using extremely biased linguistic and historic arguments, the secessionist groups have tried to enter the realms of science and their lines of argumentation have been easily invalidated by linguists and historians alike. For this reason their secessionist discourse has moved on to other types of argumentation: the **identity argument**, which claims the autonomy of the Valencian people from Catalonia, and the **juridical argument**, which claims that *Valencian* is an independent, autonomous language established by the Valencian Statute of Autonomy and the Spanish Constitution.

According to this hypothesis, the arguments currently used in the language secession discourse would be the identity and juridical ones.

Whilst the former concerns mobilizing the people of Valencia –claiming that the unity of the language threatens the culture and the identity of the Valencian people (a populist argument by definition)– the latter calls for further institutionalization of secessionism through legislation.

The complexity of this subject and the abundance of information found in the mass media leads us to prioritise some information and to establish the following research methodology: the historical part of this paper –the roots of the conflict and its identity implications– have been documented in different works relating to society, culture and language issues during the transition period (late 70's early 80's). As for the analytical part of this work –the evolution of the secessionist arguments– a chronological tracking has been carried out (April 1997 – February 2005) of the information appearing in the following regional newspapers: *Levante-EMV*, *Las Provincias*, *Diario de Valencia* (after 2000), *El País-Comunidad Valenciana*, *l'Avui* and the weekly Catalan-language magazine *El Temps*. The Ph.D thesis of Dr: Maria Soledat González Felip, *La qüestió lingüística valenciana a través de la premsa. Des de l'encàrrec del dictamen al Consell Valencià de Cultura fins a la constitució de l'Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua*, has been extremely useful for compiling relevant documents.

In order to have first-hand information, interviews have been carried out with two Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who have made several statements on the issue: Bernat Joan, sociolinguist and MEP representing the left-wing Catalan party *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) and José Manuel García-Margallo (former member of the right wing party *Unión de Centro Democrático*, legal expert and MEP representing the People's Party (PP).

Finally, it should be said that the author of this work is well aware of the high risk of subjectivity that this language conflict, full of identity and political elements, may entail. It is important, therefore, to highlight that the documents and statements that appear in the following lines have been chosen objectively, taking care to avoid any personal or partisan implication in the conflict.

2. An overview of the ideological roots of secessionism and its current implications

The roots of the Valencian language conflict are to be found in the political/social situation of the end of the Franco era and beginning of the Spanish democratic transition⁴. This was a period of political and social upheavals in the region of Valencia.

Once the Franco dictatorship came to an end, there were two main problems to resolve: the establishment of a new democratic regime in Spain and the inclusion of the different national identities within Spain in the new State structure.

As far as the political situation was concerned, the debate after Franco's death revolved around whether the system established by the dictator was to be abolished or whether the institutions created by him should be kept and reformed (Bodoque 2000:3-5).

Unlike Catalonia or the Basque Country, which clearly opted for the abolition position, the Valencian society became divided over the issue: the South of the region opted for the abolition whereas the Centre/North chose to reform the institutions established during the dictatorship. This created a political conflict between, on the one hand, left-wing political parties –with a Valencian nationalist attitude– and the right-wing conservative parties –some of them closely related to the dictatorship–. This conflict did not only take place in the political arena. The first societal demonstrations in the early 1970's were regarded by the Valencian *petite bourgeoisie* –predominantly established during the Franco years– as a threat to their position. These demonstrations were being carried out by a wide sector of the population with a cultural and linguistic awareness (Pradilla 2004; 38-40) as well as by Academia and the University, in favour of the recovery of the region's own language.

⁴ It must be said that this language conflict is also found at the beginning of the 20th century. It has been, however, during the transition period that the conflict was reactivated and used as a political tool. This is why our historical overview begins in this period.

Despite the appearance of this sector, we should not forget the way in which the majority of the Valencian population perceived the language. While Catalan was socially perceived as a rural, folkloric residue, Spanish was associated with the modern times and a higher social status.

Another key element in this socio-political conflict is the social tensions derived from the economic crisis of the mid 1970's. As outlined by Pradilla (2004:40), this crisis had a strong impact on the Valencian society, as the lack of democratic political education led some to associate the crisis with the establishment of democracy in Spain.

The political regime change, allied with the economic crisis of the 1970's and the social perception of the Catalan language, led the right-wing conservative parties in Valencia to create a fake political and social conflict over the issue of the region's own language. This strategy, and the movement who religiously supported it, is known as *blaverisme*, a popular label attached to the right-wing anti-Catalan activists. This right-wing circle claims that the *Valencian* language is independent from Catalan and states that there is a plot aimed at wiping out *Valencian* and the identity of the Valencian people.

This secessionist movement also accuses the left-wing Valencian parties of being pro-Catalan and, therefore, traitors to the Valencian people. It should be said that those being accused of being "traitors" are those who are deeply concerned about the language and the identity of the Valencian people. In other words, the most progressive people.

The success of the left in the 1977 elections acted as a catalyst for the right-wing parties to elaborate an anti-Catalan strategy by means of the language and the identity of the Valencian people. They claimed the independence of the *Valencian language*, defended the adoption of a different flag from that of Catalonia (blue stripe on the side, hence the name of "blaverisme") and proposed *Regne de València* [Kingdom of Valencia] as the name for the region.

The right-wing strategy soon found followers and supporters within the Valencian society for several reasons. Firstly, their discourse was heavily loaded with emotional elements: an independent Valencian language and an identity of its own. Secondly, several key political players, such as Fernando Abril Martorell, orchestrated a state-wide anti-Catalan strategy for fear that Valencia would become culturally and linguistically attached to Catalonia. Finally, the right wing has passed, and continues to pass, their Valencian message to the society through several daily newspapers such as *Las Provincias*, which have adopted a virulent anti-Catalan editorial attitude.

These elements, allied with the rather hesitant stand of the left-wing parties, made up the *ideological cocktail* needed to spread a highly biased and populist message. The results of this *cocktail* have been lethal for the Valencian people. Once passed into the society, the language conflict created a deep confrontation within Valencia, which soon translated into violence. During the late 1970's early 1980's, several centres such as the *Tres i Quatre* bookstore, cultural centres and even individuals in favour of the unity of the language such as philologist Manuel Sanchis Guarner and writer Joan Fuster, were attacked with home-made bombs.

With all of the above-mentioned elements, the right-wing parties lobbied during the drafting of the Valencian Statute of Autonomy (the region's *Magna Carta* of 1982) so that the positions of the left-wing parties would not be included:

- ?? The left seemed to defend the explicit mention of the unity of the Catalan language in the Statute of Autonomy. However, the final text adopted only included *Valencian* as the name of the language and did not describe it as being a regional variety of Catalan.
- ?? The flag chosen for the region would be the one proposed by the right wing: blue stripe on the side, four red stripes over a yellow background and a royal crown. The flag proposed by the left had neither a blue strip nor a crown.

?? The name of the region that was finally chosen was not País Valencià, the proposal made by the left, but the merely descriptive term Comunitat Valenciana⁵

To sum up, despite the left wing's success in the elections, the right's political strategy over the language issue and their lobbying capacity in the drafting of the Statute of Autonomy proved more powerful. As we shall see below, all these elements, established in the past, are being used today in the right-wing political and societal circles.

2.1. The participants in the language conflict

The language conflict was not only debated in the political arena. It also spread into the social arena through the creation of several political rather than cultural associations. Unofficial *pseudo-language* academies, associations in favour of an autochthonous *Valencian language* or highly biased newspapers and publications with an anti-Catalan line. With an increasing number of such associations, the conflict continued to grow.

The following section aims to provide an overview of the main associations through which the *secessionist* message is currently being delivered.

The first and most paradoxically puzzling one is **Lo Rat Penat**. Although it is considered as one of the associations currently promoting the language conflict, it was originally created in 1878 to promote the *Renaixença* movement –a cultural movement which promoted the Catalan language and culture during the mid 19th century– .

Lo Rat Penat soon became home to the conservative Valencian *bourgeoisie* of the time. Whilst the bourgeoisie tried to stop the development of a Valencian nationalistic project, it never denied the unity of the

⁵ The right wing defended the name *Regne de València* [Kingdom of Valencia], a constitutionally doubtful proposal given that the Spain was also a Kingdom. This is why this proposal was put aside.

Catalan language. During the Franco era, *Lo Rat Penat* became the only clandestine centre working to save the Catalan language from the shift that was encouraged by the Franco regime (Strubell 1991:11). Renowned writers such as Manuel Sanchis Guarner, Enric Valor or Xavier Casp were members. It was, however, during the democratic transition period that this centre became militant in the language conflict: its historical members were expelled from it and their publications began to be written using counter-orthography.

Poet **Xavier Casp** deserves special attention, as a key character necessary for a full comprehension of the language conflict in Valencia: during the post-Civil War, Casp carried out the important task of promoting novel writers in Catalan such as Joan Fuster or Enric Valor. Along with Miquel Adlert, Casp founded the *Torres* publishing house, thanks to which a cultural network throughout the Catalan-speaking lands was created. Casp even won different Catalan poetry prizes in the exile such as the *Flor Natural* in Perpignan (1950) or *l'Englantina d'Or* in New York (1951).

It was during the transition period that both Xavier Casp and Miquel Adlert inexplicably went from being key players in the promotion of the Catalan language in Valencia to defenders and leaders of several secessionist associations such as the above-mentioned **Lo Rat Penat** or **La Real Acadèmia de Cultura Valenciana, RACV**, [Academy for Valencian Culture]. They even became militants of the populist anti-Catalan political party **Unió Valenciana (UV)**.

