sciendo

Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics
Volume 17 Issue 1 • DOI 10.2478/jnmlp-2023-0002

Between Spanish Language and Multilingualism in Spain: The Radical Right Placement

Daniel Pinto Pajares

Universidad de Vigo

Universidad Internacional de La Rioja

Abstract

Since its irruption in Spanish public institutions in 2018, a new right-wing political party, Vox, has challenged the electoral spectrum of other parties under a nationalist form. This work justifies the classification of Vox within the so-called radical right based on the components of the party's nativist and authoritarian positions. These premises are deployed in discourses on the Spanish language as the only linguistic axis capable of structuring the nation. Although similar arguments can be found in other right-wing, center-right, or center-left political parties in Spain, Vox explicitly shows its placement. Language policy in Spain fluctuates around two positions related to the legal nature of the official languages. On the one hand, Spanish is the official language of the State and is widely known by the population; on the other hand, linguistic officiality is shared with other languages in several regions. This legal and social situation implies that measures for the protection and promotion of regional languages are perceived as an attack on the vitality of Spanish. We propose an analysis of Vox's discourse through three channels: first, the organic party documents, as the statutes or the electoral program; second, institutional and journalistic interventions of members with social significance; and third, the publications on Twitter of six relevant components of the party. This material reveals an attack on the linguistic policies of bilingual territories under the premise of Spanish as the common language that balances all citizens. Far from assuming a mere conjunction of particular political phenomena, Vox's discourse articulates social loyalties, with a direct impact on the coexistence of people from different territories and speakers of different languages. Our purpose is, therefore, to unravel the ideological orientation and tone with which Vox transmits its discourse regarding the social relationship of minoritized languages in Spain with the most widespread language, Spanish.

Keywords

Spanish language; linguistic nationalism; language ideologies; minoritized languages; language politics

* Daniel Pinto Pajares, Universidad de Vigo, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja; danielpinto@uvigo.gal

BY-NC-ND © 2023 Pajares published by Sciendo.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 License.

INTRODUCTION

Nationalist discourse is gaining more social acceptance in Western Europe. Parties framed on the extreme right and far right are achieving a relevant institutionalization that legitimizes undemocratic theories. Other regionalist movements call for the reorganization of modern nation-states under an identity premise based on the language and the character of the populace. Spain represented, until now, an exception in Europe in terms of the institutionalization of radical right parties (Turnbull-Dugarte 2019). This exceptionality ended between December 2018 and December 2019, when Vox entered, respectively, the Parliament of Andalusia as the fifth force and the Congress of Deputies as the third force.

The irruption of this formation has meant a strategic reordering of the hegemonic parties and a rethinking of their ideological theses and their discursive strategies at all levels of political debate. As far as sociolinguistic debates are concerned, the consensuses reached between political parties and social movements since the end of the Franco regime are also being affected. For decades the process of so-called linguistic normalization in different autonomous communities (AACC) received the approval of the social and political majority as the safeguard of the promotion of minoritized languages.

However, the social order is based on dialectical interpretations through which social actors deny the actions of their adversaries, producing structural and hierarchical changes. In this sense, the conflict perspectives proposed by classic authors such as Dahrendorf (1959) or more recent ones such as Carrier and Kalb (2015) remind us that one of the engines of social change is conflict, understood as the relationship of oppositions in which different agents take sides to alter the social hierarchy by virtue of the orientation of the change.

It is necessary to attend to the rupture of the aforementioned consensuses since numerous current discussions such as the hypothetical officialization of Asturian, Catalonia's linguistic immersion, or the requirement to know the official languages of a given territory to access the public function represent opinions difficult to reconcile, and which awake loyalties that polarize society. These tacit pacts began to break down in 2008 with the publication of the *Manifiesto por la lengua común*, a statement signed by numerous personalities from different sectors who condemned any measure that involved a direct attack against the common language, Spanish.

The relevance of this work is justified insofar as Vox has placed itself in a favored position in the political sphere and its discourse seriously threatens the sociolinguistic vitality of minoritized Spanish languages. Its speech polemicizes the consensus around the sociolinguistic reality in Spain. As a

result of the irruption of this party, the ideological positions that legitimized the promotion of regional languages (even if it meant displacing Spanish from various public spheres) are not as secure as they have been in recent decades. We consider it necessary to investigate the type of argument proposed by this party and the rhetoric with which it constructs ideologies loaded with nationalist and authoritarian overtones.

THE SPANISH RADICAL RIGHT: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL DELIMITATION

Labels such as "conservative," "liberal," and "Christian democratic" parties acquire a more or less clear differentiation in society; notwithstanding, others such as "extreme right," "far right," and "radical right" are used interchangeably in the media and political debates. We must consider that each political party is genuine in ideological and methodological terms for reasons of national particularities, the historical conjunction of a specific social movement, and the particular trajectory of its members. These phenomena distance us from a definition totally clear in its nature and, therefore, make it difficult to place each party on the ideological spectrum. Despite these epistemological limitations, we consider Vox to be on the radical right wing. This section justifies such an assessment.

After the transition to democracy in Spain, the Francoist right had to adapt to the new order that required accepting the rule of law, free elections, and social guarantees. It is not news to point out that the Popular Party (PP) —*Partido Popular*— has its sociological roots in a sector of Franco's conservatism. Since then and for three decades, this party has brought together most of the right-wing electorate and alternated holding power in the state government, the vast majority of AACC, and municipalities with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*). This bipartisanship has been broken in recent years, and the right-wing electoral bloc has fragmented with the emergence of two new parties: Citizens (*Ciudadanos*) and Vox.

