

# The Catalan Bid for Independence

*A discussion of the social, cultural and linguistic arguments for and against Catalonia's separation from Spain.*

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## ***Abstract***

In recent years, there has been a heightened hostility between the region of Catalonia and its host state, Spain. The story of Catalonia's struggle for independence has caught the attention of the western world and the intensity of the situation has made it a story that many are following. Independence has been desired for many reasons; reasons regarding economic grievances, political differences and the question of linguistic identity for the people in the region. This essay deals with the subject of cultural and linguistic identity in the Catalan region. I aim to research the arguments regarding Catalonia and the quest for independence to find out which assumptions about culture, language and identity they are based on.

Despite officially being a region of Spain, today Catalonia holds the official language of Catalan. This is especially important as during the dictatorship of Franco Francisco, their language was completely prohibited, with severe consequences if this was ignored. When Franco Francisco died in 1975, Spain transitioned to democracy and Catalonia gained control over its own media, people and most importantly their own education system. Catalan is the official language of more than 4 million people, the majority of these people also speak Spanish however, as a second language. The rise of the language was in response to and in retaliation against Francisco Franco's repression, adding to the cultural and historical depth of Catalonia. By understanding how language intertwines with society and culture I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the political and social conflict between Catalonia and the rest of Spain.

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# 1. Introduction

Catalonia is an autonomous region of Spain, situated in the north-east part of the country. The capital of Catalonia is Barcelona and the entire region is made of four provinces altogether; Barcelona, Lleida, Tarragona and Girona. Catalonia is a region with its own cultural identity and own language making the area extremely independent-minded, despite being a part of Spain since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when Queen Isabella of Castille and King Ferdinand of Aragon married; bringing their realms together. The question of Catalonia becoming independent or not has led to a heated discussion causing a rise in hostility between Catalonia and Spain.

Following the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's death in 1975, the emergence of a democratic Spain fuelled the Catalan people in their fight for independence. Franco had managed to crush regional diversity during his time in power, aiming to create a single national identity. This was a problem for Catalonia, as it meant destroying their language, their traditions and their culture. Naturally, with the strengthening of Spain's democracy, Catalonia's cultural pride also strengthened. Political, economic, social and cultural conditions have changed so significantly over the last thirty years, that traditional notions of autonomy, language and identity no longer afford solutions to present day language problems (Hoffman 2000:1). Catalonia has its own parliament and executive; these two together are known as the "Generalitat" in Catalan. Catalonia is a territory with a strong national personality, and many of its inhabitants fight for independence for many reasons; one of the main ones being that the Catalan people feel as though the Spanish government does not respect or nurture the traditions and cultural identity of the region. In 2017 a referendum was held, only to be declared by the Spanish government as void. Following this, the state shut down the polling stations and made it almost impossible for the Catalan people to vote. The Spanish government then made plans to take over the Catalonian government unilaterally and remove their politicians from any positions of power.

The resistance to the Spanish government grew in Catalonia during the European economic crisis of 2010, but although the numbers changed drastically, the majority of Catalan people would not vote for independence. This is largely to do with their economic dependence on Europe, not necessarily Spain. During the rise of political discussions regarding independence, many large companies relocated from Catalonia to different areas of Spain in order to secure their economic safety. Catalonia has always been a rich and prosperous region, meaning that losing large companies and organizations will damage their

economy if they were to gain independence. Catalonia would have to apply separately to become a part of the European Union, which would take years, making this the main argument for those voting to remain. From an anthropological perspective, this series of events urges a string of questions regarding the history of Spain vs. Catalonia and cultural identity. The highlight of my research will be based around the question; What are the main socio-political arguments for and against independence from Spain?

In Catalonia, language and identity are one in the same. Language has played a vital role in forming the Catalan identity and from a socio-cultural perspective on human action, language and identity are conceptualized somewhat differently; identity is not seen as intrinsic and personalized to the individual. Instead, it is viewed as a socially constituted, dynamic product of the historical, social and political aspects of an individual's experiences. I will be exploring this theory of linguistic identity and try to understand identities connection to culture and language use throughout this essay.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Purpose and Research Question**

Throughout this essay I will be investigating the arguments for and against Catalonia gaining independence and the assumptions made regarding language, culture and identity that they are built on. The paper will consider both perspectives, however only with subjects already involved in the debate with already established opinions. I will be focusing on the affect that language has on identity, both individual identity and group identity although with a main focus on the latter. I will explore the relationship between power and language, sociolinguistics and speech communities, as well as politics and language in order to understand the subject. I seek to not make any generalizations through stereotyping or placing people into fixed categories. Rather, I wish to understand patterns in my gathered data which link language and social factors together, without belittling or ignoring diversity within groups and the particular traits and experiences which form individual identities.

### **2.2 Method and Theoretical Framework**

I will do this by studying the current conflict between Catalonia and Spain using sources such as news channels, newspapers, online documentaries regarding the citizens of the Catalan

region. The news channels I refer to are the BBC and Channel 4, during their coverage of the recent protests and referendum, as well as gathering information from *The Guardian's* short documentary series 'I am Catalan' from 2017; a series in which a number of Catalan citizens are interviewed and tell their own personal stories, feelings and thoughts towards independence from Spain, both for and against. After gathering this data, I will then use anthropological literature to apply various linguistic and cultural theories to explore the different arguments for and against independence for Catalonia.