Miquel Adlert even invented orthographic norms known as *les normes de Torre*. This counter-orthography, opposed to the *Normes de Castelló* which were officially established in 1932, was unanimously criticized by the scientific community. As pointed out by F. Martin (2000:453), the constant attacks on the official norms led to the approval of a manifesto on the unity of language written by scientists and academics. Even the Academy for the Spanish language (*Real Academia de la Lengua Española*) adhered to it by signing an *Academic Report* in 1975, in which the position of historians and philologists was being made clear:

“We, the undersigned members of the Academy of the Spanish language and the Academy of History, being fully aware of the controversial conflict [...] of the language spoken in most part of the region of Valencia, and after being asked for our opinion on the matter, would like to express the following: according to all the studies carried out on Romance languages, it is scientifically proven that Valencian is a regional variety of Catalan, that is, of the language spoken in the Balearic Islands, the French and the Spanish Catalonia, in some parts of Aragon, in most parts of the region of Valencia, in the Principality of Andorra and in the Sardinian city of Alghero. Any attempt to separate the language spoken in Valencia from the culture and the language spoken in the rest of the Catalan-speaking territories represents a total aberration from a scientific point of view. As Spanish writers and academics, we would like to express our respect and our tribute to the Catalan language and culture, of which Valencia represents a relevant position”⁶.

Casp and Adlert’s inexplicable shift towards an anti-Catalanist attitude has been studied by different authors⁷, who come to the conclusion that right-wing, Casp and Adlert’s conservative nationalism did not match the left-wing nationalism or the idea of *Països Catalans* [a nationalist term expressing the idea of a common language and culture shared by the Catalan-speaking lands] expressed by writer Joan Fuster. This, coupled with the outdated nature of Casp’s poetry, relegated these writers to a secondary role in the literature. They were soon replaced by a new generation of cultivated writers. In the words of Burguera (1991:241) *“they went from being intellectually mediocre writers to leaders of the secessionist circles [...]”*. The combination of these ideological and personal elements would explain why these writers began to deny the unity of the language during the transition period.

Despite the statements issued by the scientific community and the academic world, the attempts to establish counter-orthography for a

⁶ Document written by 23 members of the Royal Academy of the Spanish language, including Dámaso Alonso, Jesús Pabón, Alonso Zamora Vicente, Fernando Lázaro Carreter, Emilio Alarcos Lloarch, Vicente Aleixandre, and ratified by Camilo José Cela, Salvador de Madariaga, Miguel Delibes, Luis Rosales, among others.

⁷ See RIPOLL, Faust, cited in an article of the Catalan daily newspaper L’AVUI on November 12 2004.

Valencian language became one of the main goals of the above-mentioned **RACV**, known before 1978 as *Centre de Cultura Valenciana* [Centre for the Valencian Culture].

As was the case with other associations, this centre became a leading promoter of the secessionist cause: its founding statutes were modified and the centre was given a new name, *Real Academia de Cultura Valenciana*. It was only after 1978 that this association, led by Xavier Casp, began to encourage the use of non-standard Catalan and to promote counter-orthography. As an example, over a period of 5 years (1978-1982), this centre proposed the adoption of as many as five different codifications for the *Valencian language* (Martin 2000:455). They finally adopted a set of norms called **Normes del Puig**, also known as **Normes de l'Acadèmia**.

Given the unscientific and highly biased work being carried out in the centre, their only renowned philologist had no choice but to leave. The RACV, with many of its members previously linked to the Franco regime and the hardcore circles of the Catholic Church –became another reference point for the secessionist movement–.

Along with the newborn **RACV** (1978), another anti-Catalan language association was created: **Grup d'Acció Valencianista (GAV)**. This far right-wing group also had links with *La Falange and Los Carlistas* [two fascist organisations created during the Franco regime]. They represented the most violent and obscure side of the conflict. It is said that the group received some financing from UCD, one of the right-wing political parties of the time.

The GAV was in charge of perpetrating the attacks against pro-democratic associations and against the true cultural and linguistic associations. As mentioned above, a clear example of these attacks is the homemade bomb received on December 4th 1978 by philologist Manuel Sanchis Guarner, a key player in the promotion of the Catalan language in Valencia.

Some members of the GAV and of other folklore-related associations joined **UV**, the populist right wing political party founded in 1982 by

Vicente González Lizondo. The founding idea for this political party basically boiled down to anti-Catalanism. By creating this political party, the secessionist movement became extremely active in the political arena. Thanks to its coalition with other right-wing parties (Alianza Popular, AP), UV obtained two seats in Madrid. Although they experienced a downward trend throughout the 1990's, UV finally managed to come to power in 1995 in the region of Valencia thanks, again, to their coalition with the People's Party (PP).

Once in office, the PP-UV coalition launched an anti-Catalan campaign, including an attack on the unity of the Catalan language and on the use of Catalan in the Administration. The pressure exerted by UV led to the withdrawal of public funding for Catalan, the promotion of non-standard Catalan claiming it was *the genuine Valencian language* and the use of non-standard norms such as the ones used by RACV, cultural obstructionism against Catalan-related events, non-acceptance of the Catalan philology University Diploma – issued by the University of Valencia– as a proof for language prominence⁸, approval of the *Decret de minims*, a law excluding Catalan authors not born in Valencia from the Catalan literature in Valencia⁹, to name only a few.

It was also at the request of UV that some public institutions and *conselleries* [the Valencian Government Departments] began to use an unofficial orthography. These institutions include *Les Corts Valencianes* (the regional Parliament), or the *conselleries de Medi Ambient* [Department of Environment, spelled *Conselleria de **Mig** Ambient* in non-standard orthography] and the *Conselleria d'Agricultura, Pesca i Alimentació* [Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, spelled in non-standard *Agricultura, **Peixca** i Alimentació*]. Other Departments, however, kept the use of the official norms, the *Normes de Castelló*. As pointed out by Ma. Soledat González (2004:22) '[...] the teaching of the Catalan language in Valencia was not modified. If the secessionist movement had tried to alter the Department of Education, the linguistic chaos and confusion would have been lethal to the Catalan language in Valencia”.

UV did not last in office very long. Aware of the potential votes, the PP increasingly shaped a moderate anti-Catalanist discourse –as

⁸ Decision approved by the *Generalitat Valenciana* on April 25, 2002.

⁹ Decision approved by the *Generalitat Valenciana* on March 5, 2002.

opposed to the radical and virulent anti-Catalan stand of UV– in order to have UV votes transferred to the PP in the following elections. This calculated strategy achieved its goal in the 1999 regional elections. The PP obtained an absolute majority and UV disappeared from the political arena soon after that.

Once UV was out of the political arena, **Juan García Sentandreu**, the eternal activist of the anti-Catalan movement, and president of the secessionist association **Nou Valencianisme**, founded the new populist right-wing party **Coalició Valenciana (CV)** at the beginning of 2004. With basically the same discourse as UV, the rationale behind the newly founded party is a radical anti-Catalan stand. As an illustration, we can read the following statement made by Sentandreu to a daily on-line newspaper:

“Coalición Valenciana was born out of the most sensitive layers of the Valencian people as a social opposition to the creation of the Euroregion and the Países Catalanes by the Government of Catalonia, led by Maragall and Carod Rovira”¹⁰. “Carod Rovira will demand the Catalanization of Valencia from the socialist party [PSOE] [...]. We must, therefore, begin to build a defensive network within Valencia so that the attack of these radical and independentist nationalists does not affect us. [...]. When Catalanism begins a new crusade and becomes more and more powerful under the auspices of Carod-Rovira and Pasqual Maragall, Valencia will be ready for the battle thanks to the project being carried out by Nou Valencianisme”¹¹.

The belligerent vocabulary used in these statements is a proof of the virulent anti-Catalan stand the new party is based upon.

Since its creation in early 2004, **CV** has been increasingly expanding in the region of Valencia. In order to consolidate the party, Garcia Sentandreu has launched an ambitious campaign to attract former members of UV, regional and local associations or indeed anyone with an anti-Catalan attitude. In the words of Sentandreu *“We are the legitimate political party after UV, the party*

¹⁰ Interview published by *Minuto Digital* daily newspaper. Own translation. Available in Spanish at <http://www.minutodigital.com/noticias/sentandreu.htm> (consulted December 1, 2004).

¹¹ Statements extracted from the interview given by Sentandreu to *Diario de Valencia* daily newspaper on April 12, 2004.

who won the battle of Valencia [...]. I would like to make a call to those individuals, associations, including PP and UV members, to join our exciting project¹². The strong political campaign to separate the Valencian variety of Catalan from the Catalan language has recently had its first anti-Catalan demonstration promoted by the newly founded party on November 27th 2004.

An overview of the participants in the Valencian language conflict should not exclude some parts of the mass media, who have clearly supported the anti-Catalan cause from the very beginning. Daily regional newspapers such as *Las Provincias* or *Diario de Valencia* (since 2000), local TV stations such as *Valencia Te Ve* publish misleading and strongly biased information. By promoting a strong anti-Catalan editorial line, former director of the newspapers and founder of the TV station, **Maria Consuelo Reyna**, has played a key role in the conflict.

Through the media, the secessionism movement has skilfully passed their message across. The editorial line has attacked writers, philologists, historians and even the University of Valencia, which has been labelled as “sectarians”¹³ or “dangerous *pan-Catalanists*”¹⁴, to offer some mild examples.

The scientific community is constantly under attack in these newspapers. Every time the language issue becomes a political debate, the editorial attitude towards historians, philologists, and writers of Catalan in general becomes more and more virulent.