According to the Global Party Survey, an expert survey conducted by political scientist Pippa Norris analyzing the ideological values and populist rhetoric of more than a thousand political parties around the world, the three main parties of the Spanish right differ from each other in terms of populist or pluralist tone and conservative or liberal character (Norris 2020). On one hand, Vox has a populist accent since, although it accepts democratic institutions as a whole, it is suspicious of aspects such as the plurality of parties when they represent a risk to the unity of the nation or advocate for the protection of minorities, especially Muslims. On the other hand, this party represents, together with

PP, conservative values such as a traditional family style, a specific religion, and antifeminism (Ferreira 2019).

It is striking that, in the first months since its founding in 2013, Vox leaders described PP as "the cowardly right"; at the same time, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, a prominent member of the PP, described Vox as "hyper-nationalism" (Junquera and Hermida 2020). From the beginning, Vox leaders drew a border with other right-wing parties and described themselves as the "national center-right." Self-representation in the center of the political board endows Vox with an aura of impartiality, and the condition of the national party places the nation as the main axis of its discourse. As a result, the nationalist element is configured as neutral, transcending dichotomous positions between the right and the left. That alleged neutrality was soon unmasked when in January 2017, Santiago Abascal, president of Vox, met in Koblenz, Germany with extreme-right European leaders such as Frauke Petry, Geert Wilders, and Marine Le Pen.

Since then, Vox has rejected the LGBT+ movement and "gender ideology," irregular immigration, institutional responsibility for unaccompanied foreign minors, and the laws that have decriminalized abortion and euthanasia. Likewise, recent research on Santiago Abascal draws a profile incorporating populism (Villena Martínez 2019), conservatism, xenophobia, liberalism (Ferreira 2019), and Spanish nationalism (Méndez Santos 2020). These values denote a certain kind of authoritarianism and nativism—or ethnic nationalism—two concepts accepted in the academic literature as defining, in a minimal way, the components of the radical right (Mudde 2007).

Authors such as Buštíková (2018), Mudde (2007), and Norris (2005) have indicated, however, two singularities of the extreme right that are not present in Vox: this party does not propose a dictatorial system or suppression of free elections. We also do not find in Vox a harangue advocating violence against ethnic and religious minorities, a modus operandi typical of extreme right parties (Ferreira 2019). The fundamental difference between the radical right, led by Vox in Spain, and the extreme right lies in the acceptance of democratic principles and opposition to the use of violence by the radical right.

As we said, nativism and authoritarianism constitute the essence of the party under study. Nativism refers to a xenophobic nationalism that appeals to the founding myths of the nation, whose members would be the only ones legitimized to enjoy benefits in the territory (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn 2016). Vox's nationalism settles on Spaniards as an ethnic group made up of specific cultural characteristics and a millenary historical trajectory sometimes interspersed with legendary elements. The need to culturally and

linguistically homogenize the country is advocated as a way to avoid the latent fragmentation that sovereignty movements represent, especially the Catalan and Basque movements.

To avoid dissent around this issue, authoritarianism is the operational form that Vox adopts under the premise of a "strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely" (Mudde 2007, 23). Cultural homogenization and respect for national symbols require control and severe punishments for those who offend these values, even if these opinions were endorsed by freedom of expression. This is precisely a point that distinguishes Vox as a representative of the radical right: it accepts the democratic framework as a whole while violating certain basic principles of the rule of law.

In conclusion, Vox's ideology revolves around two fundamental elements: first, nativism, understood as an exacerbated nationalism configured on an ethnic idea of the nation that implies xenophobia and rejection of any discordant element, and authoritarianism, as a methodology to strictly preserve national unity, although social rights are violated in this process. Therefore, we can categorize this party as radical right. We have to differentiate this category from the extreme right, whose worldview adds antiparliamentarianism and explicit violence against ethnic minorities. Additionally, Vox collects traditionalist demands typical of other conservative right-wing parties and is framed in the liberal economic line.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Languages are not only means of communication; they can arouse adherence and rejection. It is expected that a party with the aforementioned characteristics will discursively channel these emotions to build a concrete model of multilingualism in Spain. In the legislation on the presence or absence of certain languages in administrative, economic, or cultural spheres, every ideology is partial. Therefore, the objective of this research is to unravel the type of argument used by Vox regarding the sociolinguistic vitality of the languages of Spain and the tone with which it constructs a nationalist and authoritarian imaginary. The results that are exposed in the following section arise from the data that we have obtained in three ways:

1) Organic documents: the statutes condense relevant information on the objectives and principles of action; the electoral program prepared for the general elections of November 2019 with the "100 Measures for Living Spain"; and the "Agenda Spain," a package of measures presented in 2021 that complement the previous document.

2) Thirty-five articles from digital newspapers between January 2019 and January 2021 that reproduce fragments of institutional speeches, media, or meetings of Vox's members. We have selected news with the most literal content of speeches or interviews, paying special attention to the most heated moments focused on sociolinguistic issues due to controversial measures or debates.

