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Audiences' emotions on journalistic texts during the Catalanian-Spanish confrontation

Las emociones de los públicos en los textos periodísticos durante la confrontación catalano-española

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Abstract

This study investigates audiences' emotions in accordance with the journalistic texts analysed. To this end, a number of journalistic texts from El País and Ara newspapers, published over a three-day period from 1-3 October 2017, were analysed. The study sought to penetrate the process of constructing the emotions of media discourses' recipients, which is parallel to the construction of the narrative in both newspapers. The theoretical and methodological approaches made it possible to examine the manner in which the discourses defined the subject of study, in this case the Referendum of 1-O in Catalonia. In addition, the perspective of this topic within the interaction between the journal and the audience, as well as within the issuer's strategy oriented toward capturing the audience's good will and to leading the audience to see and feel the topic in a particular way, was examined.

Keywords

Emotion; enunciative strategies; frame; polarisation; journalistic discourses; Catalonia.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación es estudiar las emociones de los públicos tal y como son previstas en los textos. Para ello, analizamos aquí una serie de textos periodísticos de los diarios El País y Ara que forman una secuencia temporal de 3 días, del 1 al 3 de octubre de 2017. Nos interesa indagar el proceso de construcción de las emociones de los destinatarios previstos en los discursos mediáticos, que es paralelo a la construcción del relato en cada uno de ambos medios. Nos centramos en las perspectivas teóricas y metodológicas que observan en los discursos la definición del objeto del que se habla, en nuestro caso el Referéndum del 1-O en Cataluña, y su puesta en perspectiva en la interacción enunciativa, en la estrategia del enunciador orientada a captar el interés de su destinatario y a conducirlo a ver y sentir ese objeto o asunto en determinada forma.

Palabras clave

Emociones; estrategias enunciativas; marco; polarización; discursos periodísticos; Cataluña.

1. Introduction

The conflict in Catalonia has progressively worsened in recent years. In successive elections, this polarization is reflected in the evolution of the vote won by pro-independence parties, which in 2006 was 13.9%. It approached 50% in 2012, where it remains in 2020 (Ruiz Marull, 2016). (Note that 2011-12 were key years for the economic crisis and political change in Spain). This reversal of the independence vote is an example of how much of the population can transition in certain circumstances from "sceptical belief" to full identification with an ideology, a symbolic territory, or a cause, in a process that involves an emotional logic that can follow a progressive and gradual trajectory or quickly move from indifference to passionate identification. (Peñamarín, 2000).

We analyse here journalistic texts from the newspapers *El País* and *Ara* over 3 days, from 1 to 3 October 2017 (the controversial referendum to which we refer was held in Catalonia on the 1st). We aim to understand the process of construction of the emotions of the anticipated addressee in these media discourses (in interaction with their empirical receiver), which parallels the construction of the narrative of both publications.

Both *El País* and *Ara* openly express themselves as supporters of one of the conflicting positions, with *Ara*, a Catalan language publication, being for the "referendum of self-determination" in Catalonia and *El País* against it, from a position that they define as "constitutionalist." They target clearly distinct audiences. *Ara* is aimed at pro-independence Catalans, an audience presumed to be in favour of the "unilateral" strategy defined by the parties of this trend and the Catalan government in this period to achieve the independence of Catalonia. *El País*, for its part, addresses an audience distributed throughout the Spanish territory which it assumes to be "constitutionalist", at least in the opposite sense of a Catalan referendum on independence, which they considered unconstitutional. The former treats the latter as Spanish nationalists, thereby situating the problem as a conflict between two nationalisms.

In the months leading up to 1-O, we have been able to see in these publications an *in crescendo* in the emotional tone of speeches perceptible, among other things, in the increase in the degree of accusations against the enemy (anti-democratic, Francoist, insurrectionist, pro-coup, etc.), as well as in the increase in the number of pieces dedicated to this conflict, which become progressively more significant on the front pages of these publications.