First I will discuss the history of Catalonia and the relationship between Spain and Catalonia. The aim of this chapter is to understand how the rising hostility between Catalonia and Spain started, and which historical factors are behind it. I seek to understand the continuous rise and fall of the language and how this has formed the Catalan culture and society. The fourth chapter of this essay is the main discussion. During this chapter I explore the politics and power of language. I discuss the social and cultural arguments for and against separation from Spain and use theories regarding identity, politics, nationalism and language to understand them. In this Chapter I will be mainly using Hylland Eriksen's book '*Small place, Large Issues*' to explain the theories of nationalism and Power of the state, referring to education, media and so on, and '*An introduction to sociolinguistics*' by Wardhaugh & Fuller, in order to understand the role that linguistics play in the previously mentioned subjects. In the final chapter I will summarize the discussions and theories that have been explored through the essay and attempt to form an analysis and conclusion from my research that provides answers to the questions asked, and fulfils the purpose of the essay.

### **3. The Catalan independence debate**

In this Chapter I will provide a brief background to Catalonia and discuss the historical factors in regard to Catalonia's relationship with Spain in order to gain a deeper understanding of the conflict today.

#### **3.1 Developments through the twentieth century**

In 1923, General Primo de Rivera led a coup, placing the Spanish government in the hands of a Military Directorate. Some of the first measures enforced by the Military Directorate were the prohibition of the use of Catalan and Catalanist symbols in public places, as well as shutting down the majority of nationalist organizations. Primo de Rivera remained in power

for five years until the King and other powerful members of the Spanish society decided to withdraw their support. Despite the anti-Catalanist ideology of Primo de Rivera during his regime, the Catalan culture seemed to blossom during this time, leading to Catalan nationalism. This happened due to the fact that the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera did not ban what could be passed as merely cultural activity. This cultural activity continued and even grew during this time, one could say it was a passive resistance that accumulated significant long-term gains (Carreras 2009:19). In 1931 there was a strong boost to the rising progress for Catalanist aspirations. The left-wing nationalist leader, Francesc Macià proclaimed an independent Catalan republic as “a member state of an Iberian federation”. However, Madrid did not wish to show their support during the negotiations. Macia then had to renounce the initial position, in exchange for a regional government within a unitary Spanish republican constitution (Carreras 2009:20). It was then that the name of the ‘Generalitat’ was given and the referendum on the Catalan state of Autonomy endorsed it by the high turnout of voters.

An intense period during 1931 for the Catalan culture was made possible by the extended self-government; meaning official status for the Catalan language in public administration and education. This was not a long enough period of time to make the educational system fully Catalanised, however there was a noticeable change. All signs pointed to the Catalan people creating a movement for Catalan to become a fully normalized language (Carreras 2009:20). Following all these positive developments for Catalonia, the defence of the Catalan language and Catalan politics were almost thrust into extinction due to the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. Following the victory of the General Franco in the Civil war, public use of the language was completely prohibited. Catalan was replaced by Spanish in all the places it had managed to occupy over the past years (media, publications, education etc.) and many Catalan politicians, public figures and intellectuals had been murdered or exiled from the country (Carreras 2009:21). During the 40’s, the Catalan language slowly started to reorganize itself after the Allies victory in 1945. Although the language had suffered serious setbacks during the beginning of the Franco era, the repression of Catalan was slowly starting to relax and the public openness with the speaking of the language was visible. For example, a Catalan stage production was put on in 1948, and publication of Catalan books resumed (Carreras 2009:21). During the late 50’s and 60, Catalonia became famous for as a symbolic force against the political order in Spain. During this time, speaking, reading or interacting in Catalan was seen as a form of protest against the Fascist regime. As the Franco regime started to weaken its



grip on the changing country, the resilience of the Catalan language was highlighted in the form of literary creations, mainly poetry, but also in the form of a popular song movement now known as La Nova Canço (Carreras 2009:22), which was the first mass culture manifestation to be vocalized through Catalan. During the 60's Spain's state censorship started to relax, permitting publication of foreign literature into Catalan, along with new press laws which allowed further use of the language (Carreras 2009:23).

### 3.2 Catalonia after the democratic transition

Post-Franco reign, Catalonia had regional autonomy. The region has since been a land of consensus, where the different political groups have put their country first, and their partisan options second (Llobera 2004:3). After Franco died in 1975, Spain faced a difficult transition over to democracy. The language was enjoying a certain form of 'respect' under the terms of the Spanish constitution of 1978, and the protection of the autonomy states of Catalonia (Valencia & Balearic Islands). Normalization of the social and public use of the Catalan language has been and continues to be a problem in each Catalan area, even as the political conditions for this are assured 'on paper' (Carreras 2009:23). It has only been since the 1980's that the Institute of Catalan Studies and associated institutions have regained the power and authority to expand upon and modernise standard Catalan; meaning that recommendations for new terminology in all different areas of the language are allowed and received. From this point, onwards the Catalans have been facing opposing political forces, making the development of their language and culture a slightly uphill battle. There are some people who believe that since the democratic transition, Catalonia has morphed into a region with a lack of democracy once again, trying to control the language spoken but instead this time, trying to ban Spanish (Gibson 2012), although there is no proof that there are any monolingual Catalan speakers at all. In post-Franco Spain, this language debate has greatly intensified. It has become difficult to disentangle the linguistic and cultural from the parochial and political (Hoffman 2001:50). Since 2005 the support for independence in the autonomous community of Catalonia has risen quickly. The opinion polls have confirmed that 80% of Catalans support the referendum on independence (Crameri 2014:1).