3) Fifty-seven publications on Twitter from January 1, 2020 to January 1, 2022 by six relevant Vox members with intense activity on this social network: Santiago Abascal, founder, president, and deputy in Congress; Javier Ortega Smith, General Secretary and deputy in Congress; Iván Espinosa de los Monteros, Secretary for International Relations and deputy in Congress; Reyes Romero, deputy in Congress; Rocío Monasterio, deputy in the Madrid Assembly; and Jorge Buxadé, deputy in the European Parliament. To select the tweets of interest, the advanced search engine of the application has been used and keywords such as "Catalan," "official language," "Basque," "Galician," or "linguistic" have been included. According to the latest CIS barometer (2018), 67.9% of the people surveyed claimed to participate daily in social networks. Likewise, digital applications such as Twitter configure a crucial space for the electoral campaign and public exposition of ideas and arguments for politicians in Spain (Rúas Araújo and Casero-Ripollés 2018).

The analyzed textual corpus is divided into three sources that reflect three different contexts. First, the organic documents make up the party's ideological base (minimal principles that are subsequently detailed with the nuances resulting from the public interventions of party members). Second, these qualifications are broadcast publicly in institutions, media, or official and party events mediated by a communicative context to a certain formal register. Third, tweets are presumably carried out without pressure imposed by the communicative scenario, so that the manifestations through this social network verbalize more spontaneous thoughts, a very important factor in detecting possible surreptitious points contained in the more general principles indicated in the organic documentation. The conjunction of these channels offers an exhaustive profile of Vox's placement in the sociolinguistic debate on the languages of Spain and the approach that it proposes to apply in the event of an electoral situation in its favor.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

THE SPANISH CONSTITUTION AS A NEUTRAL IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

As we have indicated in the previous section, a feature that distinguishes Vox from the extreme right is its acceptance of the democratic system and, consequently, of the set of norms that constitute the rule of law. We could qualify the party's discourse as constitutionalist insofar as it cites the Spanish Constitution of 1978 (SC) as the key legislative framework that supports its argument. This is extracted from numerous analyzed tweets:

1) This Government tramples the Constitution and freedoms, destroys the security of Spaniards, ruins the middle classes, attacks our industry and our countryside, makes a pact with the enemies of the nation […].[1] (S. Abascal, October 31, 2021)

2) Vox has already gained important resources in the Constitutional Court, and there are 20 more; if the Court rules in our favor, it would be clear that Vox is the one that defends the Constitution against a government that tramples it and a PP with its arms crossed […]. (I. Espinosa de los Monteros, October 15, 2021)

The SC is the backbone of a series of basic principles unrelated to an ideological use, so any violation implies an attack on the "nation," "Spain," or "the Spaniards," which are the true political subjects in Vox's paradigm. If this respect for the SC seems to be a cornerstone of Vox's ideology, it is logical to infer its total commitment to all the responsibilities contained in its articles. With regard to the languages of Spain, we detect explicit manifestations that value the multilingual reality and respect diversity:

3) Guarantee the right to use and the duty to know Spanish throughout the national territory, without prejudice to the rest of the co-official languages of Spain. The defense of the provision of public services in Spanish throughout the State. (art. 3/8, Statutes)

4) […] the autonomous state has become an enemy of the rich diversity of Spain, attacking the provincial and regional plurality and trying to artificially homogenize territories. (point 1, Agenda Spain).

The cited article of the statutes is largely aligned with Article 3 of the SC, which draws many comments, while the second fragment recognizes diversity and plurality as elements it is necessary to safeguard, although it points to the autonomous territorial system as an imbalance of this wealth. We underline here a first element that acts as a distortion of a previous state unrelated to subjectivities or self-determinations: the AACC system symbolizes a centrifugal force that favors the dissolution of a shared common

1 All the examples presented throughout the text are originally written in Spanish and the English translation is ours.

essence represented by the Spanish nation, the pivotal political subject in Vox's discourse that is contradictorily configured as a centripetal force. This hypothesis, based on the territorial model and its implications regarding unity in diversity or diversity in unity, is specified below in its linguistic aspect:

5) All Spaniards have the right and duty to know the common language and the right to receive education in Spanish. The traitors of the Generalidad,[2] once again, disobey the Supreme Court. The only thing to do is suspend autonomy and dismantle the Generalidad gang. (S. Abascal on Twitter, November 23, 2021)

6) Respect for the variety and cultural, artistic, historical or landscape wealth of Spain, as a secular Nation, and the firm will of the Nation to promote customs, traditions, folklore or regional languages. (J. Buxadé on Twitter, April 29, 2020)

7) […] we do not make a political flag with languages. We base them on a principle of freedom. […] There is a common language, Spanish, a heritage of all Spaniards and that, as the Constitution says, there are the duty to know it and the right to use it […] We have no problem with Galician language, since it is a part of the Spanish culture. (J. Ortega Smith, apud. Punzón 2019)

Again, these references appeal to the constitutional order that includes the obligation to know Spanish and transfers competence in linguistic matters of the other Spanish languages to their respective AACC in accordance with their statutes (SC 1978, art. 3). As we said above in the form of a metaphor between centrifugal forces and a centripetal force, the previous fragments confirm this assertion: in (5) an "unpolitical" subject is opposed and prior to any form of subsequent articulation, the Spaniards, before the AACC, specifically that of Catalonia, whose executive institution is branded as "traitorous." The constitutionalist tone reflected in the organic documentation acquires at this point a bellicose semantic nuance between order and law carried out by the Supreme Court in confrontation with a segment of that essential whole. The three previous politicians also add the opposition between the common language, Spanish, and regional languages: the first as an exclusive reference of shared Spanish culture and the second reduced to traditional artifacts and juxtaposed to elements of customs or folklore.

