

ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

## Ecological metaphors in debates over language and language politics in Catalonia (1999-2009)

*Metáforas ecológicas en debates sobre lengua y política lingüística en Catalonia (1999-2009)*

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**ABSTRACT** In the last decades, the ecological approach has attracted the interest of Spanish and Catalan linguists. This contribution analyses the language used both by professional linguists and laypeople in publications and in the public debate on the conflicts in Spanish and Catalan bilingualism in the decade before the constitutional and supreme courts ruled against the prevalence of the Catalan language in Catalonia (1999-2009). The analysed decade can be characterized by a sensation of growing linguistic conflicts that manifested, for example, through heated debates over what Catalans perceived as *life threatening* for the Catalan language and reactions such as demands for the introduction of additional teaching hours to prevent the alleged *extinction of Spanish* in Catalonia. The Catalan society is reliving the ghost of *extinction* of their language—probably reinforced by publications which denounce a continuous reduction of *living space* and the disappearance of more and more *niches* of the Catalan language. On the other hand, Castilian activists (and among them some linguists) maintain there is a battle the Castilian language in Catalonia has to win in order to survive the said-to-be ferocious reduction of its *vital space* and the asserted institutionalized *suffocation* or *extermination* of the Spanish language. The texts analysed in this contribution belong to a text series which regarding its content and aims corresponds to a reduced number of triggering reference texts. The aim is to determine the importance of the language of ecology in this field and the usage of these elements by both sides, those denouncing the threat of the Castilian language and those fearing the risk of extinction of the Catalan language. It will be shown that in the debate over the *struggle for life* of Catalan and Spanish in the Catalan speaking areas,

the language of ecology and evolution is heavily used and that the re-contextualization of Catalan metaphors in the analysed texts on Spanish is systematic.

**KEYWORDS** Ecology; metaphors; Catalan-Spanish language conflict; re-contextualization.

**RESUMEN** En las últimas décadas, el enfoque ecológico ha atraído el interés de lingüistas españoles y catalanes. En esta contribución se analiza la lengua empleada tanto por lingüistas profesionales como por personas no expertas en las publicaciones y en el debate público sobre los conflictos del bilingüismo español y catalán en la década anterior a que diversos tribunales, y particularmente el Tribunal Constitucional, se pronunciaran en contra de la prevalencia del idioma catalán en Cataluña (1999-2009). El decenio se caracteriza por una sensación de conflictos lingüísticos crecientes que se manifiestan, por ejemplo, a través de debates acalorados sobre lo que los catalanes perciben como una *amenaza para la sobrevivencia* del catalán y reacciones como la exigencia de introducir horas lectivas adicionales para evitar la supuesta *extinción* del español en Cataluña. La sociedad catalana está reviviendo el fantasma de la extinción de su lengua –probablemente reforzado por las publicaciones que denuncian la continua reducción del *espacio vital* y la desaparición de cada vez más *nichos* de la lengua catalana. Activistas en pro del castellano sostienen que hay una batalla que la lengua española en Cataluña tiene que ganar para sobrevivir a la supuesta reducción feroz de su *espacio vital* y la supuesta *asfixia* o *exterminación* institucionalizada de la lengua española. Los textos analizados pertenecen a una serie de textos que, respecto de contenido y objetivos, se relacionan con un número reducido de textos de referencia que desencadenan la producción de los textos de dicha serie. Se trata de determinar la importancia de la lengua de la ecología en este campo y el uso de estos elementos por ambas partes, los que temen el riesgo de extinción de la lengua catalana y los que denuncian la amenaza del castellano. Se demostrará que en el debate sobre la lucha por la vida del catalán y el castellano, la lengua de la ecología y de la evolución tiene mucha presencia y que la recontextualización de las metáforas catalanas en los textos sobre el castellano es sistemática.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** Ecología; metáforas; conflicto lingüístico; castellano y catalán; recontextualización.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the debate over the coexistence of Catalan and Spanish language has become more and more aggressive. But since the referendum on independence in Catalonia on October 1st, 2017, which was considered illegal by the Spanish Government and which led to the dissolution of the Catalan Government, the imprisonment or exile of Catalan politicians and parliamentarians and finally to new elections for the Catalan Parliament forced by the Spanish Government in December 2017, the arguments have reached a shrill tone unheard since the times of Franco's dictatorship. This contribution looks into the debates on language in Catalonia during the first decade of the new millennium, which preceded the controversy over the decisions, in 2010, of the Supreme Court of Catalonia and the Constitutional Court of Spain regarding the use of the Catalan language and the presence of the Spanish language in Catalan schools, administration, etc. (see Kremnitz, 2015), and which might be related at least in part with the noticeable growth of the independence movement in Catalonia that finally led to the events of 2017.

The decade analysed here can be characterized by a sensation of growing linguistic conflicts that manifested, for example, through heated debates over the introduction of additional teaching hours to prevent the alleged *extinction of Spanish* in Catalonia or harsh discussions about the—then recent—immigration from South America and Northern Africa that was perceived as *life threatening* for the Catalan language as these immigrants seemed to be reluctant to integrate into the Catalan speaking community. Since the late 1990s, publications such as Pueyo's book on the «ghost of the death» of the Catalan language (2007) and reactions to it like Simó (2007a) clearly showed that the Catalan society is reliving the ghost of *extinction* of their language—probably reinforced by publications which denounce a continuous reduction of *living space* and the disappearance of more and more niches of the Catalan language. On the other hand, Castilian activists (and among them some linguists) maintain there is a battle the Castilian language in Catalonia has to win in order to survive the said-to-be ferocious reduction of its *vital space* and the asserted institutionalized *suffocation* or *extermination* of the Spanish language.

In this contribution, I will look at the language used both by professional linguists and laypeople in publications and in the public debate on the conflicts in Spanish and Catalan bilingualism in the decade before the constitutional and supreme courts ruled against the prevalence of the Catalan language in Catalonia (1999-2009). The analysed texts belong to what Haßler (2000) defines as a text series which regarding its content and aims corresponds to a reduced number of triggering reference texts (see chapter 5).