2.2. The other participants

It would be naïve to believe that these unscientific and strongly biased attitudes towards Catalan in Valencia have not been contested by

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See Article “La Gota” written by Maria Consuelo Reyna on August 11 1997, cited by Ma Soledat GONZÁLEZ: *La qüestió lingüística valenciana a través de la premsa. Des de l'encàrrec del dictamen al Consell Valencià de Cultura fins a la constitució de l'Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua.*

¹⁴ See article “L'ortografia, conseqüència de la rao” written in non-standard Catalan by Xavier Casp and published in *Las Provincias* on September 14, 1997.

those who truly promote and defend the language. From the very beginning of the conflict, the cultural circles in Valencia have been aware of the political strategy of the right-wing parties concerning the Catalan language. As pointed out by Strubell (1991:16) “*many people were aware that a campaign was being orchestrated behind the scenes to try and divide Valencians from Catalans and Majorcans*”.

Apart from political parties, from communist parties such as **Partit Comunista del País Valencià (PCPV)**, **Esquerra Unida (EU)** to nationalist parties such as **Unitat del Poble Valencià (UPV)** – currently known as **Bloc Nacionalista Valencià (BNV)** – the pro-democratic, culturally-aware Valencian society also began to create a network of organisations and centres aimed at amassing those genuinely defending and teaching the culture and the language of the Valencian people, that is, by using it on a daily basis.

Plataforma per la Llengua, Associació Cultural del País Valencià (ACPV), Federació Escola Valenciana, Mesa per l’Ensenyament are only some of these cultural centres in charge of promoting the use of Catalan and of creating a cultural and linguistic common space between the Catalan-speaking regions. These organisations aim to promote not only the folkloric aspect of the culture but also to turn Catalan into a widely used language.

In this respect, **Joan Fuster** deserves special attention. Before the creation of this cultural network, he opened a new stage of language awareness in Valencia. Fuster, the main promoter of the idea of *Països Catalans*, exposed the need to culturally link Valencia to the rest of the Catalan-speaking regions. His 1962 work *Nosaltres, els valencians* [We, the Valencian people], in which he dealt with the main identity and national problems in Valencia, was heavily criticized by the pro-Franco followers and secessionists. Even today, this masterpiece raises quite a stir in secessionist circles.

Also of paramount importance is the network of **publishing houses, writers, Catalan language teachers, the scientific community** in general (philologists, historians, sociolinguists, etc.) and **the University** and *the Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, IIFV* [Inter-

University Institute of Valencian Philology] in particular, which despite the abject political conditions, continue their research and their publications in Catalan.

3. An analysis of the evolution of the language conflict

The above sections have illustrated **who** the secessionists are –a political and social circle in the right and far-right side of the political spectrum– and **what** they claim the existence of an autochthonous *Valencian language* independent and non-attached to Catalan.

The aim of this section is, therefore, to find out **how** this circle defends their thesis, that is, what arguments do they use and why is such an uproar created within the Valencian society every time that the language issue is publicly debated.

After having monitored these arguments in the press, they have been divided into four main categories which, in my opinion, are the four pillars holding the secessionist discourse. These are the following: the **language pillar**, the **historical pillar**, the **identity pillar** and the **juridical pillar**. These arguments shall now be explained in more detail.

3.1. The language pillar. Demagogy vs. science

The secessionist movement has tried to show from the beginning of the conflict that Valencian and Catalan are two separate languages. In order to do so, one of the counter-activities undertaken has been to create a false opposition between *two languages*: they use highly dialectal varieties of Catalan spoken in Valencia and present it a *genuine Valencian*, they resort to the colloquial register to find new words and they even borrow lexical items from Spanish and adapt it to Catalan so that the mixture is seen as authentic Valencian. In the words of Pradilla (2004:48) "*their linguistic model promotes borrowing and code-switching from Spanish and punishes intralinguistic exchange, that is, an exchange within the*

Catalan language. And this is being carried out by individuals whose education in linguistics is simply non-existent”.

The results of this strategy are quite obvious: a sense of confusion among the population and a direct attack on the scientifically based language norms: the 1932 ***Normes de Castelló***. The importance of these norms for the Catalan language will now be briefly presented.

The *Normes de Castelló* were born out of the urgent need to overcome the state of anarchy of the Catalan language at the beginning of the 20th century.

The task of unifying and modernising the language was entrusted to a team led by Pompeu Fabra, who proposed a language model containing three main features, which were needed if it was to be accepted throughout the whole of the Catalan-speaking regions. Firstly, there was a *monocentric* model, that is, only once centre in charge of the codification of the language (IEC). Secondly, there was a *compositional* model, that is, comprising of a lexicon derived from all of the different varieties of Catalan. Thirdly, there was a *polymorphic* model, meaning that different alternative forms as an equivalent solution were accepted.

These three features were key for the widespread acceptance of the Fabra norms. Despite the fact that most Valencian writers were using the IEC norms before 1932, the cultural circles in Valencia, in an attempt to reach a consensus on the norms, asked Fabra for his advice on which orthographic norms should be used in Valencia.

On December 21st 1932, a wide consensus over the norms was reached by 14 cultural organisations and 52 renowned writers, who finally signed the *Normes de Castelló*. These norms were basically the Fabra Norms with slightly differing regional standards for Valencia.

Colomines (1972:61-62) clearly illustrates the importance of the Fabra reform on the Catalan language by stating that:

“another merit of Fabra’s reform was that he developed a literary language that was acceptable in all regions where the language is spoken (...). The reforms implemented by the Institut d’Estudis Catalans (IEC), under the guidance of Fabra, while maintaining Barcelona Catalan as the fundamental cornerstone, were ably combined so as to reduce dialectal discrepancies to the minimum, and were applicable to all regional varieties. And this is why they were rapidly accepted everywhere: the highly isolated resistances of a few circles in Catalonia died within ten years, nearly all Majorca and French Catalonia writers adopted them immediately after 1913, the Valencians followed suit in the 20’s, and the last influential group (that of Alcover in Majorca and that of Fullana in Valencia) completely followed suit as from 1930 and 1932 respectively)”¹⁵.

Despite their wide acceptance at that time and the general consensus reached on their approval, the *Normes de Castelló* have been under constant attack by the secessionist movement, their only aim being differentiating Valencian and Catalan at all costs.

The counter-orthography strategy –which this paper terms as *the language pillar of secessionism*– was especially intense during the first years of democracy. As stated above, during the 1978-1982 period, the RACV attempted to recodify the Catalan language as many as five times in order to present it as an *independent Valencian language*.

Another example of language recodification was the pseudo-dictionary *Diccionari diferencial valencià-català* published in 1985 by Carles Recio Alfaro, a lawyer whose language training and expertise is questionable. In his work, Recio Alfaro codifies a “Valencian language” different from Catalan by transcribing the pronunciation of words, by resorting to borrowings from the Spanish language, by using vulgarisms and even by inventing his own terms.

¹⁵ Translation provided by Miquel STRUBELL in *Catalan in Valencia: the story of an attempted secession*. Swiss Academy of Social Science Colloquium on Standardization Parpan/Chur (Grisons), 15-20 april 1991, p.7.

This cultural aberration was heavily criticized even by some of the secessionist circles such as the RACV, who published the following article in *Las Provincias*:

“Eduardo Primo Yúfera, dean of the Academia de Cultura Valenciana, denounces that Carles Recio Alfaro, author of the recently published Diccionari diferencial valencià-català, has taken the institution’s name (...) and rejects the contents of the above-mentioned dictionary due to the large amount of spelling mistakes, false lexical oppositions, vulgarisms, dialectal forms that cannot be considered as the norm and other lexical items invented by the author”¹⁶

Despite these strongly biased, unscientific examples, the secessionist groups have not stopped their attempts to establish a counter-orthography for Catalan in Valencia. These groups keep rejecting the *Normes de Castelló* and often refer to the *Normes del Pare Fullana* or the *Normes del Puig* as the ones to be followed. The following analysis of these norms and their authors will clearly illustrate the unscientific and highly tendentious arguments used by the secessionists.

By publishing the *Gramàtica elemental de la llengua valenciana* [Elementary Grammar of the Valencian Language] in 1915, Fullana established slightly different norms from those established by Fabra. Despite this, Fullana fully acknowledged that *“his system sometimes applied conflicting criteria and probably had a thousand defects”¹⁷*. Due to these “conflicting criteria”, therefore, Fullana himself was one of the first persons to sign the *Normes de Castelló* in 1932.

It is surprising to see that those who propose the Pare Fullana’s norms and consider them as the “genuine ones” tend to forget that Fullana fully accepted the Castelló norms and even participated in the wide consensus reached on their establishment.

¹⁶ Extract from *Las Provincias*, published on december 14, 1985, cited by Franck MARTIN (2001): *Les valenciens et leur langue régional : approche sociolinguistique de l’identité de la Communauté Valencienne*.

¹⁷ Citation by Miquel STRUBELL, op. cit., note 15, p. 12.

The other set of norms – the *Normes del Puig* also known as the *Normes de l'Academia* – were pompously presented in 1981. Since the end of the Franco era, the main *orchestrators* of these norms, Miquel Adler and Xavier Casp, began a series of publications, which questioned the *Normes de Castelló*. Examples of these are *En defensa de la llengua valenciana: perquè i cómo s'ha d'escriure la que es parla* (1977), o the *Murta* magazine (this is why the above norms are also known as the Murta Norms). As president of RACV, Casp stated in 1988 that:

“...if we don't complete the task of codification for the Valencian language soon – a task started by the Academia de Cultura Valenciana and supported by Lo Rat Penat and other institutions– the unstoppable wave of Catalanisation, which currently invades our society (from Universities to schools, books, radio and TV station) and supported by the Administration [he refers to the socialist party] – will soon annihilate the Valencian language”¹⁸.