This hierarchical ordering is presented as logical and neutral since Article 3 of the SC incites an interpretation in which three stages of languages follow one another with less protection as we move away from the first epigraph: 1)

2 Autonomous Government of Catalonia.

Spanish is the only official language of the State, 2) the other languages will be official in the terms dictated by the statutes of autonomy and 3) a diffuse "richness of the different linguistic modalities of Spain" is presented (SC 1978, art. 3.3). This interpretation arouses the greatest consensus in sociolinguistics in Spain and it is precisely the one that Vox embraces to legitimize an exclusive framework that guarantees Spanish a series of privileges while relegating the other Spanish languages to the corner of folklore, the particular, the local, and, ultimately, as the linguistic vertex of a centrifugal force. This paradigm of interpretation of Article 3 of the SC is that of the hierarchy of languages. Vox feels comfortable with this analysis because it highlights a common language which, since it is the only one shared in the entire Spanish territory, holds a favored position in the legal system which is logical, while the other Spanish languages are in a smaller territorial environment and, therefore, of less social scope and protection.

With the aim of reversing this argument maintained by Vox, we propose a paradigm that interprets Article 3 in an alternative way. We consider that, as a basic legal norm that articulates State regulation, the SC includes a minimum framework to which the rest of the legislative codes must adhere but does not go into details about what said codes must complete. First, Article 3.1 is based on an objective fact: the language with the largest number of speakers and with the greatest geographical extension in Spain is Spanish; therefore, it is expected that it will be official in the State. However, this epigraph does not exclude the possibility of a more beneficial state representation than the current one for the other languages of Spain.

Second, the principle of territoriality is not as broad for the other Spanish languages: they are spoken in specific AACCs. At this point, Article 3.2 of the SC opens the door for them, through their respective statutes, to legislate on linguistic matters and endow their languages with the degree of social insertion that the citizens of these territories consider freely. Following this paradigm, if there are unofficial languages —such as Asturian or Aragonese — or if others have not received the condition of compulsory knowledge — such as Basque in the Basque Country (Organic Law 3/1979, art. 6.1)— the responsibility falls on the side of the autonomy statutes and, by extension, on the populations of these territories.

Third, we understand that Article 3.3. of the SC, far from implying a disregard for nonofficial languages, serves as a synthesis to reinforce respect and protection for all Spanish languages and, once again, opens the door for nonofficial languages to still enjoy a minimum guarantee of protection and promotion. According to Vernet i Llobet (2007), this epigraph makes it

possible, in the absence of autonomous regulation of certain languages, for the State to intercede in their regulation. In short, the alternative paradigm proposed here aims to analyze Article 3 of the SC in a way favorable to multilingualism in Spain. Assuming this model, Vox's discourse would be headless, since this interpretation favors a debate in which, even from the SC, the protection of the plurality of languages in Spain is supported.

MULTILEVEL SPAIN VERSUS THE UNITY OF SPAIN

As we have advanced, the territorial model is a central point in Vox's ideology to legitimize nationalism and the measures emanating from this precept. The Agenda Spain begins with an allegation against the autonomous system, labeled as "*taifa* kingdoms" and multilevel Spain, and describes it as a territorial organization:

8) […] with first and second category citizens according to their birthplace, with an evident inequality in the exercise of rights or the enjoyment of opportunities. […] (point 1, Agenda Spain)

Autonomous institutions are perceived as entities that unbalance equal rights. On the linguistic level, since the AACC legislate on their languages, Vox proposes the "suppression of different institutions associated with language policy" (Carnicero 2021). This party proposes the liquidation of the autonomous language policy as a preventive measure against the deepening decentralization that this legislation implies. Certain resources in charge of language promotion, such as regional public television, are under attack by Vox:

9) Close organizations destined to create parallel structures to the State, the regional televisions […]. (point 35, Electoral program)

10) The Government and its partners continue with their coup project. The only way is the rule of law, the outlawing of separatist parties, the closure of TV3[3] and embassies […]. (S. Abascal on Twitter, June 22, 2021)

The autonomous public television represents an agent destabilizing the unity of Spain since one of its objectives is the visibility and promotion of languages other than Spanish. According to these postulates, delving into linguistic matters is a "true linguistic outrage" (S. Abascal, apud. Cadena SER 2020) and a concession to the independence movement (Casqueiro and Hermida 2021). This ideology coincides with the maxim of "one state, one nation, one language" (Ramallo 2009, 136). This thesis is contradicted, then, by the SC to which Vox alludes and which guarantees the protection of the country's linguistic wealth. However, this party insists on a plural project comprised

3 Autonomous television of Catalonia.

of national unity— "the future passes through a united Spain, proud of its variety and plurality" (point 2, Agenda Spain)—although its leaders express intolerance towards this plurality:

11) It is always a pleasure to support the president of #WeSpeakSpanish, Gloria Lago, in her fight for #FreedomChoiceLanguage in territories such as Galicia, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands. Asturias, the next at risk of falling into the hands of hispanophobes. (I. Espinosa de los Monteros on Twitter, June 14, 2021)