By doing so, I want to determine the importance of the language of ecology and ecological metaphors (see Fill, 1993) in this field and the usage of these elements by both sides, those denouncing the threat of the Castilian language and those fearing the risk of extinction of the Catalan language. The aim is to classify the usage of ecological metaphors and ascertain if there is a process of adoption of metaphors that are common in the Catalan sociolinguistic discourse and of re-contextualization in the discourse on Spanish in Catalonia. The applied method combines classical Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), the Ecolinguistic approach as a form of discourse analysis (see Fill, 1993, on language, conflict and ecological metaphors) and the idea of re-contextualization as exposed in Semino, Deignan and Littlemore (2013) with techniques of Text Series and Reference Texts Analysis proposed by Haßler (2002) and Sinner (2012). For reasons of space, it is not the aim to deal here with the well-known criteria for metaphor identification nor to compare the analysed instances collected with other material or corpora to justify larger theoretical claims.

## 2. The Catalan Society and the Metaphor of Death of the Catalan Language

Ever since Spanish was declared the sole language of diplomacy and common language of Christianity by the Spanish king Carlos I in 1536, the situation of the Catalan language has only deteriorated. Since the *Decreto de Nueva Planta* from 1707 Catalan had to suffer from persecution, prohibition, legal measures impeding its public use and outlawing its presence in administration, education, etc<sup>1</sup>. The deterioration of the Catalan language was intensified by the immigration of millions of monolingual Spanish speakers from other areas of Spain who could not be effectively integrated into the Catalan speaking community due to the ban of Catalan from public life. The process of so called *linguistic normalization* of the Catalan language since the democratization of Spain after Franco's death in 1975 which brought the co-official status of the language, its legal recognition, etc., has changed the position of the Catalan language substantially. Nonetheless, the linguistic habits of the population still reflect the long history of persecution. Since the late 1990s, a large number of immigrants from South America and Northern Africa arrived in Catalonia, reviving the fears of linguistic and cultural alienation of the Catalan society. At the same time, several regional laws have increased the presence of Catalan in public domains.

For a long time, probably ever since the Catalans became conscious of the threat of losing their linguistic and cultural identity, the metaphor of death has been present in the debate on the situation of the Catalan language. As Pueyo (2007) puts it, the Catalan people have been obsessed with their language and its fate (and its imminent death) for centuries, making the death of the language a *megatema* (see pp. 4-6).

1. See the historical view over the persecution of the Catalan language in Ferrer Gironès (1985); a comprehensive overview of the contact of Spanish and Catalan is given in Sinner (2004, p. 9-18).

According to Illas (2005, p. 1), the fear (>ghost<) of the death of the Catalan language is obsessing great part of the Catalan society («Un espectre recorre i obsedeix bona part de la societat catalana: l'espectre de la mort del català»).

Even after the restoration of the status of co-official language, the debate about the fate of the language has never ceased to exist. But in recent years, it has become candent again, not only in the media. It truly *is* a real »Catalan *megatema*«.

Illas (2005, p. 1) explains that the fear of the extinction of the Catalan languages has been a topos in Catalonia for a long time, pointing out several publications from the last 60 years dealing with it. He mentions the loss of social use of the Catalan language which is perceived as a fateful sign that this minority language will be swallowed by another language which is getting more and more dominant and states that, as a consequence, the number of texts by linguists, politicians and journalists dealing with the risks of disappearance of the Catalan language is constantly growing. Very probably, this growing interest in the early years of the 21st century is due to the fact that, despite all the measures to ensure the use of the language, in spite of all the advances in making the population bilingual and rising numbers of people fluent in both languages, fewer people than ever before seemed to be using the language in their everyday life (Vila i Moreno 2003, p. 126; Sinner and Wieland 2008). Gabancho (2008, p. 238) thinks »the governments under Jordi Pujol explained to everybody that the Catalan language had a promising future, until the experts started to say no, that nothing was save[d]« (our translation).

As a matter of fact, the interest in language and its existence can be seen also by the fact that apart from books by linguists dealing with the issue of language death (like Junyent, 1992, 1998, 1999), there are numerous articles and contributions by Catalan authors dealing with these aspects in the media—that is, in the non specialised media, in every day newspapers and in the glossy weekend supplements and magazines that come with the newspapers—, innumerable reviews of books dedicated to the question of language death and even interviews with linguists or want-to-be-linguists in the media (see Biosca, 2007; Gironès, 2008 [on Gabancho, '2007]; Riera and Cuyàs, 2006 [on Branchadell, 2006]; Simó, 2007a [on Pueyo, 2007, and Gabancho, '2007]; Vilaweb, 2007 [on Gabancho, '2007]; etc.).

There was a huge fear that Catalan, now that it was restored as the language of the classroom, would cease to be the language of the school yard (*llengua del pati*), since Galindo i Solé (2006) found these tendencies in school children whose linguistic behaviour she analysed:

Castilian native speakers rarely use their L2 to address to Catalan-speaking children, while Catalan native speakers tend to address Castilian speakers in Castilian; children born in bilingual families assimilate their practices to their Castilian-speaking classmates; (2) the comparison between declared

and observed data shows that children overestimate the presence of Catalan in their informal interactions, and (3) children only use more Catalan than Castilian when the presence of Catalan in the environment is clearly higher than the presence of Castilian (Galindo i Solé, 2006, English summary).

This behaviour—also proven by Antoni Riera, Rosa Sagalés, and Jordi Sedó in Grannollers in 2006 and commented by Jordi Solé i Camardons in the newspaper *Avui* in 2007—was shocking for Gabancho (2008, p. 47) who sees the panorama as »discouraging« as Castilian is prevailing in school yards and in class, in communication between pupils as well as between teachers, and particularly in public schools (*cf.* Pascual, Riera, Sagalés and Sedó, 1999).

After decades of linguistic normalization, news like this was not expected by the Catalans. This might explain the huge attention and massive media space recently given to alleged imminent and hardly avoidable death of the Catalan language. As Simó (2007a) puts it in very few words: »Es torna a parlar de la mort del català«.

### 3. »Future«, *Decadence*, *Recession* ...: the Representation of the Linguistic Situation

The situation of the Catalan language and of the language contact with Spanish or the behaviour of the speakers that threatens the survival of the Catalan language (or the Catalan culture in general, including the language) is represented in many different ways, both in the texts of linguists or sociologists and in the speeches and writings of laypersons, for example in letters to editors or in blogs. They speak of decadence, doubt the »future« of Catalan—using quotation marks to underline it has none such future—, see Catalan as belonging to the *club of the defeated languages*, talk of linguistic substitution or recession of Catalan, mourn the unstoppable advance of Spanish and retreat of Catalan, diagnose Catalan with a good, bad or even severe state of health, talk of linguistic allergy, psychological aversion against the Catalan language, etc., as the following examples show:

*decadència* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 236; Pueyo 2007, p. 26).