## **4. The politics of Language**

This chapter will address the concept of language and power. I will discuss how language and culture can be used as a tool for power by the state, as well as how language forms structures and identities in cultures, communities and individuals. I will do this by exploring different anthropological and sociological theories regarding social identity, speech communities, nationalism, language and political power.

### **4.1 The Catalan Language**

Catalan is a member of the Romance languages, it's the national language spoken in Andorra and the co-official language in the autonomous Spanish regions of the Balearic Islands, Valencia and Catalonia, as well as in the city of Alghero in the Italian island of Sardinia. This means the total extent of the regions in which Catalan is spoken covers roughly 69,250 square kilometres (Carreras 2009:3). From these statistics, it has been calculated that around eleven million people live in Catalan speaking regions, seven million people speak the language as their mother tongue and that Catalan is understood by almost ten million (Carreras 2009:3). This makes it by far the most spoken language of all Europe's "minority languages". The language is officially divided into two main dialect blocks; Eastern Catalan and Western Catalan. While discussing the geographical aspects of Catalan it is important to mention the concept of the Catalan Lands (Paisos Catalans), which is the group of territories whose culture and language are Catalan and situated along the western sea board of the Mediterranean. This concept, which is defined by a cultural and linguistic unity, can be defined as a "stateless nation". (Carreras 2009:3). This term still lives as a political ideal and a way of referring to a sense of community identity, across administrative boundaries, based on a historical and socio-linguistic reality (Carreras 2009:3). The term 'stateless nation' usually refers to an ethnic minority that does not have its own state, however it has its own language, culture and traditions.

### **4.2 Language and Social Identity**

During the 1990's, language took centre stage within Catalan society as a consequence of their politics and increasing Europeanisation, whilst in Spain, the language debate brings up questions of identity and power on the regional, national and international level (Hoffman 2001:50). When discussing how speakers use language, it is important to talk about both individuals and groups, as well as the relationships between people within and across different groups. One way of looking at this is focusing on speaker identities, as the term identity has been used in a handful of ways in the social sciences. My focus here is on how language constructs speaker identity. In the current social theory, identities are not particular attributes of people or groups, but they are dynamically constructed aspects which emerge through discourse and social behaviour (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:7). While using this theory to examine the Catalan question of independence I am primarily concerned with social identity, although the identities of individuals are still of importance. 'Identity is defined as the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories' (Kroskrity 2000:111). With this perspective, identities are not simple categorized affiliations such as 'child' or 'adult', nor 'female' or 'male'. Rather, identities are particular ways of being that we construct. For example, one may identify one's self by using a certain list of identifiers; white, male, 30, teacher, athletic etc. However, in another social situation this person may introduce or refer to themselves as, for example, a father. Thus, he is specifically focusing on this aspect of his identity and therefore bringing forward a more particular image of who he is as a father- for example; protective, strict, perhaps encouraging within academics etc. Named social categories are not our identities but concepts we use to construct our identities (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:9).

Here I believe is an agreeable place in which to bring up *The Whorfian hypothesis*; the claim that is also often referred to as 'Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis' and is the argument that language is what directly influences the way that individuals think about and see the world. The theory suggests that the social categories that we create along with how we perceive events and actions are constrained by the language we speak. Therefore, speakers of a different language will experience situations and the world in general differently, as the languages they speak differ structurally (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:11). An argument that many of the Catalans who are for the separation from Spain use can be discussed using the Whorfian hypothesis. As the region of Catalonia's official language is Catalan, everything in in Catalan before any other language. This means the television programmes, the news,

newspapers, road signs and most importantly the education system is in Catalan. The Catalans experience the world from their own cultural goggles. A protester told a reporter from the BBC during the 2017 protests in Barcelona – “I think, read, speak and dream in Catalan. If they take this away from me they take away who I am”. Anna Boll, a citizen of Catalonia told The Guardian newspaper in 2017 “Catalonia is a place with a deep tradition of co-operation and shared battles. It’s an identity forged from resistance to the adversity we have been subjected to in the past”.

Catalonia is often deemed a minority. When discussing self-identification and identification by others, the Catalan people have regarded themselves different in tradition, custom and language from the rest of Spain’s inhabitants, leading to resentment of being denied the autonomous status and recognition they have for so long sought after (Hoffman 2001:51). During the beginning of the twentieth century, Catalonia did experience two shorter periods of autonomy. During the period of oppression and prohibition for the Catalan language it became stigmatised as a mere dialect, and its speakers humiliated (Hoffman 2001:53). In a speech as President of Catalonia’s Autonomous Government on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 190, Jordi Pujol stated that “If there is one objective that a Catalan government has to prioritize it is the defence, strengthening and projection of those things that mean that down the centuries, Catalonia has been Catalonia: it’s language, it’s culture, the experience of its history, sentiment and the collective consciousness, the defence of its political right, the will to be...” (Cramer 2004:2).