It is quite surprising, to say the least, to read such a statement made by Casp, a poet who won several Catalan poetry prizes in the exile and who explicitly defended the unity of Catalan in the past, as illustrated by the letter he sent to Mr. Josep M. Casacuberta on October 25, 1951. Casp wrote:

“I would like to make you aware (in case you aren't already) of my joy at being awarded the “Englatina als Jocs Florals” in New York as a prize for my poem “Gran Sonata a la Pàtria”. It also gives me a great pleasure to receive this prize and to see that a Valencian poem has been awarded the Catalan patriotic theme. This finally represents full recognition of the unity, so much desired by us and criticized by many”¹⁹.

Casp went from being a strong supporter of the unity of language, as illustrated in the above letter, to being a leader of the secessionist cause. Only personal and ideological reasons can account for this sudden change.

¹⁸ Statement made by Casp representing RACV and published in *quadern número 3, “Sèrie Filologica”* in 1988. Citation found in EL TEMPS. October 2, 199, p. 28.

¹⁹ Extract from an article published in Levante daily by Francesc de B. Burguera entitled “*Sobre si valencià o català*”, on May 2, 1997, cited by a Ma Soledat Gonzalez, op cit., nota. 13 p. 28.

The conflict became a hotly debated issue when the Supreme Court in Spain ruled in favour of the unity of the language, allowing the University to use the name *Catalan* to refer to the language²⁰ (and not only Valencian, as secessionists wanted). The upheavals created by this ruling led Eduardo Zaplana, former president of the *Generalitat Valenciana*, to entrust the *Consell Valencià de Cultura* [CVC, a consultative body of the *Generalitat*] the task of drafting a report about the language issue and the creation of a normative body for Valencian: *l'Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua* [AVL, the Valencian Academy for the Language].

Again, the secessionist circles became extremely active and began to question the *Normes de Castelló*. Their goal was to try to have their unscientific norms institutionalised in the newly created normative centre for the Catalan language. The following extract, written by the then director of *Las Provincias*, Maria Consuelo Reyna, clearly illustrates this point:

“UV and IPC have rubbed salt into the wound by asking the Academia Valenciana de la Lengua to respect the 1932 norms, but the real ones, not the ones mixed by the Institut d’Estudis Catalans, whose main goal is to merge the Valencian language and the Catalan language”²¹.

To the secessionist movement, the creation of the AVL was the perfect opportunity to institutionalize their biased norms. Despite their enormous pressure for this, the CVC finally decided on July 13 1998 that *“the Normes de Castelló given the wide consensus reached for their approval, represent a historical moment”*. For this reason, they were considered as a *“linguistic heritage to be preserved and enriched by the new normative language centre [AVL]”²²*. By officially establishing the Castelló norms, the unscientific proposals put forward by the secessionist movement were finally put aside.

It is surprising to note that once the Castelló norms were established as the ones to be used by the AVL in 1998, the linguistic arguments of

²⁰ Ruling 75/1997 of the Supreme Court, dated April 21, 1997.

²¹ Extract from the article “La Gota”, published in *Las Provincias* on August, 7 1998, cited by M.A. Pradilla, *El laberint valencià. Apunts per a una sociolingüística del conflicte*, pàg 60.

²² Extract of the report issued by the *Consell Valencià de Cultura* (CVC), published in *EL TEMPS*, on July 27, 1998, p. 23.

the secessionist groups would be decreasingly used. From this date until the beginning of 2005 (where the compilation of documents for this paper ends), the information on the language conflict in Valencia is widely present in the press. It has been noted, however, that there has been quite a remarkable change in the secessionist discourse: the questioning of the *Normes de Castelló* is no longer in their discourse and neither is the unscientific lexical oppositions between their invented Valencian language and Catalan.

We find, however, a discourse based on identity arguments such as “*Catalan imperialism wants to annihilate the Valencian language and culture*” or juridical arguments such as “*the unity of the Catalan language goes against the Valencian Statute of Autonomy and the Spanish Constitution*”. We can observe, therefore, a shift away from the linguistic towards the identity and juridical arguments. This will be discussed further.

The explanation for this shift is, in my opinion, quite simple. The secessionist group has tried to impose their premises in the scientific arena and this is where their mistake lies. Despite the constant attacks, the scientific community has given a unanimous response to the secessionists. Philologists, historians and linguists in general, along with international Romance language experts, define Valencian as the variety of the Catalan language spoken in Valencia.

Pradilla (2004:29) clearly illustrates the homogeneity of the different varieties of the Catalan language by stating “*the language comprises of a number of varieties (grouped into two main varieties: Eastern and Western) extending along a language continuum with slight transactions which, ironically, seem to be more pronounced within the Principality of Catalonia*” (and not between Catalonia and Valencia). In other words, the varieties spoken in Valencia, and the Catalan regions of Lleida and Southern Tarragona (which make up the Western variety) have stronger, more unitary features among themselves than the varieties spoken in the Catalan regions of Girona, Barcelona and the Balearic Islands (Eastern varieties).

If the conflict in question were about language and strictly linguistic criteria were to be followed, the Valencian-Catalan opposition would make no sense. The debate, however, is not about whether the Catalan language spoken in Valencia should be considered as a separate language. The debate over the language is being used for political reasons and is heated up every time the right-wing parties need to capture some votes.

Before the controversy derived from the translation of the Constitutional Treaty and the submission of a Language Memorandum, only the defenders of the unity of Catalan claimed that this conflict was not about the language. It has been during the latest revival of the conflict that the secessionist circles have begun to overtly admit that this is a political conflict and not a linguistic one.

Let us illustrate this with two extracts from the interviews made by Fernando Villalonga, former *Conseller* [regional minister] of Culture in the *Generalitat Valenciana*, published in *Las Provincias* on December 9, 2004; and the personal interview with MEP José Manuel García-Margallo, who recently claimed that “*the People’s Party will fight the possible and the impossible battles to keep the Zapatero government [current Spanish socialist government] from imposing the unity of Catalan (...)*”²³.

*Villalonga was asked the following question: **As a privileged observer, what is your opinion on the language debate?*** To which he answered:

*“It gives me great sadness. I do not like t Carod-Rovira’s intrusion in our businesses. **But this debate is not about the language. It is a political debate.** An attack to the language in this political debate will actually harm the language. There is no doubt about it: Valencian is the way the people of Valencia call the Catalan language in the region”.*

²³ Extract from article appeared in *Las Provincias* on November 18, 2004.

MEP García-Margallo answered our question ***Do you not think that the debate over whether Valencian is part of Catalan or not should be discussed by linguists and not by politicians*** in the following way:

“We are talking about a juridical issue here: Whether Valencian resembles 90, 85 or 80% to Catalan is not the issue. It is a juridical issue: the [Valencian Autonomy] Statute states what it is spoken. The language debate was closed in the Statute. Those who fight for the language unity are trying to open a painful battle that was properly closed a long time ago. Why re-open the war?”²⁴

The secessionist mass media, including *Las Provincias* and *Diario de Valencia* also include the same type of discourse. Let's take a look at the following article entitled “*Un ultraje al valenciano*” [An Outrage to Valencian]:

“(...) Philological or historical reasons aside, our language is one of our main signs of identity that we, as a people, have. Its official status, along with Spanish, is clearly established in the Statute of Autonomy and today, our language is likely to be recognized as one of the EU languages(...)”
[bold authors own].

Despite this shift in the discourse, it would be rather naïve to believe that the secessionist movement has stopped their publications in non-standard Catalan. Right-wing town halls, *Diputacions* [provincial Councils] and even the *Generalitat Valenciana*, run by the PP with an absolute majority, continue to obstruct the production of Catalan works and keep financing unscientific secessionist associations.

Last November 2004, the *Diputació de València* approved a €60.601 budget line to finance the secessionist group Lo Rat Penat, claiming that this group “encourages the teaching and diffusion of the Valencian culture”²⁵. This is only one of the many examples to be found.

²⁴ Personal interview with MEP Garcia-Margallo held in Brussels on November 23, 2004.

²⁵ Information published by *Las Provincias* on November 16, 2004.

How can a public institution such as the *Diputació de València* finance an unscientific group whose only aim is to use a counter-orthography in their publications? What is, therefore, the role of the newly created AVL, whose decisions are binding and must be complied with “by the public Administration, the educational system, the public, mass media and other publicly-financed institutions or bodies²⁶” (the *Diputació de València* being one of them)?

3.2. The historical pillar. Demagogy vs. science II

Parallel to the linguistic argument, the secessionists have used another strategy to claim that Valencian is not the same as Catalan for historical reasons. According to this theory –biased and unscientific as we shall see– Catalans did not bring the language to Valencia in the 13th century, as historians claim. The secessionists argue that the *Valencian language* was born differently. Their position on how this *independent Valencian language* was born, however, is far from being consistent.

On the one hand, some secessionist groups claim that the *Valencian language* finds its origins in the Mozarab language, that is, Latin spoken in Valencia during Arab domination (711-1609). This theory considers Valencian as a totally independent language, with no links whatsoever with the Catalan language. There is, on the other hand, the secessionist theory that claims that the *Valencian language* does derive from Catalan but has evolved differently over time. In other words, according to this theory, Catalan and Valencian were once a single language but are now two different languages.

Despite this clear inconsistency –one theory claiming that Valencian derives from Latin spoken in Valencia during the Arab domination and the other one stating that Valencian was once the same as Catalan– both lines of argumentation have been used indistinctively. The following is an analysis of the evolution of their arguments.

²⁶ Extract from the CVC report, op.cit., note 22.

Unlike the other lines of argumentation, the historical argument has not been as widely used in the press. Rather, it seems to be present in pseudo-scientific publications, many of them financed by pro-secessionist public institutions²⁷. The first theory defending the independence of Valencian from Catalan gives little or no importance to the invasion of Catalans in Valencia. The following further articles clearly illustrate this point. Francisco Lliso wrote “*the number of Catalans arriving with Jaime I [the King who conquered Valencia] is insignificant, so the siècle d’or of the Valencian literature, which took place one hundred years later, was not an influence of the Catalan literature, known only after the 19th century*”²⁸.