We are interested in analysing, first of all, what each text and each publication puts into play for its recipient, as well as how, in communicative interaction with its intended recipient, each publication takes into account the interests, values, and affects of its audience in order to persuade it to see the matter or object in question – here, the referendum – "in a certain light," from a certain perspective. Such adopting of perspective is inevitable in any enunciation, since the definition, or "portrayal", of an object is correlated to "the position and interests of the enunciator", so one's choice when selecting one of the possible definitions or categorizations always produces a "perspective effect", as Fontanille and Zilberberg (2004: 22) point out. Further, we are interested in how this perspective is established in the discourses of these two newspapers, enunciated from and for radically opposed positions and audiences, especially on this key occasion of the pro-independence "challenge," as defined by *El País*. This process, in which audiences and media have been "radicalizing" in relation to the Catalonia-Spain affair, is what we wish to observe here by selecting a small sample from a high point in the conflict, on 1, 2, and 3 October 2017. We focus on the front page of the two chosen newspapers as well as the articles featured on them and continued inside the newspaper.

The above question also involves researching how each publication defines and constructs the "1-O Referendum" issue for its addressee; what worldviews and values they assume; from what perspective each publication represents its object, its recipient, and its adversary or enemy; what feelings are associated with the rhetorical resources they use to promote their perspective and to describe the other. Our interest, mentioned above, in analysing the public's emotions as they are anticipated in the journalistic texts involves the analysis of the narrative dimension of meaning, values, actors, imaginaries, frameworks, and figures that each narrative constructs for its recipients.

2. Theoretical-methodological approach.

How does one approach this political conflict? For Arendt, the world we jointly build is the object of politics. Political life is formed by actions and discourses regarding the common world, the material and immaterial world of "objects and issues" that we all build (1997:118). We understand that the political dimension, in mediated public space, is not external to the media, but is itself mediatic and takes place in the media space with its languages and resources (Alvarez-Peralta & Carañana, 2018). That is why the media are a central place of power, a basic place in the formation of collectivities of identification. In our case, in

studying how the public issue of the "1-O Referendum" is constructed, we also see the involvement of political-discursive positions that enter into conflict in this sector of the public sphere.

Without entering into the complexity of the notion of emotion (affect, feelings, passion, and differences beyond the scope of this article), we will clarify certain aspects. To start, we think of passions from a basic assumption, shared among the social sciences, semiotics, phenomenology, biology, and neurology, which allows us to understand emotion as the sensitive dimension of our relationships with the self, with the other, and with the others (Peñamarín, 2016). This dimension is ubiquitous in our experiences of *relation* with the world and also, of course, with texts and political conflicts. It is ever-present in the media. According to some authors, emotions are redefining the classical conception of journalistic objectivity and even the idea of news, as the use of emotions to try to involve the audience in the informative speeches becomes increasingly clear and explicit (Beckett and Deuze, 2016). In some current research, the media are understood as "affect generators" (Lünenborg and Maier, 2018; Reckwitz, 2017).

Emotions show us humans, and other animals, to be fundamentally relational beings, biologically prepared to feel and react to contact with the material and symbolic environment. We have referred to the intensification of the feelings of confrontation and the "turn" to the position favourable to the pro-independence strategy. These emotional processes call to mind the decisive contributions of authors such as Elio Canetti and William Ian Miller.

Canetti separates himself from previous psychological, philosophical, and sociological theories about crowds (von Scheve and Salmela, 2014). Note that the transformation experienced by most people in a situation of war – or in occasions such as natural disasters, in which they all act together to deal with adversity, etc. – entails intense involvement of each person in the collective event, to the point that the problems of the collective occupy much of their field of perception, affects, and interests. This phenomenon would correspond to what Canetti (1981) describes as a metamorphosis of the person in the crowd. According to the author, for a number of people to form a crowd, they must have a common direction or goal, even if they are not mass aggregations, but are instead a group of people who may not even know each other. This common orientation is also provided by the fact that they share a feeling, which allows Canetti to characterize crowds by their "dominant affect" (baiting crowds, fight crowds, feast crowds, etc.) The historian W. I. Miller relates moral values and the sense of primary repugnance, disgust, which for him are intimately linked (Miller, 1998: 38). Moral repugnance, or disgust, occurs, according to Miller, by the failure of the reference point (or the standard) unquestionably incorporated into the subject. "Most violations of deeply assumed norms are capable of arousing disgust in conditions that show those who transgress them, as a depraved, hypocritical, arbitrary or cruel violator" (1998:356).