*segadors de l'herba sota els peus* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 15).

*el seu «futur»* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 14) vs. *el seu futur* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 16).

*la lengua catalana no arribaria al segle XXI* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 17).

*«club de les llengües derrotades»* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 25).

*substitució lingüística del català* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 29).

*recessió del català* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 29).

*acaben practicant allò adequat als conflictes en els quals s'enfronta una part forta i una de feble: la submissió lingüística* (Bofill, 2007).

*possibilitats futures del català* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 26).

*recuperació del català* (Pueyo, 2007, p. 31).

*la llengua recula* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 51).

*el català allà on encara respira amb una certa amplitud* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 52).

*avenç imparabile del castellà* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 55).

*la cultura catalana és una cultura en regressió* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 72).

*recula la llengua, s'esllangueix la cultura* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 142).

*corrosió dels referents culturals* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 257).

*no hi havia res salvat* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 260).

*la partida està perduda* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 265).

*assegura que el català es troba en un estat »summament greu«* (Llacunenc, 2004).

*El diagnòstic sobre l'estat de salut del català als centres de salut és una d'aquelles males notícies que costa donar als parents del malalt* (Capdevila, 2007).

*La Guerra de la llengua* (Voltas, 2007).

*Al·lèrgia a la llengua* (Simó, 2008).

*El català els produeix una aversió tal que jo la qualificaria d'al·lèrgia psíquica, per a la qual no sé si hi ha tractament* (Simó, 2008).

Several groups of metaphors, some main topics can be distinguished:

- CHANGE and TRANSFORMATION, with expressions like *arrival* and *departure* or *ending* and *beginning*, but also others that imply decay and decadence (see above);
- FIGHTING and WAR, with expressions such as *retreat*, *advance*, *win the battle*, *rescue*, etc.;
- ECONOMY, with expressions such as *recession*, *decadence*, along with others that express decay and decadence.
- DECAY, with verbs like *corrode*, *decay*, etc.;
- HEALTH, with elements such as *breathe*, *decay*, *state of health*, *severe state (of health)*, *allergy*, *psychological aversion*, etc.

The tendency to use ecological metaphors in economy has to be taken into account here; it makes it difficult to separate elements that classify for the group of ECONOMY from those titled DECAY and HEALTH. Some of the elements in this last group of HEALTH could possibly be integrated into a superior group, LIFE AND DEATH, such as a figurative use of *breathe* with the sense of ›live‹. Some of these elements belonging to the categories of HEALTH and LIFE AND DEATH are clearly part of the ecological metaphors treated here. Some typical ones can be found in the following examples with the metaphor of the *severe state of health* or, in contrast, the *excellent health* of Catalan and the representation of the language as an organism that can still *breathe*:

assegura que el català es troba en un estat »summament greu« (Llacunenc, 2004).

Com que, de tant en tant, sempre apareix algú dient que som uns alarmistes, que el »catalán goza de excelente salud«, etcètera, doncs bé, situem-nos una mica, si us plau (*Cultura i llengua*).

Que som bilingües ho accepten fins i tots aquells que utilitzen el bilingüisme per acotar el català allà on encara respira amb una certa amplitud (Gabancho, 2008, p. 52).

Language is seen here as if it were a being, a creature being able or needing to breathe. One might even include *vulnerar*, *vulneració lingüística*, used to describe the act of hurting someone's pride and self-esteem by obliging him to be taught in a language that is not his »natural« as a consequence of belonging to a »linguistic minority at your own place« (see Sangles, 2007).

The fact that Catalan politicians refer to the *state of health* of the Catalan language attracted the attention of some authors and is also mentioned by Puigpelat in December of 2007 in an article in the newspaper *Avui*:

abans de redactar aquest article he repassat els 35 folis de la conferència d'Artur Mas per a la refundació del catalanisme, i he comprovat que a penes es fa referència a la llengua catalana: a la seva (bona o mala) salut, a la seva promoció o al seu futur (Puigpelat, 2007).

Finally there are some more »exotic« metaphors within the economy metaphors, obviously due to humoristic intentions of individuals such as Guinjoan and Llauredor (2007a) who talk about the bad quality of the Catalan language spoken on the streets mentioning the »linguistic energy« some people try to *economize*:



L'empobriment es nota al carrer, però també als mitjans, on conductors que parlen un català impecable tenen col·laboradors i convidats que no passarien un filtre de mínims. L'estalvi d'energia lingüística per part de qui s'expressa, sumat a l'absència de control individual i social sobre una cosa tan elemental com parlar bé, ens duu on som.

In another article, the same authors talk about the Catalan language from an economical point of view, talking once again of *saving* (linguistic) *energy*, calling the language a *resource* and presenting the language as something with *exchange value*:

1) Utilitzem l'idioma que menys esforç i inversió ens exigeix i dediquem les energies estalviades a altres qüestions. Es tracta, doncs, d'un recurs. 2) L'idioma té un valor d'ús i un valor de canvi. El d'ús depèn sobretot de la seva utilitat comunicativa i el de canvi, de la utilitat per aconseguir altres objectius com, per exemple, feina. L'idioma també té un determinat valor davant d'altres idiomes en situacions multilingües com la catalana. 3) L'idioma té valors simbòlics i de senyalització que ens indiquen pertinença, identitat i generació de determinat prestigi social. 4) Les persones actuem en l'idioma, com en quasi tot, per incentius (Guinjoan and Llaureador, 2007b).

Those are exceptions and therefore I will concentrate on the less peripheral cases. Alas, it has to be pointed out that many of the elements easily classified as part of areas such as ECONOMY or CONFLICT AND WAR are usually also used in ecology, such as *retreat*, *decline*, *decrease*, *recession* or *lose*, *recover* and *win space*. Examples of their use in writings about the Catalan language can be found in the following quotes where the authors state that the Alguerese variety of Catalan is *gaining space* and Catalan has *obtained and recovered spaces* it had lost in the past or, in the second quote, that Catalan is in *retrogression*:

A què és degut aquest retrocés tan acusat? Al llarg del segle xx, l'alguerès ha experimentat una recessió molt important [...]. La quantitat, cada any creixent, d'actuacions a favor del recobriment de la llengua catalana és un clar marcador que l'alguerisme guanya terreny en la població sarda. La recuperació que està vivint el català des dels anys seixanta és deguda, en bona part, a la col·laboració de les associacions culturals catalanes en les activitats culturals organitzades a l'Alguer. Així, el català ha assolit i recuperat alguns espais d'ús que havia anat perdent al llarg dels anys [...] (IEC, 2007).