Following the same line of argumentation we find an article published by Ma Consuelo Reyna in *Las Provincias*:

*“Any discussion about this is pointless since it is a clear-cut issue. The number of people arriving in Valencia does not even reach 5 percent. Out of that 5 percent, more than fifty percent was Aragonese and only a minority was Catalan. It is, therefore, clear that such a small minority cannot bring a language. This means that the [Valencian] language comes from the period before Jaime I (...). Philologists come to the conclusion that the language spoken in the Kingdom of Valencia does not date from medieval times, that is, after the Jaime I conquest, but from before”*²⁹. According to this secessionist theory, when Jaime I arrived in Valencia, he already found an autochthonous language: Mozarab.

This line of argumentation is not new. In the words of Antoni Ferrando (1994:15) several authors in the early 20th century such as Marià Grandia, Francesc Carreras or Lluís Fullana had begun to circulate the Mozarab theory, some of them out of ignorance, others for their anti-Catalan campaign. It

²⁷ As an example, we can cite the *Josep Maria Bayarri* prize awarded by the *Diputació de València* to Alfons Vila and his work *El nom historic de la llengua valenciana*. Vila is a member of the secessionist association *Real Acadèmia de Cultura Valenciana* (RACV) and of the *Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua* (AVL).

²⁸ Francisco Lliso, *¿La fabla aragonesa es una, dos, o dos en una? (influencia sobre la llengua valenciana)*, Valencia, 1985, edited by the author himself, p. 154.

²⁹ Antonio Ubieto arteta, cited by Ma Consuelo Reyna, “*Los incultos que defienden la lengua valenciana*”. *Las Provincias Almanac: La Vida Valenciana en el año 1997*, Valencia, Federico Doménech, 1998, p. 283-286 (p.285).

was, however, Leopold Peñarroja who introduced the theory in the current secessionist discourse by writing *El mozárabe de Valencia. Nuevas cuestiones de fonología mozárabe* [Mozarab in Valencia. New Questions on Mozarab Phonology] in 1990.

The scientific community again unanimously rejected this demagogical, strongly biased line of argumentation. Ferrando (1994:20) summarizes the stand of historians and philologists alike by stating that “*there is no single document proving, directly or indirectly, that the language in the 13th century in Valencia, not to mention later on, was Mozarab*”³⁰.

Parallel to this line of argumentation, the secessionist group has often used in their discourse the theory claiming that even if Catalan and Valencian were once the same, they have evolved differently. Let us illustrate this with one example:

Miquel Adlert published his work *En Defensa de la Llengua Valenciana; perquè i com s’ha d’escriure la que es parla* [A Defense of the Valencian Language, why and how the language should be written] in 1977, in which he claimed that:

*“The Valencian language has existed without philologists and, it is without philologists that it has produced a vast and worldwide renowned literature [...] The Valencian pan-catalanists have now taken the language for themselves, in an absolutist act, and want to impose this artificial and scientific language to the people [...]. But the Valencian people has always called their language Valencian because, whether it was brought by Catalans or not, we regard it as different. And the Valencian people refuses to call it Catalan because, **even if these languages were the same some centuries ago, the people see they are now different**”³¹ [bold authors own].*

³⁰ “Un ‘mossàrab’ valencià a l’època de Jaume I” IN: *Els Mossàrabs valencians*. Revista SAÓ, monografies 21, December 1994.

³¹ Miquel Adlert Noguero, *En Defensa de la Llengua Valenciana, Valencia, el Cénia al Segura*, 1977, pp 18-30.

In this extract, Adlert fully admits that Valencian and Catalan were once a common language but the people of Valencia have given it the status of an autonomous and independent language over time. In other words, the “diversification thesis” proclaims the autonomy of the Valencian language through a process of elaboration (by the Valencian people). The scientific community believes that this thesis is much more dangerous than the other one. In the words of Pradilla *“This thesis is more intelligent than the other one. It goes beyond the unscientific ideas of the previous thesis. It is a perverse operation whose main goal is to become a legitimate argument by using the alleged willingness of the people”*³².

This perversity can be easily illustrated in the pathetic strategy of inventing a philologist/historian – whose name was Bernhard Weiss – coming from München. His goal was to prove the linguistic independence between Valencian and Catalan.

For a long time, this mysterious character would write articles in the press about the language issue, would send papers to different conferences, etc. *Las Provincias* newspaper would be in charge of covering the “news”. On May 19, the daily published an article “Great success of the I Conference on the Valencian language” claiming that *“There has been a high turnout, one of the main interventions being that of professor Bernhard Weiss from Munich [...]”*.

It has been proven that all this was nothing but an invention. The only person named Bernhard Weiss is not a historian or a philologist of the University of Munich. Nor is he an expert in the *Valencian language*. He is a biologist working at the University of Michigan.

As mentioned above, the historic argument has not been as widely used in the press as other secessionist arguments have. Our news monitoring allows us to claim that out of the two arguments related to the origins of the Valencian language, it is the one claiming total independence that seems to be

³² Miquel Àngel Pradilla. op. cit., note 21, p.29.

more present in the press. The following text, written in 1998 by Ma Consuelo Reyna in *Las Provincias* daily, is an example:

“The CVC is debating the origins of the Valencian language today. It is just absurd to still be discussing such an issue. Don't they know that the origin of our language is the same as the origin of languages such as Galician, French, Italian, Spanish or Catalan, that is, Latin? Don't they know that we all have the same roots, the Latin language? Don't they know that all these languages are sisters but have their independent course over time? None of these languages tries to live at the expense of others, except for Catalan of course. Its rather poor, even null, literary past obliges this language to take that of the Valencian language. This is a kind of Cain-like attitude: I kill my brother to get the primogeniture. Of course there are coincidences between the Catalan and the Valencian languages. The same coincidences that Spanish and Italian have. That is why Italians and Spanish can understand each other perfectly well. Or Spanish and Galician speakers. They don't need to study their languages to understand each other. Also, the CVC people should not forget the Arabs, present in our Kingdom. It is funny to see those who claim our historic links with Catalonia. We have a long common history with the Romans and the Arabs, not with Catalonia. And the names of our towns are an illustrative example. Where is the evidence of the Catalan civilization? Nowhere, maybe in three or four places. And how can that be compared to the Arab and Roman civilizations? It simply cannot be compared. Take this into account. We don't need anybody establishing genealogical trees out of the voracity of our neighbours whose literary past is simply non-existent”³³.

We believe that the preference for this thesis may be related to the popular notions of *dialect* and *language*. Claiming that Valencian is a dialect of Catalan may cause a feeling of inferiority and submission to the Valencian people due to the pejorative connotations of the term *dialect*. In our news monitoring, we have found many texts ferociously denying that Valencian is a dialect of Catalan. The following text is an illustrative example:

³³ Article by Ma Consuelo Reyna entitled “*La filiación*” published in *Las Provincias* on June 22 1998.

“(...) considering Valencian as a dialect of Catalan cannot be justified. It is a fallacious concept that cannot be defended and analyzed. It can only be supported by using the Authority criteria but not by reasoning: It is not scientific, it is dogmatic (...)”³⁴.

Today, the historical argument is scarcely used in the secessionist discourse. The secessionist movement no longer uses the Mozarab or the “diversification” thesis. We find, however, a constant reference to History for different reasons: the secessionists claim that the language spoken in Valencia has been historically called *Valencian* and not *Catalan*. If this is so – they claim – Valencian and Catalan should be regarded as two different languages. This statement leads us to the question of the **name of the language**, a key element if a full account of the language conflict is to be given.

During the recent conflict derived from the Constitutional Treaty translation and the Language Memorandum for the modification of the EU’s language regime, the secessionist groups – including the *Generalitat Valenciana* – refused the name *Catalan* or the dual name *Catalan/Valencian* to refer to the language. This group claimed that the only name to be accepted was *Valencian*. And they claimed so because the term *Valencian* appears in the Statute of Autonomy, because it is a matter of identity and because the name of the language has always been *Valencian*. Let us focus on this latter aspect of their argumentation.

The secessionist ideas on the name of the language are clearly illustrated in the following articles published in *Las Provincias* during the TEC conflict:

“Most Valencian people do not want others to impose the name Catalan on our language. We have never doubted that the language passed down from generation to generation is Valencian (...). The term Valencian is deeply rooted in our traditions and in our literature and that is why we feel

³⁴ José Angeles Castelló. *Fundamentación metodológica de la Lengua Valenciana*. Valencia, Academia de Cultura Valenciana, 1993, p. 13-14.

*outraged when they try to persuade to believe that we do not have our own language*³⁵

This text makes several references to history to defend the name Valencian for the language spoken in Valencia. It is true that as early as the 15th century we can trace the names *Valencian* and *Catalan* to refer to the same language. However, the existence of two names never denied that fact that it was the same language. In the words of Pradilla (2004:35) it was after this [15th] century that the term *Valencian* began to be used to refer to the Catalan language for several reasons. Firstly, the name Catalan no longer represented the “umbrella term” to refer to the language spoken in the Kingdom of Aragon since this Kingdom became part of the Spanish Monarchy in 1479. The name *Valencian* started to gain ground up until the 19th century, when the regional varieties of the Catalan languages underwent a process of serious study and research and the unitary feeling became strong.