The general idea of what constitutes of being Catalan is – being Catalan means speaking Catalan. However, these days it is not quite as simple as all that for the Catalans. If one were to apply this theory today, then roughly only a third of the inhabitants in Catalonia would qualify, due to the fact that around half the population in Catalonia are immigrants from other parts of Spain. The Catalan people do not benefit from this particular theory as most of the immigrants in Catalonia consider it their home, and the autonomous government needs their support (Hoffman 2001:63). This could encourage Spanish speakers to put forward their language as ‘the first language’ of Catalonia if they feel as though they are not welcomed as Catalans. Today, anyone who lives and works in Catalonia is regarded as Catalan, however this makes it harder for the Catalans to argue for the development and sustaining of their language (Gibson 2012). In 2017 the guardian newspaper produced a series of videos on Youtube called ‘I am Catalan’. The idea behind these videos was to give the Catalan people a

platform on which to speak for themselves as individuals and why Catalan independence was important to them personally, rather than being categorized in a group by a biased media outlet. One of the subjects stated in his video that his will for independence had started with the want to protect and preserve his cultural heritage and traditions, although now the situation had turned his focus more to the idea independence for Catalonia means breaking out of a system that they do no longer want to be a part of. He told *The Guardian* that the feeling of loneliness and rejection that so many Catalans feel from their host state, Spain, only “enforces their desire to get out of there and break up the relationship” (The Gaurdian 2017).

With regards to identity, it is important during this discussion to understand that the Catalan people do not all have the same identity just as all English people do not have the same identity. The subject explains that many of the Catalan people have different opinions on what independence means for them, his personal opinion being that – “if the easiest way to separate from the Franco legacy is independence-can one really say no?”. (The Guardian 2017). The one common theme however amongst all Catalans wishing for independence is their language, and how they are identified as a people, and as individuals through this language. This begs the question; can an individual be Catalan and Spanish at the same time? Writer Fernando Sanchez Drago says that “The Spaniard is the only human being who’s always unsure about his identity. An Englishman or a German will have no problem being English or German, but a Spaniard is always at odds with himself”, he goes onto explain that this is the unfortunate reason for Spain having a high record of civil wars throughout history (Gibson 2012). “We are between a rock and a hard place” says one subjects of the series ‘I am Catalan’, “it is not a question of pride, or identity. It’s just a very practical question; What is best for our kids? Who will help us form the better society?” (The Guardian 2017).

It is often presumed that there is a high correlation between having been born in Catalonia and having Catalan parents, on one hand, and supporting radical nationalist options on the other (Cramer 2014:40). To some degree, this is true, in 2011 Ivan Serrano carried out a study which showed that those who identify as solely Catalan, or at least much more Catalan than Spanish are definitely more likely to think that Catalonia should be an independent country (Cramer 2014:40). Many argue that nationalism not just in Catalonia but in other parts of the world, is a result of modernization and industrialization. Gellner writes that nationalism is a response to industrialization and peoples disengagement from primordial ties to kin, religion and local communities (Gellner 1983) and that this is a functional sort of

replacement for older ideologies and social organization. The Catalans pro-independence feel as though they have a connection with those they do not even know personally, however share the same language and the same cultural ties, therefore bringing them together (BBC News). As a nationalist, one is loyal to a legislative system and a state which represents one's "peoples", not individuals that one knows personally (Gellner 1983).

### 4.3 Speech communities and Language inequality

One can define a speech community by saying that the speakers in such a community share some kind of common feeling about linguistic behaviour in that community, meaning that they observe particular linguistic norms (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:65). A common argument used in other parts of Spain and by the Spanish government about Catalan is that if they were to accept Catalan being a dominant native language in the region, then it would be unfair to the other regions of Spain, for example the Basque region. However, as writer Michael Tree states in an interview during the troubles of 2012, 'the Catalans are the only group that actually have a live, active linguistically differentiated culture'. Former president of Catalonia Jordi Pujol, states that - "The Catalans believe and respect the framework of Spain, however we are not like the others because we have our own language and our own political interests".

Here I bring up the topic of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is the study of language use within or among groups of speakers (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:63). The study of speech communities is of great value to the understanding of the human language and interpretation. The communities are groups that share values and attitudes about the practice of their language. We are born with the ability to learn languages, although we do so within cultures and societies which frame the process of learning how to talk to others (H. Morgan 2014:1). I do not study the concept of speech communities by simply stating that all groups must speak the same language, instead I study it as a concept that language represents, constructs and constitutes a purposeful participation in society and culture. If one approaches the topic by applying the theory that speech communities are recognized as distinctive in relation to other speech communities (H. Morgan 2014:3), then one can try to understand the argument for the Catalan people not defining themselves as Spanish due to their different mother tongue languages. A large number of the critical arguments regarding speech communities hold two contrasting perspectives of how to define language and discourse; one being the analysis and

description of linguistic semantic and conversational feature that are gathered from a group and are in turn deemed to be stable indicators of that speech community (H. Morgan 2014:5). The other focuses on how language can be used to represent ideology and construct relationships, otherwise known as the Foucauldian discourse analysis; a form of discourse analysis focusing on power relationships in society mainly expressed through languages and practices. My focus is on the latter.

The Catalan education system is taught in Catalan, with Spanish integrated into the curriculum. However, many Spaniards have issues with the fact that the Catalans are trying to demolish the Spanish language and this is seen as disrespectful (Gibson 2012), it is argued that the Catalans are segregating themselves and making it impossible as a speech community for people to then move out into other areas of Spain later on in life, as Spanish will be their second language and therefore making them a less appealing candidate for many jobs. In doing this the Catalan people are exerting a social power of the people in order to keep them in the region and help it prosper, according to journalist Encarnacion Vlenzuela (Gibson 2012). I will discuss the concept of language and power later on in the essay.