12) Asturias […] has an enormous opportunity with tourism if it is endowed with the necessary infrastructures. But it is subject to the threat of nationalism, which always begins with the use of language as a factor of division. (I. Espinosa de los Monteros on Twitter, August 28, 2020)

In recent times, the debate on the hypothetical officialization of Asturian in Asturias has shown that the Spanish radical right equates the linguistic project with the separatist project and, therefore, the revitalization of a language would generate new sovereign demands to configure a nationalist movement. This reasoning is fallacious since the officialization of a language does not derive from the strengthening of a nationalist movement, which does not inevitably generate a goal of political-administrative independence of a territory. Thus, instead of generating an additive framework of coexistence, Asturian, like other languages, would suppose an exclusive scenario contrary to national unity. In this paradigm, multilevel Spain has Spanish languages other than Spanish as a first step of division, then these languages are enemies for Vox's unity project. The respect for plurality expressed above is low-intensity respect since Vox only tolerates multilingualism as long as Spanish is the hegemonic language and the other ones are not promoted.

This is so much so that it does not seem that the ignorance of non-Spanish languages poses any kind of problem for this party:

13) Ignorance of the co-official languages cannot become an apartheid that divides first and second category Spaniards […]. (point 1, Agenda Spain)

14) […] Eliminate the requirement of knowledge of the co-official language when accessing the public function so as to avoid any type of discrimination. (point 4, Electoral program)

15) The Basque Government is urgently seeking doctors against the coronavirus but requires them to speak Basque […]. (R. Monasterio on Twitter, March 3, 2020)

In June 2021, Vox proposed to modify the Basic Statute of Public Employees with the objective that co-official languages other than Spanish are given

merit that is "valued and proportionally weighted according to the specific position" (Vox Parliamentary Group 2021), but never a requirement to access the autonomous public function. Currently, "Public Administrations […] must plan the selection of duly trained public employees to fill jobs in the AACC with two official languages" (Royal Legislative Decree 5/2015, art. 56.2). This dichotomy is based on the principle of equality to access public employment.

On one hand, the SC establishes that access to public service must be carried out under conditions of equality (SC 1978, art. 23.2). Thus, the requirement to know the non-Spanish official language in the AACC to apply for public employment violates this provision and can be understood as a discriminatory preference (Sánchez Morón 2020). In addition, and in contradiction to the previous quote of the Basic Statute of Public Employees, it is aligned with the SC by stating that "all citizens have the right to access public employment in accordance with the constitutional principles of equality, merit and ability [...]" (Royal Legislative Decree 5/2015, art. 55). On the other hand, the AACC with more than one official language must select civil servants who can satisfy the active right of citizens to interact with public administrations in the official language of their choice, as well as the passive right to receive the answer in that language (Agirreazkuenaga Zigorraga 2005).

The extensive jurisprudence in this regard has not clarified the acceptability of this linguistic requirement, but we must emphasize that the Constitutional Court (CC) has produced conclusions that combine both interests. Specifically, in response to an appeal of unconstitutionality regarding the right to use Basque in the public administration of the Basque Country, the CC accepted the knowledge of this language as a merit for the provision of public places since the guarantee of offering the service to citizenship in Basque corresponds to the administration as a whole and not to individual officials (Sentence 76/1983). This coordination in terms of linguistic rights has been classified as "objective bilingualism of the service," (Ramos Moragues 2010; Erkoreka Gervasio 1996, 24) and we consider that it progresses access to public employment under equal conditions and the guarantee of citizens to interact with the administration of their territory in the official language of their choice.

Based on this analysis, Vox does not show intention to reach a solution that resolves this confrontation without violating the principle of equality. In fact, this party claims this principle in a biased way to satisfy its ideology of the hegemony of Spanish. So far, we observe the ideological and political line that Vox raises in the debate on the languages of Spain within a conflictual

paradigm between national unity and multilevel Spain. The assessment of the plurality contained in its organic documents and even in public demonstrations by its members is called into question when the party proposes to laminate language policy, close regional television channels, and reduce minoritized Spanish languages to the realm of the merely folkloric and anecdotal.

THE ROLE OF SPANISH IN SPAIN AND THE WORLD

In the first point of the Agenda Spain, Vox affirms that "a Spain without distinctions or internal borders is the best guarantee of prosperity and well-being for all." Based on this ruling, the principles of equality and progress are based on a multidimensional homogenization: a unified territory, a shared culture, and a common language. Some tweets are consistent with these assumptions:

16) @VOX_Congreso presents an NLP in defence of toponymy in Spanish. #WeSpeakSpanish. (R. Romero, June 2, 2020)

17) Proud to speak #Spanish, committed to its defence. Fundamental to transmit our values, history and identity […]. (R. Monasterio, April 23, 2019)

Two important principles are extracted from these statements. On one hand, they establish a model of alterity opposed to a Spanish-speaking endogroup. These deputies build a militant "us" with Spanish since this language seems to be the only one capable of representing a series of national values. On the other hand, the other languages of Spain are displaced from the capacity to participate in a national subject that Vox insists is common throughout the territory. Thus, the exclusion of these speakers responds to a biased ideal of a nation that does not integrate the multilingual reality of Spain and that contradicts the party's statutory assumptions. On the other hand, the aforementioned statements share the concern to protect Spanish. This defense makes sense when there is a latent danger that threatens the sociolinguistic vitality of this language. This work is not quantitative, but we do not resist offering a revealing fact: 53% of the analyzed tweets contain allusions to the attacks that Spanish is undergoing by the "linguistic imposition" in the bilingual AACC. Let us see some statements about it:

18) The imposition of Catalan and the ostracism of Spanish is so flagrant that the Judicial Power has to intervene. (Manuel Acosta, deputy of Vox, apud. Tercero, 2021)

19) The use of Spanish cannot fail to be protected, it is a vehicle for the unity of Spain, not like the linguistic apartheid that, also in Galicia, is being tried to build. (J. Ortega Smith, apud. Punzón 2019)

20) To stop the attack on Spanish […] #OnlyVoxRemains. (I. Espinosa de los Monteros on Twitter, November 22, 2020)

21) […] Guinea succeeds in getting the African Union to adopt Spanish as a working language. Meanwhile, in Spain, Sánchez accelerates the defenestration of Spanish in Spain itself. (J. Buxadé on Twitter, November 11, 2020)

22) Posters in El Vendrell only in Catalan and Arabic. It must be reported: suppression and discrimination of the Spanish language […]. (J. Buxadé on Twitter, September 9, 2020)

These examples draw a warlike scenario in which one of the parties, that of the Spanish language, is the victim of attacks made by the other contender, the "linguistic imposition," meaning the other Spanish languages. In this discourse, the classic dichotomy between dominance and hegemony emerges. While dominance is based on coercive control, hegemony requires that social control is not perceived (Rull 2010). Through what we can call "invisible discursive practices" (Blackledge 2000), the hegemonic power achieves a social reaction without society itself being aware that its activity is being oriented in a certain way. Vox presents linguistic normalization as a set of coercive impositions that violate individual freedom of expression in Spanish. Meanwhile, the predominant presence of Spanish in economic, political, or cultural spheres falls within the realm of the hegemonic because it is based on a priori neutral factors such as the SC, the sovereignty of the Spaniards, or the so-called education in freedom:

23) […] In Vox we act defending #education in freedom, equal opportunities and the right to educate in Spanish throughout Spain. (R. Monasterio on Twitter, January 1, 2021)

24) Today we have been supporting Spaniards who want a free and quality education, who do not abandon Spanish because of the separatist toll, and who do not seek to indoctrinate their children. #StopCelaaLaw # EducationInFreedom. (J. Ortega Smith on Twitter, December 20, 2020]

These tweets are complemented by those that appeal to freedom of decision on the part of the students' families to be schooled in the language of their choice within the official languages in a given territory. The result of both premises leads to the thesis that freedom is manifested whenever there is individual freedom of decision. In the specific context of Catalonia, linguistic immersion in Catalan in public schools has reduced the presence of Spanish in the subject of Spanish Language and Literature. This model has the endorsement of the CC as long as the learning of Spanish is guaranteed. Despite the fact that

social life is carried out mainly in Spanish, with the exception of autonomous institutions, it is questionable to what extent the linguistic skills essential for the integration of the individual in a community can be acquired from educational and formal registers if an official language does not acquire the status of the language of instruction. It is precisely active bilingualism that guarantees freedom. If the population of an officially bilingual territory is competent in the linguistic skills of those languages, we can speak of freedom as long as the two linguistic options are mastered and it is possible to freely choose.

A second phrase used by Vox to delve into this thesis consists of the internationality of Spanish, a factor that opens the economic and commercial doors to a much more extensive market:

25) Demand due recognition of the Spanish language at an international level, in accordance with its importance as the second most widely spoken language in the world […]. (point 60, Electoral program)

26) Defense of our culture, languages, and common roots. To promote greater knowledge and cooperation among the group of Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries from all continents. (point 16, Agenda Spain)

Here, the symbolic power of Spanish overflows mainly in Hispanic America, thus inserting the international component. This new category further reduces the legitimate field of action for the other Spanish languages, which, because they are spoken in territories hierarchically subordinate to a State, are presented as "regional languages" (J. Buxadé on Twitter, July 14, 2020 and June 11, 2020). The Spanish language emerges "as a symbol of concord, democracy, economic progress, as an instrument at the service of a post-nation, of a panhispanic international community that leaves Catalan, Galician, and Basque reduced to reactionary atavism and particularism" (Del Valle 2007, 53). Spanish would mobilize a series of economic resources whose amplitude would be proportional to the degree of protection and expansion.

The globalized economy maintains a link with the linguistic reality of which Vox is aware. In the report on The International Forum of Globalization, Cavanagh and Mander (2002, 19) listed eight characteristics of liberalism, among which is "global cultural (and, we would add, linguistic) and economic homogenization." In the commercial activities of modern companies and states, language is an integral part of economic exchanges (Marazzi 2002). When Vox proposes a greater approach to the Spanish-speaking world based on a shared language, it is conceived as an intercessory tool in the exchange

of capital. Consequently, the hegemonic dimension that revalues languages passes through the filter of the ability to transfer capital.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has approached Vox's discourse on the coexistence among the languages of Spain. This party bases a good part of its discourse on current legislation, with special emphasis on the SC, which is a central leitmotif to cement the proposed theses. However, we have verified that the organic documents and the spontaneous declarations of its members are susceptible to contravening the constitutional regulations due to two elements that make Vox a radical right-wing party: nativism and authoritarianism. These factors structure an exclusive nationalist ideology.