Al capdavall, el retrocés del català és fruit del bilingüisme promogut per un sistema constitucional i un context polític espanyol profundament anti-pàtics (Bofill, 2007).

Expressions such as *win territories* or *recover space* can be found in ecology, where the term *living space* is used as synonym of *habitat* or *biotope*.

Particularly frequent seem to be images related to life, death and natural phenomena related to them: birth, growing (and growing up), being healthy or not, falling sick, and dying. Metaphors related to life and death are omnipresent in the writing on Catalan as well as on the contact with the Castilian language in both Spanish and Catalan media, news and internet sites, on one hand, and publications in Catalan linguistics and sociolinguistics, on the other. Let's have a look at some of the different ecological metaphors related to these areas that can be found in the debates on the language conflict in Catalonia or the Catalan speaking areas of Spain in general in the analysed texts.

## 4 Ecological Metaphors

### 4.1 *Vitalitat*

Very frequent are allusions to the vitality, vigour or vital force of the Catalan language, as Pueyo (2007) mentions repeatedly, pointing out the use of the Catalan language on the Internet:

Les meves intencions són molt més senzilles i tenen a veure amb les ganes de dir algunes coses sobre la vitalitat de la llengua catalana [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 14).

No únicament pel seu pes demogràfic, sinó també pel seu estat jurídic, pel seu equipament jurídic, per la seva vitalitat –a tall d'exemple, podem esmentar que a Internet, la catalana es la vint-i-sisena llengua del món en nombre de pàgines per parlant, per davant del rus, de l'espanyol, l'àrab o el portuguès, i disposa d'un domini propi, el primer que identifica una llengua i una cultura a la xarxa–, per la seva tradició cultural i literària, la comunitat lingüística catalana constitueix un cas únic a Europa [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 24).

Des del punt de vista de la llengua oral, la seva vitalitat, al llarg d'aquests segles, fou molt elevada [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 26).

### 4.2 *Viure, vida*

The metaphorical use of *live* and *life* and the representation of Catalan as a living organism are frequent. Illas (2005), not without spicing up his position with strong sarcasm, states:

Les llengües minoritàries han de continuar vivint, no pas per aspirar a una vida eterna convertint-se en llengües fortes, útils i normals, sinó perquè es puguin continuar morint i perquè els seus parlants puguin continuar patint per la seva desaparició imminent (Illas, 2005, p. 9).

A frequent collocation is *mantenir viu*, as in the following sentence:

Defensa que l'actitud dels parlants és bàsica per mantenir la llengua viva (Biosca, 2007).

#### 4.3 *Sobreviure, supervivència*

The Catalan language, as other minority languages, from its ›defenders‹ point of view does not just *live*: it *survives* and people fight for its *survival* which is seriously endangered or threatened:

Tanmateix, aquesta supervivència [de les llengües minoritàries] no s'ha de buscar mitjançant la seva consolidació política i estatal, és a dir, la seva »salvació«, sinó a través de la confrontació amb la pròpia mort que els suposa la seva mateixa condició de minoritàries (Illas, 2005, p. 8).

28/10/2004 – Portada – L'IEC considera la ›supervivència del català seriosament amenaçada«. Avui (Recull, 2004).

Aquest esquema posa en dubte la supervivència de la cultura *natural* i minoritària [...] (Gabancho, 2008, p. 149).

This last sentence is also an example for the use of *culture* including *language* as part of it, because language, for Gabancho (2008), is part of the culture and cannot be separated from it. Apart from *supervivència*, there can also be found also *sobrevivència*, but while *supervivència* is included in the normative Catalan dictionary of the normative institution *Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, who defines it as »Acció de sobreviure; l'efecte« (DIEC s.v. *supervivència*), *sobrevivència* does not appear in the normative dictionary.

#### 4.4 *Subsistir*

Very similar to *sobreviure* is the use of *subsistir*, employed in opposition to *desaparèixer*, as in the following example where Gabancho established a direct relation between the two terms, stating that it depends not on official measures but on prestige if Catalan will *subsistir* or *desaparèixer*:

El terreny en el qual Catalunya decidirà si el català subsisteix o desapareix no serà l'oficial —administració, escola, mitjans públics— sinó el del prestigi (Gabancho, 2008, p. 242).

#### 4.5 *Sostenibilitat*

The survival of the Catalan language, according to some authors, depends on its sustainability; with *sostenible* and *sostenibilitat*, there are two elements heavily used (and abused) in the debates on environmental protection, with *sustainable* as the magic word (cf. enormously frequent expressions such as ecologically sustainable— that is, organic—farming, sustainable development, sustainable use of energies, sustainable tourism, etc.):

25/10/2004 Una declaració institucional de l'IEC qüestiona la »sostenibilitat futura« del català. Diari de Girona (Recull, 2004).

#### 4.6 *Morir, mort*

Words such as *morir* and *mort* as the exact opposite of the forms that express vitality, such as *life* or *survival*, etc. are, obviously, as well used to describe the situation of the Catalan language. As could be seen, the metaphors of life and living are often used in contexts where it is wished the Catalan lived, survived, gained vitality, defended its life, and so it is no wonder the negative expressions are even more frequent in the discourse on the language conflict in Catalonia or in the Catalan speaking areas in general. Some examples from the recent debates about Catalan and Castilian:

La situació no és comparable amb el cas de Catalunya, però la lliçó sí: les actituds són fonamentals. Una llengua no morirà mai si es fa servir (Biosca, 2007).

Es torna a parlar de la mort del català (Simó, 2007a).

¿Sabeu que imposar el castellà per la força de les armes no té importància, però que intentar salvar el català d'una mort segura és una vilesa? (Simó, 2007b).

Allusions to famous poems, lyrics and texts are frequent in the debates on the death of the Catalan language, such as in the following examples of Pueyo (2007):

[...] hem deixat darrera nostre un solc interminable de debats, sentències lapidàries i profecies sobre el corpus del català, sobre el seu futur i la seva mort, tants i tants cops anunciada [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 16).

[...] debats sobre el català, sobre el seu futur i sobre la seva mort («la mort del català», vet aquí el megatema que fa trempar amb la mateixa intensitat gent de parers teòricament antagònics), tants i tants cops anunciada, de vegades amb una precisió gairebé forense [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 40).