The *Institut Inter-Universitari de Filologia Valenciana (IIFV)* [Inter-University Institute of Valencian Philology] issued a communiqué on December 2, 2003 in which they clearly exposed the issue of the name for the language. This document argues that the name *Catalan* was chosen because the language was born in Old Catalonia and also because Catalonia became the leading centre for literary and cultural movements in all of the Catalan-speaking regions during the 19th century. The option of naming the language *Lemosin* was also discussed but was soon dropped because it assumed that the language derived from Occitan, something that has been proven wrong.

The name *Valencian* is perfectly compatible with that of *Catalan*, that is, there are two names to refer to the same language. This is called in linguistics as “*langues polynomiques*” and other languages such as Spanish or Dutch, to name a few, present the same feature (Castilian/Spanish, and Dutch/Flemish).

However, the secessionist movement has demagogically used this argument and has claimed that the danger for their autochthonous and

³⁵ Extract from the article called *Un ultraje al valenciano* [An Outrage to Valencian], published by Miquel Domínguez in *Las Provincias* on November 19 2004.

independent *Valencian language* is *Catalan*, which is imposed on the Valencian people by the Government of Catalonia. As stated by the IIFV, “*the existence of two names for the language is a perfectly respectable historical fact but should not be demagogically used for language secession purposes. The term Catalan became general to refer to the language as a whole (...). It is a well-known fact that the international scientific community fully acknowledges the unity of the Catalan-Valencian-Balearic varieties of the language, which are known scientifically as the Catalan language. To try to break these varieties and present them as different language is a scientific, historic and cultural aberration and a lack of respect to science*”.

3.3. The secessionist identity argument. The populist argument

Of the four lines of argumentation, the identity argument has been discussed most in the press. When Joan Fuster published his work *Nosaltres, els valencians* in 1962 [We, the Valencian people], which included the idea of *Països Catalans* [Catalan-speaking regions] and a statement proclaiming the cultural unity of these regions (*dir-nos valencians és la nostra manera de dir-nos catalans*, being Valencian is our particular way of being Catalan), a strong wave of anti-Catalanism was lit up, based on the ground that *the sole aim of Catalanists is to overshadow the personality and the identity of the Valencian people*”.

A virulent reaction to Joan Fuster’s work soon took place. Right after its publication, the writer, along with those with the same ideas, were severely criticized and verbally attacked by the secessionist movement, as the following extract illustrates: “*The enemy is within us, he lives among us. The biggest enemies of the Valencian people are (..) some Valencians themselves (...). Valencia is on its way to losing its soul (...)*”³⁶.

This anti-Catalanist attitude went into crescendo during the 1960’s and the 1970’s. Under the motto “*no mos fareu Catalans*” [you will never

³⁶ Antonio Igual Ubeda, *València i els Valencians*, València, 1964, cited by Franck Martion, op. cit., note 16 p. 491.

turn us into Catalans], radicals of the secessionist movement began to use violence against those people and organisations defending the unity of the Catalan language. As illustrated above, several home-made bombs were sent to Tres i Quatre, the bookstore defending and selling Catalan works.

The secessionist movement also began the strategy of making the Valencian society believe that the danger for the Valencian identity was Catalan, a political strategy aimed at inventing an enemy for Valencia: Catalans and those defending the unity of Catalan. This strategy has been used ever since then. The following extract from *Pancatalanismo entre valencianos* (1978) [Pancatalanism among Valencians], written by Vicente Ramos Pérez, is an illustrative example:

“These pages witness the horrific Catalan invasion which, encouraged by within and outside Valencia, is trying to kill the historic substance of the Valencian personality, an attempt to annihilate it”³⁷.

Aware of the *social permeability* of an argument such as the identity one, the secessionist groups have increasingly used it. The complicity of the secessionist mass media has also helped spread their message. By manipulating and instrumentalizing the language issue, the mass media has become a key participant in effectively passing the secessionist discourse over to the Valencian society.

One of the main demagogical aspects of the secessionist discourse has been the correlation they have made between the linguistic/cultural unity and the political unity, as the following 1986 extract from *Las Provincias* shows:

“The identity of the Valencian people must be defended and protected from the Catalanist offensive against our Kingdom, which has increasingly grown over time (...). Aware of the Catalanist aggression in cultural terms – Parliament, language, University– and in historical terms (...) Unión

³⁷ Vicente Ramos Pérez. *Pancatalanismo entre valencianos*, València, 1978, cited by Franck Martin, op. cit. nota 16, p 492.

*Valenciana cannot leave this matter unattended since it would severely harm our people*³⁸.

or this other extract from Chimo Lanuza claiming that:

*“when two languages are very similar, they should be given a different autonomy so that they can become different: Otherwise one of them – the weakest one – would merge with the strong one and would then be considered as a dialect. **This process could become an excuse (as it happens in Valencia) for political subordination**”³⁹ [bold authors own]*

As mentioned above, the identity argument is the most widely used of all the secessionist arguments. Every time the language issue is debated –always for political reasons– the intensity of the identity arguments, measured by the number of articles in the press, grows more and more and irrationality and virulence become the norm. Let us illustrate this with three representative examples:

After the 1997 ruling of the Supreme Court, *Las Provincias* published a series of articles against the Court ruling and against those who defended the unity of the language. Among these articles we found extremely belligerent ones such as the one written by Vicent Ramón Calatayud:

“They do not want to lose the war. They are still in pain from the old battle of Valencia, that battle of the symbols. Over twenty years, they have been creating a strategy, getting ready and training for another battle. You are battling against the Mother. One has the feeling that you are heading a war of occupation, as if Catalonia wanted to invade Valencia. Are you aiming for war? Will you be able to fight the last of the battles? I doubt it. For over twenty years, you have dreamed of it, you have been preparing for it...but some of your followers are now abandoning the battle. They are now saying they are against pan-Catalanism because it has no future now (...) Are you in such a rush to become Catalans and lose your Valencian

³⁸Article published in *Las Provincias* on April 13 1986, cited by Franck Martin, op. cit., note 16, p. 494.

³⁹Chimo Lanuza (1994: 114), cited by Miquel Angel Pradilla op. cit., note 21, p 49.

*identity? (...) Everyone will know what your position is. You have attacked the very essence of Valencia and its identity: the Valencian language*⁴⁰.

The second example can be found when the proposal for the creation of a language normative centre, the AVL, was put forward. This process lasted from September 1997 until June 2001. During this period, the secessionist political parties (PP and UV at that time) and their allied mass media orchestrated a manipulative strategy whose only aim was to try to institutionalise secessionism within the new AVL.

Due to this demagogical campaign, some true cultural associations and characters stepped forward and publicly denounced it. One of these characters was Professor Manuel Pérez Saldanya, who wrote the following article in *Levante* regional newspaper:

*“Enough of manipulating the language identity of Valencians with xenophobic arguments and irrational campaigns. If some journalists working for an old newspaper [he refers to Las Provincias daily] want to do this, fine. It is their business, in the end (...). What is not acceptable, however, is that the political party in office [the People’s Party] and the cultural associations led by some of this party enter this game. The government will need to tell us whether they are working only for the interests of a minority of people [the secessionists] or whether, on the other hand, defend the interests of the Valencian people (...).”*⁴¹.

The last of the examples of the identity argument is found in the recent conflict of the Constitutional Treaty (end of 2004), in which the Valencian and the Catalan governments submitted the same translation of the TEC under different names. The scientific community and some political parties (especially from Catalonia) defended the unity of the language. The secessionist groups began, again, their attacks against those in favour of the unity.

⁴⁰ Extract from the article written by Vicent Ramon Calatayud entitled *L’atra batalla de Valencia* [The other Battle of Valencia], published in *Las Provincias* on May 2 1997, cited by Ma Soledad Gonzalez, op. cit., note 13, p. 28.

⁴¹ Extract from an article entitled *La identitat del valencià* [The Identity of Valencian] by Manuel Pérez Sadanya, published in *Levante* on May 27 1998, cited a Ma Soledad Gonzalez, op cit, note 13, p 109.

Once again, *Las Provincias* and *Diario de Valencia* were the main newspapers chosen by secessionists from which they spread their message. Vicente González-Lizondo Sánchez expressed his anti-Catalan attitude in the following way:

“The surprising attitude against the Valencian language expressed by Maragall [President of Catalonia] is intolerable. As a citizen, I am totally outraged and sad to see how the Catalan ambitions are a direct attack against the integrity and the values of the people of Valencia (...). I cannot understand why some born-and-fed Valencians forget their identity (...). What happens in Valencia seems like one of those horror Stephen King novels, an international-wide boycott to annihilate the culture, the mores and the language of Valencia...and make it look like an accident”⁴².

The same line of argumentation was used by right wing politicians such as Esteban Gonzalez Pons, *conseller* of Institutional Relations of the *Generalitat Valenciana*, or Juan García Sentandreu, president of the far right-wing *Coalició Valenciana*. The former claimed that *“the identity of the Valencian people was being sold for a handful of votes”⁴³* whereas the latter organized a demonstration aimed at *“firmly defending the identity and the language”*.

By constantly resorting to the demagogical identity argument and to the feelings and the symbols of the Valencian people, the secessionist movement has gained ground and has consolidated their argument. Pradilla masterfully summarizes the secessionist strategy in the following words: *“this ground has been gained through an Inquisition-like anti-Catalanist strategy allied with a Chauvinist regional attitude. Resorting to the most primary feelings of the people produces a strong mobilisation that does not accept any rational discourse. By doing so, an enemy is created (...): the Catalanist, depicted as a sort of imperialist agent at the disposal of another region”⁴⁴.*

⁴² Extract from the article *Despierta, Valencia* [Wake up, Valencia] published in *Las Provincias* on November 9 2004.

⁴³ Statements published in *Las Provincias* and *Diario de Valencia* on November 16 2004.

⁴⁴ M.A. Pradilla, op. cit., note 21, p. 45.