The autonomous territorial system and its linguistic aspect in the form of social bilingualism and linguistic normalization are perceived as disruptive centrifugal forces. In contrast, the Spanish nation as a political subject with authentic legitimacy and the State institutions as an administrative body are the face and the cross of nativist and authoritarian principles, respectively. Spaniards are configured as social actors based on a common culture and language; meanwhile, the State is the guarantor of the indissoluble unity of the nation, so its hegemonic function consists of coercively penalizing any attempt to revitalize minoritized languages using legitimized frameworks that hide the repressive nature of these actions.

What place do Spanish languages other than Spanish occupy in Vox's discourse? This party often refers to the respect and protection of the linguistic wealth of Spain, so plurality is seen as positive and does not contradict the principle of national unity. However, an in-depth analysis reveals that this tolerance is only contemplated as long as these languages do not intercede in the spaces hegemonized by Spanish or in its sociolinguistic vitality. The stronghold of the minoritized languages is their optional character in education, the legalization of active ignorance of them, and their non-interference in public spheres. Therefore, they are conceived as folkloric elements without any real capacity to serve as communication tools in prestigious contexts.

This ideology is reinforced by bringing up the link between language and economics. The internationality of Spanish is an opportunity for use and benefit that exceeds the limits of Spain. Thus, a double opposition is built: in Spain, Spanish is the common language in the face of regional linguistic particularisms that hinder communication and the reinforcement of a homogenizing idea of the nation; transcending the borders of Spain, Spanish is the shared language of several countries and, therefore, serves as a door to the

international scene, since the other Spanish languages lack prominence. The liberal agenda of Vox commercializes the language, so it needs to control the educational system to reconceptualize people as competitors and consumers. The intense concern in Vox's discourse regarding education in Spanish is consistent with this dynamic.

In short, we can draw three general conclusions. In the first place, the organic and media treatment of the party reinforces the nativist and authoritarian thesis that corroborates its position on the radical right wing. The language ideologies analyzed here are consistent with these approaches. Secondly, the controversy raised by certain language policy measures in the bilingual AACC fuels an often bitter ideological conflict that serves as the basis for Vox to emphasize the imposing nature of language normalization processes versus the halo of neutrality and common sense that enshrine Spanish as a common language. Thirdly, this party aligns itself de jure with the constitutional order when it expresses respect for linguistic diversity and plurality, but at a deeper level, a de facto ideology emerges to strongly reject measures for the protection and promotion of minoritized languages.

REFERENCES

Agirreazkuenaga Zigorraga, Iñaki. 2005. "La doble oficialidad lingüística en el municipio de Vasconia." [The double linguistic officiality in the municipality of Vasconia] *Iura Vasconiae* 2: 253–79.

Akkerman, Tjitske, Sarah L. de Lange, and Matthijs Rooduijn. 2016. *Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Into the Mainstream?* London: Routledge.

Blackledge, Adrian. 2000. "Monolingual Ideologies in Multilingual States: Language, Hegemony and Social Justice in Western Liberal Democracies." *Sociolinguistic Studies* 1 (2): 25–45.

Buštíková, Lenka. 2018. "The Radical Right in Eastern Europe." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by Jens Rydgren, 565–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cadena SER. 2020. "'No vamos a tolerar el odio hacia España', dice Vox sobre el decreto del euskera." ["We are not going to tolerate hatred towards Spain", says Vox about the Basque decree]. *Cadena SER*. Accessed June 23. https://cadenaser.com/emisora/2020/01/23/radio_bilbao/1579767661_380702.html.

Carnicero, Laura. 2021. "La oposición y el PAR se unen contra la academia del catalán." [The opposition and the PAR unite against the Catalan academy]. *El Periódico de Aragón*. Accessed June 10. https://www.elperiodicodearagon.com/aragon/2021/09/10/oposicion-par-unen-academia-catalan-57134895.html.

Carrier, James G., and Don Kalb, eds. 2015. *Anthropologies of Class: Power, Practice and Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Casqueiro, Javier, and Xosé Hermida. 2021. "El PSOE descarta permitir las lenguas cooficiales en el Congreso tras aprobar su uso en el Senado." [The PSOE rules out allowing

co-official languages in Congress after approving their use in the Senate]. *El País*. Accessed June 23. https://elpais.com/espana/2021-09-23/el-psoe-descarta-permitir-las-lenguas-cooficiales-en-el-congreso-tras-aprobar-su-uso-en-el-senado.html.

Cavanagh, John, and Jerry Mander, eds. 2002. *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

CIS. 2018. "Barómetro de mayo 2018." [May 2018 Barometer] *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*. Accessed June 20. http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=14399.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1959. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Del Valle, José. 2007. "La lengua, patria común: la hispanofonía y el nacionalismo panhispánico." [The language, common homeland: Hispanophony and panhispanic nationalism]. In *La lengua, ¿patria común? Ideas e ideologías del español* [The Language, common homeland? Ideas and Ideologies of Spanish], edited by José Del Valle, 31–56. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert.