A main aspect of speech communities is that they are defined partly through their relationships with other communities (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:67), in this case the other community being the host state Spain. Since the Franco dictatorship the Catalan people have found a solidarity amongst themselves after the prohibition of their language was lifted, they hold a lot of pride in their language and take Spain's disregard for Catalan very personally. The view that Spain has on Catalan and the lack of interest in keeping the language alive, reminds the Catalan people of a time when their people were tortured, murdered and exiled for speaking it. Speech communities tend to hold the idea that certain languages are better than others, which is a common theme in the Catalan vs. Spanish debate. Bernstein has views on the relationship between language and culture which are influenced by the Whorfian hypothesis; he regards language as something which influences culture and is in turn influenced by culture (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:341).

Catalonia has its own traditions and culture which have been shaped through Catalonia's own political history overtime; their language has too developed throughout time with these cultural traditions and defining events which is what makes the language so representative of their struggles and cultural pride. This is a suitable point to bring up the concept of ethnicity and nationalism. It has been argued that most nationalisms are cases of ethnic ideologies,

since most ideologies argue the ancient nature of their nation (Weber 1978). Nationalism usually appears as a traditionalist ideology and claiming ancient cultural tradition, however this does not always have to mean that the culture is ancient itself (Weber 1978). Catalonia holds a number of cultural traditions, few of which are ancient however many traditions mentioned within the independence discussion are somewhat more modern (The Guardian 2017). Here we can compare Catalonian nationalism to Norwegian nationalism which started in the 1850's. During this time Norway was in an enforced union with Sweden. A growing number of educated Norwegians felt entitled to their own state and in doing so, travelled to remote regions to explore different traditions. They brought these traditions back to the cities, and made them appear as symbols of Norwegian spirit and its people. This led to the growth of a national symbolism, different to that of Sweden and Denmark and therefore used to establish the concept of the ethnic Norwegian nation (Hylland Eriksen 2001:276). The stress on these new Norwegian traditions were used to give off the impression that Norway was in fact an old country of its own, with a unique culture, therefore deserving political independence. Nationalism suggests that all members of society have a shared culture (Hylland Eriksen 2001:276), which is seen as a problem for the Catalans hoping for independence, as few feel that Spain and Catalonia do indeed share a culture (Gibson 2012).

Former president of Spain, Jose Maria Aznar, shares the opinion with many other Spaniards that the lack of Spanish being taught in Catalan schools is problematic, and is robbing the Catalan children of their Spanish heritage. However, the Catalans teach in Catalan as they believe it is only right that the Catalan history and culture is taught through the Catalan language, otherwise it would be seen as giving in to the Spanish government and letting their culture face extinction. Throughout history, generations have passed down traditions, cultural pride, language, history and national pride using schools and the education systems. A child growing up in a particular linguistic environment and culture learns the language of that environment and that culture, and then proceeds to pass that on to the next generation (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:341). Bernstein believes that there is a reciprocal relationship between a particular kind of social structure and that this relationship is socially reproduced and handed down from generation to generation (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:342). He suggests that a certain cycle exists in which social patterns produce certain linguistic patterns, which in turn produce the social patterns etc.; as the kind of social structure he describes leads to a particular kind of linguistic behaviour and so on. By using this theory, one



could argue that the social structure that the Catalan people live within is dependent on their language, and vice versa. A question raised here is ‘who should adapt?’. Neither speech community is willing to accept another language as their ‘national language’.

There are a number of disadvantages in changing the curricula for children regarding the languages in the classroom. This includes the social, cognitive, and psychological disadvantages of being told that one’s way of speaking is wrong and undesirable in academic areas (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:345). This can lead to identity struggles amongst the children regarding heritage and can create trouble for them in expressing themselves in front of their teachers and peers, as well as facing trouble acquiring literacy skills (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:345). This theory backs the Catalans fear of their children feeling out of place in Spain, and being children of no nation rather than children of Spain. This is often the point at which one could bring up the benefits of bilingualism, however this is a common misconception amongst outsiders analysing the Catalan independent movement. The answer does not lie within the practice of bilingualism; it lies with the social structures which are formed around the linguistic structure which in turn make Catalonia what it is today and what gives the people an identity to which they can relate. With regards to the Catalans feeling a sense of insecurity and a lack of belonging, one can begin to approach the subject of the nation-state. Both Gellner and Anderson refer to the nation and nationalism as tools of state power and claim that nationalism is a functional ideology for the state in that it creates loyalty; it replaces obsolete foci for identification and socialism (Gellner 1983). The Catalan people often refer to themselves as a community resembling a family (The Guardian 2017). According to Gellner, the nation-state often offers a feeling of security and a cultural identity, as well as socialisation (education) and career opportunities (Gellner 1983). One can draw examples from this theory with the Catalan people and their loyalty to each other on cultural terms and their referral to each other as families. There is, one could say, an aspect of the nation-state and nationalism which resembles that of religious communities and families. Eriksen writes that the nation state is able to mobilize very strong passions among its members, and Anderson states that nationalism has more in common with phenomena such as religion and kinship than with ideologies like socialism and liberalism (Anderson 1991). A subject of an interview during the rise of independence protesters in 2012 stated - “The Catalans are my family, my people. Spain is not.” (Gibson 2012). One could say that nationalism encourages the need for roots, for tradition in the life of any community.

Naturally, within Catalonia there are many Spanish people living, working, raising families and so on. Many of these Spanish citizens have voiced concerns that the Catalan government is forgetting about them. Alex Ramos, a Spanish man living in Catalonia believes that the independence movement should be respected, but the Catalan people are imposing the protest on all of Catalonia's citizens and speaking for them as well (The Guardian 2017). This leads us to the next section on Power.