3.4. The juridical secessionist argument. Legislating secessionism

During the transition period and the first years of democracy in Spain, the secessionist found a new argument that became fatal for the unity of the Catalan language: the juridical argument. As mentioned above, the first years of the democratic regime translated into political upheavals between the left wing political parties, with more progressive and nationalist feelings, and the conservative right wing parties, some of them closely linked to the former Franco regime. The right wing's capacity for effective, skilful lobbying during the drafting of the Valencian Statute of Autonomy (the region's *Magna Carta* of 1982) made it very difficult for the left to include their proposals.

Not only did the right push for symbolic secessionist elements such as the flag with a blue stripe, they also included one sentence in the Statute over which they have created a whole secessionist argument. Article 7 of the Statute claims that "the two official languages in the region of Valencia are Castilian and Valencian". Catalan is not mentioned anywhere. In other words, by being ambiguous and making no reference whatsoever to the link between Catalan and Valencian as one language, the secessionists have developed a new discourse over the language. The juridical argument.

Secessionists claim that the *Valencian language* is a different and an independent language because article 7 of the Valencian Statute of Autonomy says so. This is the only argument that they can put forward. They have delivered this argument more and more ferociously through their secessionist media platforms. Every time the language issue was discussed, the secessionist movement would primarily resort to the juridical argument as a defence for their position. Over time, this argument has become one of the main pillars used in their discourse.

Born in 1982, the juridical argument has been increasingly used in the secessionist media platforms. One of the periods illustrating this fact was after the Supreme Court ruling of April 21st 1997. The judges ruled in favour of the University of Valencia and put an end to a long case. Juan Garcia Sentandreu,

the eternal activist for the secessionist cause, and a group led by him –Alternativa Universitaria– took the University of Valencia to Court stating that one of the articles of the University's Memorandum claimed that “the language of the University of Valencia is the language of the region of Valencia. To these effects, both the academic name of Catalan language and the name contemplated in the Valencian Statute of Autonomy –Valencian language– are perfectly admissible”.

The fact that the University of Valencia won the case sparked a media debate over the language issue. Xavier Casp –the receiver of various awards for his poetry written whilst in exile and defender of the unity of the language– wrote an article in *Las Provincias* through which he severely criticized the 1997 ruling:

“How many philologists are there in the Supreme Court? (...) This is an opaque and biased ruling. I only know one small thing about the whole thing: the Supreme Court has not ruled that Valencian is Catalan (...).A language is the blood shared by a community. A language is the expression of the heart of all of those who share the same feelings. A language...don't we just feel it without even know it whether we speak it or not? (...). The ruling only refers to the name, and it is not about that, rather, it is not ONLY about that. It would be quite cynical to believe that the language is a only a matter of names. No, no. The Statute is quite clear about it. The two languages of Valencia are Valencian and Castilian. It is not about the name Valencian or Castilian. It is about being Valencian and being Castilian (...).”⁴⁵.

The secessionists considered the ruling as being biased and began a media campaign against it, against the University of Valencia –accusing it of not respecting the Statute and the Valencian people– . The following extract is a clear illustration of this campaign:

“Rulings such as this do nothing but to make the names and the concepts meaningless, which leads to all types of biased interpretations. If the University is able to go against the law, the Statute of Autonomy, what is the “meaning” of the word “University independence”? A State within a

⁴⁵ Extract from the article entitled “Per, sobre i des d'eixa sentència”, published in *Las Provincias* on May 4 1997, cited by Ma Soledad González, op. cit., note 13,p. 28.

*State, an autarchy, a totally independent State able to create its own laws? If the Valencian language can be academically called Catalan, what is the meaning of the word Valencian? Does it also mean Catalan?*⁴⁶

Apart from the attacks against the Supreme Court and the University of Valencia, the secessionists orchestrated different demonstrations in Madrid and Valencia under the motto *‘en defense de nuestro estatuto y nuestro idioma’* [in defense of our Statute and our language]. It is surprising to see that this so-called defense was not done in their independent Valencian language but in Spanish.

During the following years, the juridical argument became increasingly intense in the secessionist discourse. The number of articles found in the press grows daily, the misleading interpretation of the Statute being key to their argumentation. An example to be highlighted is the interview by Hector Villalba, president of the populist right wing party UV and president of *Les Corts* [Valencian Parliament], published in EL TEMPS in 1998. When asked whether he considered that Valencians, Catalans and Balearics spoke different languages, he replied: *“We keep saying that our Statute of Autonomy says we have our own language, whereas the statutes of autonomy of these two communities establish Catalan as the language spoken by them. We shall always say, therefore, that our language is Valencian”*⁴⁷.

The partiality of the answer is quite perverse: it is true that the Valencian Statute of Autonomy claims that Valencian is one of the languages in the regions of Valencian whereas the Statute of the Balearic Islands and Catalonia use the term Catalan to refer to the language spoken in these territories. It is also true, however, that the scientific community unanimously agrees on the fact that the name Valencian is perfectly compatible with the name Catalan and that both names refer to the same language. The answer given by Mr. Villalba is, therefore, extremely biased. This is, in our opinion, the perfect illustration of how the secessionists use the juridical argument.

⁴⁶ Extract from the article “Una sentència”, by Joan Costa, published in *Las Provincias* on May 5 1997, cited by Ma Soledad González, *op. cit.*, note 13 p. 37.

⁴⁷ Interview published in EL TEMPS on July 6 1998.

If the scientific language criteria were taken into account, along with the Supreme Court ruling, the whole juridical debate would be over. As illustrated above, two names does not necessarily mean two languages.

There is also consensus about this. The latest scientific document issued by the AVL –dated February 9th 2005– claims once again that *“the language of the Valencian people is the language shared by the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, along with the Principality of Andorra. It is also the historical language of other territories belonging to the Kingdom of Aragon (the Eastern Aragonese border, the Sardinian city of Alghero, and the French Department of Midi Pyrenees. The different varieties of all these territories make a single language, that is, the same linguistic system (...).”* Despite this clear-cut explanation, article 7 of the Valencian Statute of Autonomy continues to be used and secessionism is far from being over.

One of the latest controversies over the language issue and where the juridical argument has played a key role was during the translation of the Treaty establishing a European Constitution and the Language Memorandum. By refusing to submit a common translation of the Treaty and by claiming that Valencian should appear as a totally independent language from Catalan in the Memorandum, the secessionists were trying to take the issue to a European level. Their argument? The biased interpretation of article 7 of the Valencian Statute of Autonomy.

Serafin Castellanos, from the ruling People's Party in Valencia, stated that *“Valencian has a Constitutional and a Statutory legality as a co-official language and must be at the same level as Catalan, Basque or Galician”*⁴⁸ while the president of the *Generalitat Valenciana*, Francesc Camps, stated: *“we are defending a particular way of thinking. A Valencian-speaker is a Spanish person who speaks Valencian. We must defend this name. We cannot accept an anti-Constitutional, illegal and anti-Statutory act against our common heritage”*⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ Statement made on September 1st 2004. EUROPA PRESS.

⁴⁹ Information published in *Las Provincias* on December 14 2004.

In an attempt to solve the conflict, several political parties and some language experts proposed the name “Valencian/Catalan” to refer to the Catalan language at European level. Despite these efforts, secessionists refused the proposal and resorted, one again, to article 7 of the Statute.

One of the most lamentable, Inquisition-like moments took place on December 22nd 2004. The *Conseller* of Culture, Alejandro Font de Mora, entered the AVL premises in order to keep linguists from approving a document with the name “Valencian/Catalan”. He claimed that legal actions against the AVL would be taken if they went on with their work. The president of the AVL had no choice but to give up and not approve the document.

The Language Memorandum defined Catalan as “*the language called Catalan in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands and Valencian in the Valencian Community*”. As a result, MEP José Manuel García-Margallo made the following statement to us and to the press “*the government [Spanish Government] is acting intentionally and that goes against the Constitution and the Valencian Statute of Autonomy*” and the *Generalitat Valenciana* claimed that “*legal action will be taken against the Memorandum because it does not confer a faithful picture of the Statutory and Constitutional legality*”⁵⁰. They remained true to their word. On February 4th 2005, the *Generalitat Valenciana* took legal action against the Spanish Government’s Memorandum claiming that “*An alleged consensus of the Academia and the scientific community (...) cannot replace the law*”⁵¹. Again, they claimed this using Spanish and not their so-called independent Valencian language.

The unity of the language proven by the translation of the Treaty establishing a European Constitution and the Memorandum has not stopped secessionists from using their arguments. Despite the unanimity expressed by the international Romance language experts, philologists, historians, scientific documents –the most recent one approved by the AVL on February 9th 2005– which demonstrated the unity of the language and established that two names does not necessarily mean two languages, and despite the 1997 Supreme

⁵⁰ Information published in *Las Provincias* on December 14 2004.

⁵¹ <http://www.uegva.info/fundacioncv/actualidad/index.php?id=708> (date of consultation: February 23 2005).

Court ruling and the lack of objective criteria to defend the two-language theory, secessionists keep using the Statute in an extremely biased way.

A clear illustration of how politicised the Catalan language issue in Valencia is can be seen in the following example. Article 3.1 of the Spanish Constitution states that “**Castilian** is the official language of the State” whereas article IV 448.1 of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe says the following: “*This Treaty, drawn up in a single original in the Czech, Danish, (...), **Spanish** (...) languages, shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Italian Republic*” [bold authors own]. Could anybody claim that Castilian and Spanish are two different languages because the Spanish Constitution uses one term and the European Treaty uses the other? The answer is quite obviously no.

4. Final remarks

The so-called language conflict in Valencia is the result of a political and ideological manipulation which, even if it began in early 20th century Valencia, has gained ground since the end of the Franco regime and the beginning of the democratic transition period. It is after this period that the Catalan language in Valencia –Valencian– became the source of political confrontation used by right-wing Valencian parties.