Obviously, Pueyo alludes to Gabriel García Márquez' *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* in the Spanish original and *Crònica d'una mort anunciada* in its Catalan translation.

Illas (2005), probably making allusions to the first line of Marx' and Engels' Communist Manifesto, »A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism«<sup>2</sup>, writes the following:

Un espectre recorre i obsedeix bona part de la societat catalana: l'espectre de la mort del català (Illas, 2005, p. 1).

The author, with the same irony and sarcasm shown in 4.2, states:

Per això, cal potenciar les llengües minoritàries per mantenir viva el que en podríem dir la seva mort asimptòtica, és a dir, el fet de veure com es van morint progressivament sense que tanmateix s'acabin de morir mai (Illas, 2005, p. 9).

*Mort* is frequently used together with *imminent*, as can be seen in the following example, once again by Pueyo:

[...] els catalans –i especialment aquells que dediquen tant d'esforç i de temps a parlar de la mort imminent del català– tendim massa sovint a oblidar-nos que no són les llengües les que salven els pobles, sinó els pobles els que salven les llengües [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 17).

But not all authors are happy with the use of *mort* and *morir* to refer to the reduction in employment of the Catalan language. Junyent uses quotation marks to distance herself from the use of the word *mort*, as she thinks death is the result of a natural process, which she thinks is not the case of languages:

Tot plegat indueix a moltes confusions, la més perillosa de les quals és creure que la ›mort‹ d'una llengua és un procés natural al qual totes estan abocades més d'hora o més tard. [...] La mort o extinció d'una llengua vol dir que aquells parlants que la feien viure l'han substituïda per una altra, parlen una altra llengua, i aquella que han abandonat s'ha perdut per sempre (Junyent, 1999).

2. In Catalan: »Un fantasma (or: espectre) recorre Europa, el comunisme«.

*Mort* and *morir* themselves are also represented by metaphors, such as »to end on the graveyard«, »end in the grave«, »get a tombstone«, etc., such as in the following example from a blog:

Ellos mismos [los hablantes] son los culpables si el catalán acaba en el cementerio (CatBlogger, 2008).

The graveyard, in turn, can be represented by a tombstone, with a *pars pro toto*, as can be seen in the graphic 1 titled »Do you want your language to end like this? Speak Catalan!«. The engraving on the cross reads »2037. Catalan Language«, while the tombstone bears an engraving saying »Here rests a language whose people let it die«.



Figure 1. [www.somiserem.org/escuts/tomba\\_gran.jpg](http://www.somiserem.org/escuts/tomba_gran.jpg)

#### 4.7 *Desaparèixer, desaparició*

Itself a metaphorical, euphemistic substitute of the verb *morir*, *desaparèixer* is used in the sense not only of the physical disappearance in the sense of ›being absent, leave‹, but also of ›becoming extinct and vanishing‹—the authors see a process of extinction, etc.—:

[...] [aquestes ›extincions‹ històriques] demostren que la continuïtat del català [...] no és necessàriament incompatible amb la seva desaparició en un més espais del seu territori [...] (Pueyo, 2007, pp. 21-22).

Una llengua que guanya parlants no és una llengua en procés de desaparició (Voltas, 2007).

Catalunya decidirà si el català subsisteix o desapareix [...] (Gabancho, 2008, p. 242).

Once again, the co-occurrence with *imminent* (cf. 4.2) is worth noticing:

La imminent desaparició del català ha estat pronosticada en tantes ocasions [...] (Pueyo, 2007, p. 17).

#### 4.8 *Extingir, extingir-se, extinció*

With a meaning related to *desaparició* and *mort*, there are *extinció* and the corresponding verbs, *extingir* and *extingir-se*, and collocations such as *en perill d'extinció*, *en vies d'extinció* or *en procés d'extinció*. Junyent (1999) points out the importance to distinguish between the latter two:

el català és una llengua, no tan sols en perill d'extinció, sinó que ja és una llengua en procés d'extinció (Junyent, 1999).

In the following examples, *extinció* is also used in the context of the decline of the Catalan language or the Catalan culture:

[Carme Gironès:] Com és que la majoria de la immigració clarament no opta pel català com a llengua de comunicació? [Carme Junyent:] Doncs perquè amb el nostre comportament no els fem veure que sigui necessari per a res. Si els parlants no ens conscienciem, el català es veurà abocat a l'extinció (Gironès, 2008).

Una cultura mil·lenària en vies d'extinció (Gabancho, 2008, p. 3).

En els processos d'extinció sempre hi ha una generació que resisteix i una generació —sovint la mateixa— que es deixa anar (Gabancho, 2008, p. 236).

It can also be used to express the disappearance of certain words, which is seen, most times, as the beginning of the extinction of the language itself:

Catúfols, Barjaula, Userda o Llostrejar són algunes de les moltes paraules que corren seriós perill d'extinció (Soler, 2007).

Gairebé 22.000 internautes han recolzat la iniciativa ›Apadrina una paraula‹ i han rescatat unes 11.000 paraules en vies d'extinció (Avui, 2007).

Pueyo (2007) even uses *extingir* and *extinció* to refer to the partial disappearance of a language, that is, the loss of the use of a language in a determined place in a certain moment of history, such as the loss of Spanish in the Philippines, which he compares to the historical extinction of the Catalan language in some territories in Aragon, Murcia and Valencia which are Spanish speaking areas today:

Des del segle xv, quan va arribar a ser una de les llengües més escampades i prestigioses de la Mediterrània [...], la llengua catalana s'ha extingit (com el castellà a les Filipines o el francès en diversos territoris del Canadà i dels Estats Units) en una part del territori catalanoparlant d'Aragó [...]; de l'Horta murciana; de la zona oriental del País Valencià [...]; de les comarques valencianes del Vinalopó Mitjà i del Baix Segura [...], i de la ciutat nord-americana de Sant Agustí [...]. És ben curiós que d'aquestes ›extincions‹ històriques gairebé ni se'n parli, en caps dels múltiples debats sobre la mort del català, probablement no només pel fet d'estar mancades d'emoció del prognòstic, sinó també perquè demostren que la continuïtat del català –como de qual-sevol altre llengua– no és necessàriament incompatible amb la seva desaparició en un o més espais del seu territori [...] (Pueyo, 2007, pp. 21-22).