#### 4.4 Language, Politics, Economics and Power

Power holds a significant role in society and identities. Politics is linked with power; both power that people have over each other and ways in which societies holds power over people by imposing institutionalized constraints on their agency (Hylland Eriksen 2001:157). Power gives us the ability to control events and situations in order to achieve our own goals.

Bourdieu conceived of languages as 'symbolic marketplaces' where some people control more of the goods than others might do, due to some languages being endowed with more symbolic power than others and therefore holding a greater value (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:9). For example; speaking, reading and writing the standard language in any given community is often of vital importance to secure employment, find housing, make friends and create a social network as well as often placing the speaker in a more authoritative position even in a casual conversation. Intercultural communication can be problematic. Verbal exchanges involving people from different cultural backgrounds tend to go wrong more easily than those that involve people who share the same cultural background (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:297). When a cross-cultural exchange involves an important topic, for example between an employer and employee or interviewer and interviewee, we tend to depend upon our own cultural background to interpret other speakers, which can create a breakdown in communication due to the lack of flexibility with the language. One of the speakers might find the other "indifferent", "angry", "evasive" or "aloof", this can create asymmetrical power in certain social situations (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:297). The influence and power that the Catalans feel they lack with regards to the Spanish government is a motivation for many who wish to become independent from Spain. Many Catalans feel disrespected by the rest of Spain, in both cultural and political terms, but also due to disregard Spain has for their language. Here we see a case of nationalism from both sides. Nationalism can be defined as

an ideology which states that cultural boundaries should correspond to political boundaries; meaning that the state should only contain people 'from the same kind' (Gellner 1983).

Within different societies, social differentiation produces differences in power, these differences can often lead to protests and revolts amongst the less powerful/powerless (Hylland Eriksen 2001:155). One of the most common definitions of power is that of Max Weber- "it is the ability to enforce one's own will on others behaviour", essentially meaning that power is the ability to force someone to do something that they otherwise would not have done. It is possible to approach the subject of political power and Catalonia by comparing the Catalans to a "muted" group, as the Catalan people feel as though the Spanish government does not adhere to their needs or wishes. According to Michael Foucault; powerless groups are subjugated by the dominant discourses of society; the ways in which everyday language structures the world and confirms a set of values (Foucault 1970). The Spanish government do indeed have an open communication with the Catalan government, however the suggestions and requests are rarely, if ever, taken into consideration or acted upon (The Guardian 2018). The sociologist Luke Stevens suggests that power can be studied by looking at non-decisions; the political issues which are discussed within a political system but not adopted, or by studying the "muted groups"; those whose interests never reach the levels of serious negotiations (Hylland Eriksen 2001:159), these people being marginalized and made invisible. Research on these kinds of groups show that those feeling powerless and marginalized, often develop their own plans and strategies to increase control over their own existence (Gellner 1983), which is how Catalonia have proven to react to the oppression of their culture and disregard of their language. One could say that the Catalans have held a rather high level of autonomy by sabotaging impositions from the authorities in retaliation to their political governing. The Language is the most powerful tool in the struggle for and against the Catalan language.

The meaning of autonomy is free for different interpretations. For many it can mean the dissolving of a certain power, some take it as a rightful expression of their separate identity, justifying the pursuit for a greater degree of autonomy (Hoffman 2001:53). This kind of demand is possible to be used as a tactic against the central government for giving more freedom for autonomy, as well as possibly causing public anger and people feeling threatened by regional policies. In 1989 the Catalan parliament passed a notion assuring that the Catalan people do not withdraw their right to national self-determination. Brassloff wrote in 1996 that

“the meaning of autonomy is blurred at the edges and depends, like patriotism, on who is speaking, who is being addressed and when and in what circumstance, whether-for example it is defined by those who simply “think Spain” or by regional nation nationalists for home consumption while negotiating with the national government and keeping half an eye on the other autonomous communities” (Hoffman 2001:56). The Catalan people feel entitled to autonomy for a handful of reasons, however, the strive for autonomy stems from the inner strength that the Catalan people have after being illegitimately repressed and having their cultural pride stepped on for so long. One cannot look past the idea that after years of repression during the Franco era, the people naturally have a desire for a democratic, pluralist system which would ideally give regions cultural and linguistic autonomy of maximum degree (Hoffman 2001:61).

An argument for a number of Spaniards against the separation is that the Catalan people are hiding behind the cultural and social arguments when really they believe the economic and political benefits of independence are what really makes them so desperate for independence (Gibson 2012). Sorens writes that ‘secessionist parties in advanced democracies succeed not because they appeal to a primordial past but because they are able to present independence or wide-ranging autonomy as beneficial in political and economic terms’ (Cramer 2014:24). Rather than being the main force behind the strive for independence; ethnic identity and national sentiment could be seen as tools to help secessionists to come to the important political and economic goals (Cramer 2014:24). A Spanish protester against the referendum told the BBC – “Don’t let them hide behind some silly argument about cultural tradition or language. They want to stop paying taxes to Spain so that they can prosper economically, that’s what it is, they’re greedy”. Sorens believes that even a strong sense of group identity is not itself enough motivation to convince individuals that they should support independence, despite whatever cultural and linguistic connections the group may enjoy. Rather it could appear then that secession is not about the emancipation of an old nation, but the beginning of a new state which tends to contemporary needs (Cramer 2014:25) although, this theory is one sided and ignores different dimensions to the debate and to the nation itself.