This "unquestionably incorporated" norm brings us to the second aspect of the emotions we wish to signal: they inseparably involve body and mind. What we know, have experienced, and learned affects what we fear and desire as well as what and how we hate, reject, admire, or love. Certainly, there is an immediate, preconscious reaction, the "emotion", as Damasio would say, which is immediately oriented through thoughts and memories, through conscious activity, which gives it a certain form, called "sentiment" by Damasio (2006), the secondary feeling, filtered through thought and culture. Without entering into the delicate questions that this raises, but taking into account examples as eloquent as that of disgust, studied by Elio Canetti (2009) and by Miller, we assume that certain unthought, preconscious reactions, such as fear or disgust, depend on what the person has experienced as normal, habitual, negative, or strange in their life. Each person's experiences permeate and shape their bodily and affective memories, as well as their encyclopaedia (semiotic memory, Eco, 1990). We must take into account the interaction between the unthought (emotional) reaction and the systems of meaning and value that allow us to think about it and act on it (as a feeling already named and known) precisely as a central question in the analysis of discourses.

For this reason, we are interested in observing whether affects are involved in the articulation of experience (Macón and Solana, 2015: 17) and the ways in which we give it meaning and value. "Affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects," following Ahmed (2010: 230). Always linked to contexts, relationships, bodies, and particular memories, emotions are not only psychological states; they also involve social and cultural practices, habits, and encyclopaedias which are fundamental to produce the surface and the boundaries between the inside and the outside, as Ahmed writes (2004:10), the border between self and others, between the individual and the social. Affects and knowledge, biology and culture, immediate reaction to the situation, short- and long-term bodily memory, and semantics are all intertwined in the emotional experience. There is no mere passivity in feeling; affects act, for example, by altering the public sphere with their emergence (Macón and Solana, 2015: 18), and surely encourage action and the adoption of one attitude or another. There is not only spontaneity in feeling; it also involves "emotional habitus" that, operating outside of conscious perception, provide members of a social group "with an emotional disposition, with a sense of what and how to feel, with labels

for their feelings, with schemas about what feelings are and what they mean, with way of figuring out and understanding what they are feeling (Gould, 2009: 34).

Studies on the involvement of emotions in the formation of nationalist identities and movements have a long and rich tradition (as synthesized in Peñamarín, 1995). More recently, referring to the politics of identity, Berlant defines "national sentimentality" as a "rhetoric of promise that a nation can be built across fields of social difference through channels of affective identification and empathy" (2002: 107). In the antagonisms that pit them against other communities, these sentimental identity policies reflect, in addition to the rhetoric of promise, "the *self-evidence* and *objectivity* of a painful feeling and about the nation's duty to eradicate it" (2002: 111). Even citizenship is, for Berlant, defined from the feeling of identity: "Citizenship is a relation among strangers who learn to feel it as a common identity based on a shared historical, legal, or familial connection to a geopolitical space." Fellow citizens "learn to feel" a "visceral identification" of personal identity with the national identity through numerous social and institutional practices in which they participate (Berlant 2014: 38), among which political and journalistic discourses are fundamental. In this sense, we would say that neither Catalan nor Spanish citizenship, which *Ara* and *El País* respectively claim, can be understood outside the Catalan or Spanish national "learned feeling of identity", which they involve. In both, the sentimental politics of social and discursive identity practices, according to Berlant (*ibid.*), tend to promote and maintain hegemony in a certain form of national identity, despite the persistence of internal differences and antagonisms.

For the analysis of the construction of the emotions of the assumed addressees in the journalistic texts, we are interested in the approaches that focus on the perspective of the object of the discourse from the strategy of the enunciator, to observe how it is oriented to affect its receiver, to grasp its interest in order to lead him or her to understand and feel that object in a certain way. This is how Danto's rhetoric is understood, when he states that "[a]s a practice, it is the function of rhetoric to cause the audience of a discourse to take a certain attitude toward the subject of that discourse: to be caused to see that subject in a certain light." (1981:165). In this sense, all texts (visual, verbal, artistic, commercial, interpersonal) are rhetorical in that they try to present their object "in such a way as to cause us to view it with a certain attitude and with a special vision". (Danto, 1981: 167). We take one attitude or another towards something due, in large part, to how our affects are oriented towards that object and how they intervene, intertwined or articulated with our cognitive and cultural competences as they are, in the meaning and value we give it. This orientation of the affects is the fundamental object of the ancient art of rhetoric.