It is interesting to state that Pueyo first uses *extingir* without quotation marks and then *extinctions* with quotation marks, apparently to relativize this use and show it might be too strong to talk of *extinction*.

#### 4.9 *Acabar-se*

*Acabar-se* is used to express something comes to an end and, metaphorically and sometimes even poetically, to refer to a person's or an organism's death. In the following example, the authors use it exactly this way:

Mentre la família tota reunida treu l'espina al lluç, vostè fa l'anunci fatal: ›El català s'acaba: avui l'he sentit parlar menys que ahir. Menys que ahir però molt més que demà‹ (Riera and Cuyàs, 2006).

#### 4.10 *Li queda/queden x temps/anys/generacions*

Another rather euphemistic way of saying someone's time is almost up is to say how much time is left. By using these kinds of expressions, the authors don't have to comment on whose fault it is:

[...] bona gent que es dedica a proclamar amb contundència [...] que el català es troba en plé procés de llatinització [...], o que només li queden una generació o dues, a tot estirar (Pueyo, 2007, pp. 16-17).

Reitero una vegada més que sí al català li queda un segle o com a màxim dos com ens certifiquen els altaveus espanyols a la llengua catalana tampoc li quedarà una eternitat perquè si la llengua anglesa ha de dominar el Planeta no trigarà gaire a fer-ho (Batlle, 2007).

És igual, al català li queda vint anys de vida (Damic, 2008).



#### 4.11 *Matar*

The situation with those who talk of *matar* is quite different. As could be seen in 4.6, not all the authors are happy with the use of *mort* and *morir* in connection with the situation of the Catalan language. Once more, Junyent is to be mentioned who in the context of language prefers to speak of *matar*, as shown in the following example from an interview with the writer:

[Carme Junyent:] El que mata el català és la indiferència, no els hostils (Gironès, 2008).

Paralleling the habit of Junyent (1999; cf. Gironès, 2008), some authors prefer to use *matar* or expressions related to it or substituting it.

#### 4.12 *Acabar amb algú*

One of the expressions used instead of *matar* is *acabar amb algú*, or *acabar con alguien* in Spanish:

Es confirma, també, la tesis socialista de que per acabar amb el català, l'anglès resulta més pràctic (Cristòfol, 2009).

La Franja de Ponent: Volen acabar amb el català de totes totes (Casanova, 2008).

28/10/2004 - El hábito de pasar al castellano acabará con el catalán, según el Institut d'Estudis Catalans. La Vanguardia (Recull, 2004).

#### 4.13 *Suïcidi*

Apart from those who speak of *dying*, *letting die* and *killing*, there are also those who maintain there is *cultural suicide* going on, such as Gabancho (2008) who claims the politics of the former Catalan president Pujol was nothing but cultural suicide:

[...] el mateix pujolisme [...] va foragitar del seu costat el món cultural: analitzarem aquest *suïcidi*, perquè un suïcidi alentit ho ha estat [...] (Gabancho, 2008, p. 156).

That is, the position of the ones who refuse to talk of death and prefer to see killing is divided between those who blame the Catalans themselves—and talk of suicide—and those who reject this posture and insist the Catalan language is being murdered:

No, no es [sic] el suïcidi [sic] del català, es [sic] l'assassinat del català (Torra-collons, 2009).

## 5. Spanish in Danger of Extinction?

After looking into the use of ecological metaphors applied to the Catalan language, now a look shall be given at the use of such metaphors in the context of the Spanish language that give evidence of a dramatic re-contextualization for ideological and rhetorical reasons (see Semino et al., 2013)<sup>3</sup>. This re-contextualization is closely tied to a rhetorical strategy called parallelism, which consists in creating new terms and mirror-expressions that are loaded with a highly negative sense: if in Catalonia authors claim to fear to be treated as second-class citizens because of their language, the answer from Madrid is to talk of the fear of Spanish speaking persons being second-class citizens due to persecutions of the Spanish language<sup>4</sup>.

Examples of the growing aggression in the debate over the situation of the Spanish language in Catalonia or the bilingual regions in general in the analysed period are the pseudo-documentary *Ciudadanos de segunda* broadcasted by Telemadrid on April 9th 2007<sup>5</sup> and the *Manifiesto por la lengua común* published in June 2008 by some Spanish intellectuals such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Félix de Azúa, and Fernando Savater who insist there are growing reasons to be preoccupied about the institutional situation of the Spanish language in Spain and believe the aspiration to become bilingual in Spanish and a co-official language should only be stimulated, but not imposed (see El País, 2008). These texts can be seen as the reference texts that trigger the text series of publications related with them through the content and the common objectives (see chapter 1, see Haßler, 2000).

I will present some extracts of the documentary *Ciudadanos de segunda*, judged both by Catalan politicians and media as manipulating, perverting and misrepresenting the linguistic reality in Catalonia. Pilar Rahola in *El Periódico* from April 14th, for example, comments the documentary talking of manipulation and lies made with public money (Pagès, 2007, p. 105)<sup>6</sup>. In the introduction to the documentary, the narrator, marked by tone and context as a rhetorical question, asks if maybe Catalan is in danger of extinction:

3. The equation of *re-contextualization* and *intertextuality* as proposed by Semino et al. (2013) does not convince, as re-contextualization is also to be found within isolated texts and intratextuality is, obviously, not the same as intertextuality.

4. Cf. Montolio (2019) on the rhetorical strategies of the Spanish right-wing movement against the laws to protect women, and who denounces the same kind of parallelisms, such as talking of *hembrismo* in order to ridicule and fight feminists who try to end *machismo*, thus identifying feminism with the same blights and defects it intends to fight.

5. The complete commentaries of the documentary are reproduced in Pagès (2007, pp. 89–101).

6. More commentaries like this are included in Pagès (2007, pp. 106–108). According to Casas (2008), the documentary broadcast by the television channel from Madrid satanizes the linguistic immersion and diagnoses Spanish is in danger of extinction in Catalonia («La televisió autonòmica emet un reportatge que satanitza la immersió i diagnostica que el castellà està en ›perill d'extinció‹ a Catalunya»).

¿Qué está sucediendo con el castellano en Cataluña, está quizá en peligro de extinción? (Pagès, 2007, p. 90).

Francisco Caja, teacher of Philosophy at the University of Barcelona, is shown saying:

[...] lo que es inadmisibile es que haya desaparecido el castellano, la lengua insisto de la mayoría de los catalanes, del espacio público. Ese es el problema de Cataluña (Pagès, 2007, pp. 90-81).