Some of the controversies surrounding the language on instruction in the Catalan educational system are discussed in terms of power. Some have voiced concerns that the Catalan government has marginalised the Catalan language in the educational system and in doing that has allegedly infringed upon the rights of the people in the region (Miley & Garviá

2013). These critics have also stressed the argument that the regional governments use of the education system to promote the Catalan language and Catalan identity is part of a bigger project; nation mobilization (Miley & Garviá 2013), meaning that they believe the Catalan government is using the education system to ultimately gain self-determination for Catalonia and this is therefore undermining Spanish national unity. Benedict Anderson argues that the development of mass media, especially the printed book, allows for an immense number of people to be exposed to the same knowledge, therefore allowing a standardization of language and world-view on a huge scale (Anderson 1991). Here, according to Anderson, is where the role of state educational systems in nation-states is vital, for example; in England, all schoolchildren have heard of Guy Fawkes, however few know why Raoul Wallenberg is an important figure in Swedish history. And of course, in Sweden this situation is reversed, just as school children in Catalonia and Spain are taught different aspects of their own cultural history. On a cultural level, print media and this form of standardized education suggest a certain homogenization of representations, which are important features of nation-building and contribute to explaining how it can be that people identify with the entity of a nation (Hylland Eriksen 2001: 278).

The Generalitat (The Autonomous Government of Catalonia) has been accused by citizens of Catalonia and Spain who are against separation, of exerting control and manipulating people within and outside Spain or Catalonia through different ways. Alex Ramos discussed how when the protesters for the referendum took to the streets of Barcelona, they grouped together and wore matching colours, sang songs and created a sense of community and family amongst them which was seen as endearing and appealing to the rest of the world watching (The Guardian 2017). He says- “it’s not a revolution of the oppressed or the poor, it comes straight from the power. That is why it’s easy for them to do the big marches, because they own the television which we pay for, but it only benefits them” (The guardian 2017). An example of this kind of action from the Generalitat is TV3, the television channel they created in 1983. This was the first Television channel operated by Televisio de Catalunya and it was originally started in order to promote the Catalan language, while also improving Catalan’s awareness of belonging to a distinct cultural community (Cramer 2014:121). During the rise of unhappiness with Catalonia’s political autonomy, so did TV’s role in initiating debate about the possible alternative relationships with the Spanish state (ibid 2014:121). It is this sort of power carried out through the state-run media which subject Alex Ramos was referring to

during his interview with The Guardian. Many criticisms of the state-run media in Catalonia argue that it is exceeding its remit to represent the cultural interests of Catalans and morphing into political power making in a way that is unethical, biased and purposefully forcing a pro-independence agenda (ibid 2014:121). Despite the fact that all filmmakers, like anthropologists, have a duty to report the truth, it can also be acceptable to present a one-sided argument according to Paul Ward- “To remain stubbornly “impartial” and “balanced” in the face of clear imbalances in the real world and the power struggles that go within it” (Cramer 2014: 124).

There are differing opinions amongst the Spaniards and the Catalans with regard to this use of power. One argument that has been used to counter Spanish criticisms is that the issues are not being brought up anywhere else, meaning that anti-independence arguments have their own champions in the Spanish media which is more widely shown, causing an imbalance of power (ibid 2014). Therefore, it is seen as acceptable from many Catalans that the Catalan television is more one-sided and pro-independence, as they believe that the Spanish television would never show a Catalan pro-independence documentary. Here we can see an example of a nation-state. It could be said that for a nation-state to exist, the leaders of said nation must simultaneously be able to legitimate a particular power structure and create popular belief in the ability of the nation in order to satisfy certain needs in the population (Hylland Eriksen 2001:279). “The control exerted by the state, through the media, could be a reason for the Catalans feeling uneasy and not fully understanding where their loyalties should lie” says Alex Ramos to the Guardian paper, “if you are fed one thing through the media – that you should support the Catalan government, and taught only about happenings within your own region and be fed propaganda about Spain, then of course the Catalan people are not going to feel a sense of home with Spain”, meaning that the Catalan government is purposely ‘othering’ the Catalan people in order to feel like their own people.

*“Every empire tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate”*- Edward Said (H. Morgan 2014:6).

One man tells the BBC- “This situation goes beyond culture and identity, now it’s about breaking away from a system, I am pro-independence without being a nationalist. For me, it is a means to an end and not a final destination.”

From what I gathered from the interviews carried out by myself and various news channels was that many Catalans have been content until now with being deemed as an ethnic group,

until they experienced the disrespect from Spain regarding their language and culture in recent years. The doctrine of a nation-state implies that state boundaries should coincide with cultural boundaries (Hylland Eriksen 2001:279) which many Catalans feel does not apply to their region as they're still controlled by Spain, however live and function within another culture with their own language.

## **5. Conclusion**

During this chapter I will summarize the theories and arguments I have discussed throughout the essay. I will draw conclusions and attempt to summarize the main themes in order to answer the research questions I proposed at the beginning. At the beginning of this essay I posed the question –What are the main socio-political arguments for and against independence from Spain? I have explored the theory of language to try and understand self and group identity and the relationship with language use, culture and society. Using anthropological literature, documentaries, articles and interviews, I have investigated the arguments for and against independence for Catalonia and the assumptions made regarding language, culture and identity that they have been based on.