Erkoreka Gervasio, Josu Iñaki. 1996. "Exigencia de preceptividad en los perfiles lingüísticos como requisito de capacidad en el ejercicio de funciones públicas." [Demand of preceptiveness in linguistic profiles as a requirement of ability in the exercise of public functions]. *Revista Vasca de Administración Pública* 44 (2): 617–664.

Ferreira, Carles. 2019. "Vox como representante de la derecha radical en España: un estudio sobre su ideología." [Vox as a representative of the radical right in Spain: a study on its ideology]. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* 51, 73–98.

Junquera, Natalia, and Xosé Hermida. 2020. "Feijoo: 'Es mayor mi compromiso con Galicia que con el partido.'" [Feijoo: "My commitment to Galicia is greater than to the party"]. *El País*. Accessed June 28. https://elpais.com/politica/2020/02/26/actualidad/1582734060_687396.html.

Marazzi, Christian. 2002. *Capitale & linguaggio: Dalla New Economy all'economia di guerra* [Capital & Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy]. Rome: Derive Approdi.

Méndez Santos, María del Carmen. 2020. "La construcción de la identidad lingüística de Santiago Abascal en Twitter." [The construction of the linguistic identity of Santiago Abascal on Twitter]. *Revista Estudios del Discurso Digital* 3: 50–77.

Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, Pippa 2005. *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, Pippa. 2020. "Global Party Survey by Expert 29 Dec 2019.tab." *Global Party Survey, 2019*. Accessed May 15. https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/WMGTNS/O75THA&version=3.0.

Organic Law 3/1979 of the Statute of Autonomy for the Basque Country. 1979. BOE 306. December 22, 1979.

Punzón, Carlos. 2019. "El secretario general de Vox: 'En Galicia se pretende levantar apartheids lingüísticos, por eso hay que proteger el español.'" [The general secretary of Vox:

"In Galicia, the intention is to raise linguistic apartheids, that is why Spanish must be protected"]. *La Voz de Galicia*. Accessed May 15. https://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/galicia/2019/01/17/galicia-pretende-levantar-apartheids-linguisticos-proteger-espanol/00031547744811799286268.htm.

Ramallo, Fernando. 2009. "Política lingüística do Estado: problemas e oportunidades." [State language policy: problems and opportunities] In *Sociedades plurilingües: da identidade á diversidade* [Multilingual Societies: From Identity to Diversity], edited by Henrique Monteagudo, 129–143. Santiago de Compostela: Consello da Cultura Galega.

Ramos Moragues, Francisco. 2010. "El conocimiento de las lenguas Autonómicas como 'requisito' para acceder al empleo público." [Knowledge of the autonomous languages as a "requirement" to Access public employment] *El Derecho*. Accessed June 30. https://elderecho.com/el-conocimiento-de-las-lenguas-autonomicas-como-requisito-para-acceder-al-empleo-publico-2.

Royal Legislative Decree 5/2015 by which the revised text of the Law of the Basic Statute of the Public Employee is approved. 2015. BOE 261. October 31, 2015.

Rúas Araújo, Xosé, and Andreu Casero-Ripollés. 2018. "Comunicación política en la época de las redes sociales: y lo viejo y lo nuevo, y más allá." [Political communication in the age of social networks: and the old and the new, and beyond]. *AdComunica. Revista Científica de Estrategias, Tendencias e Innovación en Comunicación* 16: 21–24.

Rull, Xavier. 2010. "Política i manipulació del llenguatge." [Politics and language manipulation]. *Revista de Recerca i d'Análisi* 27: 105–23.

Sánchez Morón, Miguel. 2020. *Derecho de la función pública*. [Public Function Law]. Madrid: Tecnos.

Sentence 76/1983. 1983. BOE 197. August 18, 1983.

Spanish Constitution. 1978. BOE 311. December 29, 1978.

Tercero, Daniel. 2021. "El Parlamento de Cataluña rechaza cumplir las sentencias del 25% de español en las escuelas con el voto del PSC." [The Parliament of Catalonia refuses to comply with the sentences of 25% of Spanish in schools with the vote of the PSC]. *ABC*. Accessed June 27. https://www.abc.es/espana/catalunya/politica/abci-parlamento-cataluna-rechaza-cumplir-sentencias-25-por-ciento-espanol-voto-202111291229_noticia.html.

Turnbull-Dugarte, Stuart J. 2019. "Explaining the End of Spanish Exceptionalism and Electoral Support for Vox." *Research & Politics* 6 (2): 1–8.

Vernet i Llobet, Jaume. 2007. "El pluralismo lingüístico." [Linguistic pluralism]. In *Lenguas y constitución* [Languages and Constitution], edited by Jaume Vernet i Llobet, and Ramon Punset Blanco, 17–60. Madrid: Iustel.

Villena Martínez, Antonio José. 2019. *El Nuevo nacionalpopulismo español: Análisis de Vox y su discurso político* [The New Spanish National Populism: Analysis of Vox and its Political Discourse]. Master's Thesis. Castellón: Universidad Jaume I.

Vox Parliamentary Group. 2021. "Proposición No de Ley en Comisión a la mesa del Congreso de los Diputados." [Proposal in Comission to the table of the Congress of Deputies]. *Voxespaña.es*. Accessed May 3. https://www.voxespana.es/grupo_parlamentario/actividad-parlamentaria/proposiciones-no-de-ley/vox-solicita-que-que-las-lenguas-cooficiales-no-sean-un-requisito-para-acceder-a-la-administracion-20210705.