The narrator comments on the preoccupying situation in the Catalan schools and says about the Spanish speaking inhabitants that they are:

Amenazados, sin libertad para poder elegir un colegio en castellano para sus hijos. (Pagès, 2007, p. 98).

This is nothing but a straight lie, because there are schools with Spanish as the language of tuition. Such schools do exist, but as the laws guarantee all inhabitants will be bilingual by age 16, also Catalan schools, with most subjects taught *in* Catalan, guarantee the fulfillment of the linguistic laws. As a matter of fact, most schools in Catalonia are mainly in Catalan nowadays, having Spanish as a subject only. A school not offering Spanish at all would probably be closed right away.

The reactions to the documentary and to the *Manifiesto* can be found everywhere, and it shows a language mirroring the words used to describe the situation of the Catalan language, such as *peligro de extinción*:

El castellano. ¿En peligro de extinción en Catalunya? (<http://entrevolutas.blogspot.com/2007/06/el-castellano-en-peligro-de-extincin-en.html>).

Also immediate were the reactions of the Catalan politicians and media (and were in part even reproduced in Spanish in some Madrid newspapers), where journalists, amazed by the allegation of a threat to the Spanish language, answered such as Carré did—once again with intertextual hints on Marx' and Engel's *Manifiesto*—:

¿El castellano, está en peligro en Cataluña? [...] No sufran, que la lengua castellana no está en peligro en Cataluña. Además, debo decirles que no hay conflicto lingüístico en las aulas. El estudio revela que el castellano y el catalán conviven y comparten espacios en los centros educativos sin ningún tipo de problema. Y es que no existen más fantasmas que los mentales (Carré, 2008).

Simó says about the allegedly lacking skills of Spanish (which according to the defenders of Spanish would lead to the extinction of Spanish in Catalonia) that:

Alhora, els estudis més seriosos avalen que els estudiants de Catalunya saben tan bé el castellà com els estudiants de Valladolid. Són arguments que desmunten les falòrnies dels al·lèrgics a la llengua catalana, però tant és: repeteixen els mateixos eslògans [...] (Simó, 2008).

Even some politicians from other Spanish areas, even from monolingual Spanish speaking Extremadura, backed her and other writers who defended there was no danger to the Spanish language:

L'expresident d'Extremadura Juan Carlos Rodríguez Ibarra ha qualificat de ›batalla artificial‹ la polèmica generada al voltant de la defensa del castellà i ha assenyalat: ›El dia que un català no parli castellà, començaré a preocupar-me‹. Ibarra ha fet aquest comentari en resposta a una pregunta sobre el contramanifest del PSOE que dona suport al model d'educació lingüística de Catalunya i que remarca que el castellà no està en perill i que ›gaudeix d'una bona salut‹ (Avui, 2008b).

But this position is, apparently, an exiguous minority in monolingual parts of Spain. The writer and columnist of the Spanish newspaper *El País*, Antonio Elorza, says:

El español gozará de buena salud en el mundo, pero no en las universidades catalanas (Elorza, 2008).

José María Rojo, with a remarkable ironic tone, mocks the linguistic politics in Spain:

Quizá los académicos franceses hayan mirado al sur y hayan visto lo que ha sucedido en España, donde se considera que las lenguas regionales y minoritarias, como las especies en peligro de extinción, merecen protección por parte de los gobiernos regionales ( Rojo, 2008, quoted by Díaz Sotero, 2008).

And also José María Aznar, former president of Spain, was fighting against the *vulneración*—of parents' rights in the Autonomous Regions, claiming they are not allowed to choose the language of education for their children:

José María Aznar [...] se reunió ayer con representantes de las plataformas por la libertad lingüística, con quienes acordó constituir foros conjuntos para denunciar la «vulneración de derechos» que sufren los padres en algunas comunidades autónomas al no poder elegir la lengua en la que se educarán sus hijos (El Mundo, 2008b).

*El Mundo* proclaims the disappearance of Spanish in the bilingual region of Galicia, and the *Círculo Balear* maintains the linguistic politics of the *Partido Popular* on the Balearic Islands implies the disappearance of Spanish from schools:

La señalización oficial en la Comunidad gallega vulnera sistemáticamente el bilingüismo. [...] La práctica desaparición del idioma de todos los españoles se inició con el PP al frente de la Xunta (Orgaz, 2008).

[...] la política lingüística llevada a cabo por el PP balear ha supuesto la »práctica desaparición« del castellano de la educación y la administración de la comunidad [...] (Libertadbalea, 2008).

One can read about the *end* of Spanish classes and their deletion from school curricula, and interviews where famous writers answer questions such as if literature in Spanish is a phenomenon to be extinct in Catalonia:

Se acaba así, ilegalmente, con la llamada »tercera hora« de castellano, que pretendía evitar la supresión de la enseñanza de esta lengua a través del fraude que supone impartir »estructuras lingüísticas comunes« en catalán en el horario de lengua castellana (Vermoet Hidalgo, 2008).

[La revista *Taula de canvi*] Va a trucar a la porta dels escriptors i els va preguntar si la literatura en lengua castellana era a Catalunya *un fenomen a extingir* (Gabancho, 2008, p. 155).

One could suddenly find a growing number of articles on the death of the Spanish language, on its agony, and there is rising interest in the supposedly »sad situation« of the Spanish language in the bilingual areas, especially in Catalonia. The mention of death or agony in the headlines makes articles dealing with the Spanish language interesting for readers, thus leading to more and more articles about it. The idea is not new though: already in 1981, we find an article on *La agonía del español* by José-Ventura Olguibel in the daily newspaper *El País*, dealing, among other things, with the normalization of the minority languages and its possible impact on the Spanish language itself. What is different are the tone and words chosen, very often merely *calques* of the desperate outcries of speakers of one of Spain's minority languages against the extreme pressure of the national language. We can find the same metaphors that could be stated in the discourse on the situation of the Catalan language, such as the *muerte anunciada*, mentioned in 4.6:

Sin embargo, la muerte del castellano en Cataluña, hoy por hoy, se puede considerar una muerte anunciada (Velasco, 2003).