### **5.1 Summary of Theoretical Arguments**

A vital part of the Catalan vs. Spain discussion is based on the historical factors I brought up earlier on. The rich and prosperous region of Spain has had an ongoing struggle against oppression from the Spanish government. Due to the constant uncertainty of Catalonia's relationship with Spain, the Catalan people live with a fear of their culture and language being taken away from them again and with that, their identity. After the Franco regime, Catalonia bounced back quickly, intensifying the debate and will for independence from Spain. The oppression they had suffered during that time had only fuelled their cultural pride.

During the first part of the discussion I explored the concept of identity and language. I found that many Catalans identify themselves based on their language, meaning that if this is taken away from them, then a part of their identity as a group and as individuals would be taken away from them too. A number of Catalans feel a form of connection with their fellow

Catalans and identify as a group. This is an aspect of the argument which the Catalan government have taken into consideration, making it their duty to defend their people's language and culture. However, I have discovered that it is important not to categorize all Catalans together; for some it is not a question of needing to have a separate identity, rather it is about being separate from Franco's legacy and being able to break away from a system that he formed.

I have found that the concept of speech communities is important in this discussion. Within speech communities my research shows that the speakers share common feelings about linguistic behaviour within communities and the linguistic norms, therefore bringing the Catalan people together and highlighting the differences between Catalan and Spanish. We tend to learn languages within cultures and societies which frame the process of learning how to talk to others. What I have learnt about speech communities and the Catalan people identifying as separate from the Spanish seems to make sense, as speech communities are recognized as distinctive in relation to others. The Catalan people recognize themselves in distinct relation to the Spanish. In this Chapter I was also able to apply the Whorfian hypothesis and his idea that language is something which influences culture and in turn is influenced by culture. In Catalonia, it is clear that the culture is influenced by the language, as their language is representative of their past struggles throughout history.

Throughout this study I have been able to see cases of nationalism and understand the concept of a nation-state. Nationalism suggests that all members of a society have a shared culture, which the Catalans have within Catalonia, however they do not feel as though they share the majority of their culture with Spain. The Catalan people have struggled with the lack of security they feel and have relied on their own government to provide the safety and the protection of their language and culture. Nationalism tends to induce a sense of security amongst the people involved, which, according to my research, is what the Catalan government is trying to achieve for their people. We can see that the education system in Catalonia is used as a tool for passing on the Catalan culture and cultural pride, making the education system one of the most centralized areas of this discussion. We can see a strong contrast in opinion regarding the Catalan education between the Spanish living in both Spain and Catalonia, and the Catalans. The main points being that the Spanish believe the idea that the schooling being solely in Catalan is segregating the Catalan children and categorizing them, making it harder for them to move around Spain freely and minimizing their future



career opportunities. On the other hand, the Catalans see Spain's protest to this as another attempt to oppress their language, or at least a sign of the disregard for the language they have known to experience from the Spanish government.

A common theme within the essay has been the concept of power. The power struggle the Catalans have experienced over the past century have formed their culture today, and led to the referendum that took place in 2017. One can see power in two main aspects of the discussion. Firstly, I explored how the Spanish government has had control over Catalonia despite the region having its own parliament, The Generalitat. Secondly, I investigated the ways in which the Catalan government has been able to use its power in order to spread propaganda and encourage the Catalans to request separation from Spain. The Catalan government has exerted this power mainly through media, with successful results. However, as we can see from my research there are opposing forces to this as well, from people who label it biased, unfair propaganda. The education system is another example of the control the Catalan government enforces, using language to group the citizens of Catalonia together making it harder for them to integrate into Spanish society and identify as Spanish.

As Eriksen states, social differentiation produces differences in power. It is written in his book in reference to Gellner's theory that these differences often lead to protests and revolts among the less powerful, which is what we can see in Catalonia where many of the Catalans feel marginalized and invisible. If one is to apply this theory to the Catalans, then it would be only natural that they would strive for autonomy, as autonomy represents the dissolving of a certain power and freedom to express a groups own identity, as I discuss in this essay. I have understood that Spain believes there are other economic and political reasons for Catalonia appealing for autonomy, and it is argued that the cultural and social problems are somewhat used as a disguise for this.

## 5.2 Final Conclusion

Catalonia has long history of striving for independence from its host state, Spain. The main reasons for the long strive for independence are based on a number of social, cultural, historical, economic and political aspects. This essay has dealt with the social and cultural arguments with a focus on linguistics and its relationship with power, society, education and nationalism. From my research for this essay I have come to the conclusion that the arguments for and against independence for Catalonia stem from the cultural oppression that

the Catalan people have been succumbed to in the past, and that they strive to keep their cultural identity and individual identity is based on the fact that the Catalan language represents the constant struggle that their society has been burdened with. The need that many Catalans feel for autonomy and to be recognized as an independent nation is due to a lack of security, as well as feeling marginalized and unimportant in the eyes of the Spanish government. I have understood that the Catalan people regard themselves as different in tradition, custom and language; leading to a resentment towards the Spanish government for denying their autonomous status that they have desired for so long. The recent rise in nationalism within Spain and Catalonia is essentially a result of conflict based on language and regional identities, fought by citizens demanding security and to be recognized for their cultural identities by their ruling governments. This research paper has allowed me to understand that arguments regarding cultural products allow us as anthropologists to explore and understand areas of societies and nations that merely studying politics does not allow.

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