The thesis defended by these secessionist parties (UCD, AP later becoming PP, UV and the recent CV) along with pseudo-cultural secessionist associations tightly linked to the right and far-right political parties has been the following: to try at all costs to detach the Valencian variety of Catalan and turn it into an independent and autonomous language. Their thesis has been developed thanks to the support of some media platforms, primarily by *Las Provincias*, and subsequently by *Diario de Valencia* and *Valencia Te Ve*.

Our research and monitoring of the news on the language conflict and our analysis of these have led to the following conclusions:

From the end of the Franco era up until today, the secessionist movement has used four main lines of argumentation: the linguistic argument, the historic argument, the identity argument and the juridical argument. The first three arguments were activated from the very beginning of the conflict whereas the fourth one had an exact date: 1982, when the Valencian Statute of Autonomy was approved.

Although all four arguments have been used indistinctively, their intensity and their evolution varies greatly. Whilst the linguistic and the historic arguments show a downward trend and have been less frequently used over time, the identity and the juridical arguments have experienced the opposite trend. The explanation we have for this is the following: by using the first two arguments, the secessionists have attempted to make science out of demagogical, strongly biased argumentations. These have been unanimously contested by the scientific community. Despite the secessionist's constant attempts to detach Valencian from the Catalan language, history, philology – and most important of all common sense – have repeatedly proven otherwise.

The incongruence and the unscientific nature of the linguistic and the historical arguments is easily contested: characters whose background in linguistics is null have invented codifications and have gone against the established orthography in an attempt to create an “independent Valencian language”. This strategy has had a minimal effect since the main language they know and use on a daily basis is Spanish. They have made up names for non-existent philologists and historians, such as Bernhard Weiss. They sometimes claim that their independent Valencian language comes from Latin. Some claim that it derives from other languages. Others say that it comes from Catalan but has evolved differently.

Such a cultural incongruence has been invalidated by science –decreasingly used by the secessionist media, as their impact has diminished over time–.

Despite this downward trend, it should be said that the production of secessionist documents is far from being over due to the constant grants offered by the public secessionist authorities. The examples mentioned

above are only a few. Many more have been found during our news monitoring. After carrying out this research project, we are in a position to claim that the government of Valencia –the *Generalitat Valenciana*– continues to financially support unscientific and demagogical associations.

This downward trend of the linguistic and historic arguments has been compensated by the upward trend of other lines of argumentation. Joan Fuster's masterpiece "*Nosaltres, els Valencians*", with the idea of establishing cultural and intellectual links within the Catalan-speaking territories, sparked a political confrontation in Valencia. The secessionist movement would begin to create a new line of argumentation – the identity line –. They would claim that the identity of the Valencian people was to be protected from the Catalans. The idea of Valencian being a variety of Catalan would also create a feeling of submission and inferiority so their only goal was to try to separate them at all costs.

A populist discourse began to be built based on the following premises: Catalanists want to annihilate the culture, the language, the history and the identity of the Valencian people. A discourse orchestrated and supported by the secessionist media, in charge of spreading the populist message in to the society.

The same line of thought can be found in the juridical argument. The fact that the Valencian Statute of Autonomy did not link Valencian with Catalan would be used by the secessionists to build a new line of argumentation, which was fatal for the language since it began to be discussed from a legal point of view, and no longer from a linguistic point of view. The secessionist juridical argument was quite simple: "Valencian is an independent language because the Statute of Autonomy says so". The scientific documents issued by the University, the Romance language experts, philologists and (objective) historians did not seem to matter. In addition, they were constantly attacked through the secessionist mass media.

The most recent controversy over the translation of the Treaty establishing a European Constitution and the Language Memorandum allows us to assert that the secessionist discourse no longer uses the linguistic and

historical lines of argumentation to defend their thesis. They only focus on the identity and the juridical lines. The issue at stake, therefore, is no longer whether Valencian and Catalan are related from a linguistic point of view. It has been a political debate in which the language issue is demagogically instrumentalized and used for political purposes.

After writing this paper, it becomes quite clear that the debate is not about linguistics. The secessionist movement is well aware of that. However, it has not been until the recent conflict over the translation of the Treaty establishing a European Constitution that they have explicitly admitted that the issue at stake is not linguistic but political. “*The [Valencian] government’s reasoning is that the debate is not linguistic but political*”⁵² – claimed Esteban González Pons, spokesperson of the Generalitat Valenciana. It is not, therefore, about finding out whether Valencian is part of Catalan or not. The homogeneity of the different varieties that make up the Catalan language is easily perceivable. What lies at the heart of the language conflict is an ideological conflict sparked by the conservative, Spanish-minded right-wing parties, and the left-wing, concerned about fostering the Catalan language and culture in Valencia.

The Valencian vs. Catalan dichotomy is just an excuse to hide the real debate within the Valencian society: Catalan vs. Spanish and the ideological conflict deriving from it. How many of those who claim that “Valencian is a totally independent language from Catalan” actually use the language on an everyday basis? Very few, if indeed any.

Let us illustrate this point. During the recent conflict over the translation of the Treaty establishing a European Constitution, the *Generalitat Valenciana* began a huge campaign in order to protect the “independent Valencian language”, considered by them as the primary identity symbol of the Valencian people. They claimed that this independent Valencian language should be legally recognized in Europe. However, they defended this in Spanish and not in their “independent language”, as the following PP’s website shows (<http://www.ppcv.org/informe1.htm>) :

⁵² Statement published in *Las Provincias* on November 16 2004.

“The Valencian People’s Party will fight for the recognition of Valencian in Europe, as any other co-official language in either a State or the European Union. The Valencian language must have the same recognition in the EU than any other co-official language in any Member State”.

The same page includes the following statement: *“Valencian is the official language of the Valencian Community and, therefore, is an official language within the territory of a Member State. The language, therefore, must be object of respect and good treatment”.* What better “treatment” for a language than its use within society? What better “treatment” for a language than its development at all levels and not just as a subordinate, marginal language, as called for by the secessionist movement?

Behind this alleged defence of the “independent Valencian language”, there is a residual, marginalized and highly dialectal language. The development of a cultural and linguistic activity beyond folklore is simply non-existent.

While the right wing political parties have demagogically used the language issue for partisan purposes, the left, and especially the PSPV has shown a rather hesitant stand all along. It is true that they carried out some key policies for the protection and use of Catalan in school and in the Administration such as the *Llei d’ús i ensenyament del valencià* [Law for the protection and use of Catalan in Valencia] in 1983. During the time they were in office (1983-1995), however, they did not dare solve the conflict and that is why it has lingered on for such a long time. This explains why the issue is hotly debated today.

It should also be said that the rather conflictive stand shown by some political leaders in Catalonia has not helped solve the conflict. As an example, we could cite the statements made by Carod Rovira (leader of the left independentist political party ERC) during the TEC conflict: he refused to support the State’s annual budget as long as the central government established a difference between Catalan and Valencian. To him, this was an aberration since

“Valencian does not exist”⁵³. As expressed by MEP Bernat Joan (belonging to the same political party), Carod Rovira’s intentions were not to deny the existence of the Valencian people but to explain that Valencian is a language variety of Catalan. This statement, however, does more harm than good to the language since the secessionist movement regard it as an attack to the Valencian people and keep using their secessionist arguments.

Our analysis seems to indicate that the issue of Catalan in Valencia is far from being over. Due to the creation of a new conservative, populist right-wing party –CV– the People’s Party will keep using the language for electoral purposes.

While secessionist politicians orchestrate this *divide ut imperis* strategy, hypocritically invoking the protection of a language they never use, Catalan in Valencia keeps being underdeveloped and marginalized, despite the big effort made by publishing houses, writers, language experts and the scientific community in general.

⁵³ Statement made to the media. Available on <http://www.periodistadigital.com/secciones/espana/object.php?o=35783> (consulted 11-03-05).

ABBREVIATIONS

AP	<i>Alianza Popular</i>
AVL	Valencian Academy for the language
BNV	<i>Bloc Nacionalista Valencià</i>
CV	<i>Coalició Valenciana</i>
ERC	<i>Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya</i>
EU	<i>Esquerra Unida</i>
GAV	<i>Grup d'Acció Valencianista</i>
IEC	Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies)
ML	Language Memorandum
PCPV	<i>Partit Comunista del País Valencià</i> (Valencian Communist Party)
PP	Popular Party
PSPV	<i>Partit Socialista del País Valencià</i> (Valencian Socialist Party)
RACV	<i>Real Acadèmia de Cultura Valenciana</i> (Academy for Valencian Culture)
UCD	<i>Unión de Centro Democrático</i>
EU	European Union
UPV	<i>Unitat del Poble Valencià</i>
UV	<i>Unió Valenciana</i> (Valencian Union)

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LINKS

Acció Cultural del País Valencià (ACPV)

<http://www.acpv.net/>

Associació Cívica per la Normalització de Valencià

<http://www.fev.org/lacivica/>

Generalitat Valenciana. Direcció General de Política lingüística i Patrimoni Cultural Valencià

<http://www.cult.gva.es/dgplpcv/>

Grup d'Acció Valencianista (GAV)

<http://www.gav-valencianistes.com>

Plataforma Normes d'El Puig

<http://www.normesdelpuig.org>

Lo Rat Penat

<http://www.loratpenat.org>

Real Academia de Cultura Valenciana

<http://www.llenguavalenciana.com/>

RegnedeValencia.com

<http://www.regnedevalencia.com>

Coalició Valenciana

<http://www.coaliciovalenciana.com/>

Partit Popular de la Comunitat Valenciana

<http://www.ppcv.org>



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