It is also an interesting fact that the authors very often use the argument of territory or space to refer to the danger the Spanish language is going through in Spain, for example by claiming that »Schools in a third of Spain teach only in minority language

ges« (Rojo, 2008). But as a matter of fact, the space the Spanish language occupies is also mentioned by the defenders of the minority languages, who ask, very ironically, how a language spoken in a small corner of Spain can endanger a language spoken in four continents, pointing out, once more, the desperate situation of the minority language:

El escritor catalán Albert Sánchez-Piñol se mofó del Manifiesto impulsado por una veintena de escritores en defensa del castellano como lengua común de España y comentó irónico que, para él, ›los autores del Manifiesto son unos tibios. Es de público conocimiento la desesperada situación del castellano en Cataluña‹. «En los quioscos, la prensa en español se reduce a un par de periódicos; el mundo audiovisual en catalán copa todas las pantallas y canales, a excepción de una ínfima minoría», prosiguió en el mismo tono. ›Habría que hacer algo antes de que un idioma hablado por seis o siete millones extermine al español, que sólo dispone de unos 450 millones de hablantes‹, concluyó Sánchez-Piñol con ironía (El Mundo, 2008a).

Space is, indeed, one of the main topics that appear in most of the pro-Castilian writings and manifestos, as in the following context where a Spaniard from Navarra blames the Catalan people for *marginalising* the Spanish language in Catalonia:

No obstante, yo como español de Navarra que está presenciando el grotesco espectáculo que están protagonizando esos nuevos y viejos miserables catalanes en Cataluña para separarse de España, proponiendo estatutos secesionistas y marginando la lengua castellana, me siento en la obligación moral de defender en igual medida todas las lenguas y costumbres que desde hace siglos conviven en España, porque mi familia, al igual que cientos de miles de familias están diseminadas por todo el territorio nacional [...] (Cleto, 2008).

However, the tone gets even harsher, as one can appreciate in the following extract where we learn that the Catalan Government is spending money to expand to Valencia and Roussillon—both territories where, as a matter of fact, the Catalan language is already present and, in the regional varieties of *rossillonès* and *valencià*, has been spoken for hundreds of years—, behaving, thus, as the author suggests, in the way the *nazis* under Hitler did during the Second World War:

No terminan aquí las utilidades del catalán. Sirve para que la Generalitat se gaste casi cuatro millones de euros al trimestre en expandirlo por Valencia o el Rosellón, a modo de lebensraum (el espacio vital de los nazis) o en iniciativas tan peregrinas como traducir el juego de la petanca, o tan urgentes como investigar el judaísmo catalán. Y luego se quejan ante Madrid de que

no tienen músculo presupuestario para socorrer al millón largo de marginados que hay en Cataluña. Espíritu práctico, otra vez (Basallo, 2005).

*Lebensraum* ›vital space‹ is, indeed, already a step further: it means applying the ecological term *espacio vital* in its German form *Lebensraum*, thus relating the politics of the Catalan government to fascist tendencies à la Hitler, who proclaimed a need of more *Lebensraum* in the east of Europe which led to the well known atrocities committed in the name of the supposed biological and ecological needs and rights of a ›superior race‹. In a comparable way we can see the use of *limpieza étnica* applied to the Spanish language, used the same way as *genocidio*, also applied to the Spanish language in Catalonia in the analysed debates:

El fracaso escolar en los castellanohablantes, del que ÉPOCA habla en este número, es la prueba más palpable de esa variante de limpieza étnica (Basallo, 2005).

It does not come as a surprise that we can also find the expression *neteja lingüística* coined on *neteja ètnica* and expressions such as *eradicar el castellà*, as Alexandre (2008) laments:

L'ofensiva del Partit Popular per tal d'imposar l'espanyol a Catalunya i al País Basc continua endavant. La seva idea és poder fer una llei que, segons diuen, ›garanteixi que els pares puguin triar la llengua en la qual educaran els fills‹ perquè ›sota la pretensió d'una suposada normalització lingüística, s'està produint un fenomen de neteja lingüística tendent a eradicar el castellà de les escoles i a conculcar els drets dels pares a educar els fills en la seva llengua materna‹. De la neteja lingüística que sota la pretensió d'espanyolitzar Catalunya i el País Basc va practicar Espanya en aquests dos països, a fi d'eradicar-hi el català i l'euscar, no en diuen res (Alexandre, 2008).

As the author points out, while engaging in their campaign to ›save‹ the Spanish language (using such a harsh tone and very doubtful arguments and comparisons to inhumane regimes), these ›defenders of the Spanish language‹ seem to forget that not long ago, Catalonia and the Basque Country were the aim of linguistic cleansing pursued by the Spanish Government.

## 6. Conclusions

The overview has shown an interesting tendency: ecological metaphors that used to be applied in the context of the Catalan language are now also being used in context of the Spanish language. By doing this, the self-proclaimed fighters for the *survival* of Castilian in the Catalan speaking areas, particularly in Catalonia, where the local

politicians have been doing everything to safeguard the Catalan language, give the movement for the linguistic normalization of Catalan a very negative image. Catalan politicians, linguists and writers criticize the media in the monolingual Spanish speaking areas saying they are lying, manipulating and distorting the facts. It is even said the Spanish politicians, especially those from the right-wing party *PP* (Partido Popular), invent linguistic conflicts<sup>7</sup>:

El Partit Popular necessita recuperar el poder i tornar a la Moncloa, d'on creu que va ser expulsat injustament i per unes circumstàncies molt excepcionals. Res d'això, però, justifica la seva actitud d'aquesta legislatura de presentar el castellà com a llengua minoritzada i perseguida a Catalunya. La mentida hauria de ser el límit del joc democràtic, però per recuperar el govern no els importa gaire la veritat, ni la realitat, ni l'odi que puguin fomentar entre pobles. És inadmissible, i sobretot perillós, inventar-se conflictes inexistents per treure'n crèdits electorals. Catalunya no discrimina ni segrega per motius de llengua. Malauradament, no podem dir el mateix de tothom (Avui, 2008a).

Nonetheless, the harsh tone of the Spanish politicians and writers, especially the print media and some Madrid TV channels, are obviously getting the attention they were craving. By applying to the Spanish language the ecological metaphors previously used by Catalan linguists and politicians to refer to the situation of the Catalan language, they were apparently achieving much more success than the Catalans themselves all these years before. As the Spanish language is far from being in danger of extinction, the complaints—mainly from Catalan authors, who reject the perversion of the language used to describe the situation in the bilingual areas—are obviously more than justified. This perversion of the language does clearly consist in the adoption of ecological metaphors common in the Catalan sociolinguistic discourse.

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