In attempting to lead the recipient to read something "in a certain light", the enunciator also tries to have them accept certain assumptions and take them as non-problematic. Thus, we encounter once again the unthinkable and the unquestionable from the sphere of emotions now in semantic-pragmatic territory. The action of the enunciator must define the "normal" and the questionable (Meyer: 2008), choose between the various conceptions and the various possible norms, and then make a hypothesis on the encyclopaedia, the norms and values, and the possible interpretation of its interlocutor (Eco: 1990). The specific habits and "feeling rules" of a collective (Hochschild, 1990) may be found within the norms that are part of a common encyclopaedia and are involved in interpretation.

Journalistic information refers to the open occurrences which nobody knows how will end. In principle, they are recounted, as in any news report, "in media res", in the present of the day-to-day happenings. A narrative, on the other hand, has an end and includes a closure that offers a key of meaning fundamental to the interpretation of what has been narrated. In every story, a subject pursues an object of value and it is that subject's valuative perspective towards the object that sustains the basic plot, the thread of the narrative (White, 1992). It gives us an idea of the conflict between systems of meaning and value that the subject's actions puts into play against the obstacles of the world or other subjects in order to achieve his/her object (Greimás and Courtés, 1982: 272). The story defines an object from a double perspective: the exterior perspective of actions and the interior perspective of a subject, informed by its values and visions of the world. For Ricoeur, the story conveys a worldview that is never ethically neutral, but partial and debatable. However, the story always aspires to "ethical justice" (Ricoeur, 1985: 359); it is enunciated from the conviction of being in the right.

Actors involved in a conflict do often build "a story"; they have a project that orients their action towards a goal and a value. They always anticipate and expect an end in which they best their opponent. *Ara* and *El País*, as openly partisan media, define the object, the 1-O referendum, from their respective perspectives, which involve sharing their values and worldviews with their audiences. They build contrasting narratives of conflict, which we analyse here. Further, we must bear in mind that many stories can "provide what has happened as experience to those who listen" (Benjamin, 1986:92). The reports of these newspapers provide their audiences with the experience of participating, of involving themselves affectively and according to their values, in the event. These media outlets allow their readers to see their own political choice supported, reasoned, and confirmed by their favourite media, which they have chosen because of these

reasons, although they also ask it to maintain a certain 'fair play' with the rules of the journalistic game, with the objectivity and neutrality, in appearance, at least, of public information (Peñamarín, 2014).

G. Lakoff's concept of framing also appears in this line of conceptualizing the construction of meaning as intended to transmit certain assumptions, values, and affects to the addressee. A conceptual framework, or framework of meaning, is a series of coherently organized ideas or concepts that frame the meaning of certain terms or utterances so that they also involve values and emotions. (Lakoff, 2007). This way of arming language with semantic, moral, and emotional implications, often unconsciously, can be capable of defining realities for broad audiences, especially when continually repeated in the media. (Lakoff, 2007). This concept is further explored in R. Entman's studies on journalism: framing involves "selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality and enhancing the relevance of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality" (Entman, 2004: 26). This perspective involves considering the narrative dimension inscribed in the framework, since, according to Entman, a frame can involve the connection between three elements: diagnosis of the situation, attribution of responsibility, and proposal for a solution (Entman 1993: 52).

Both the concept of rhetoric as well as those of framework and narrative allow us to focus on the enunciative strategies in the publications studied that are oriented towards a recipient who is not present as a specific individual or group, but rather as an interlocutor-addressee, a central figure that publications must understand and interest in order to communicate. The enunciator, here the newspaper, must know something about how its reader thinks and feels, it must grasp its interest and guide its enunciation in some sense. Whether the enunciator wants to or not, it must select certain preconceptions about the object as well as a certain portion of the encyclopaedia and the memory of its recipient, it must anticipate certain unquestionable suppositions and values and must contribute to reinforcing or questioning them. Inevitably, the texts enter into dialogue with their recipient and mark a strategy in that communication which engages with the systems of meaning, the preconceptions, that allow us to understand and understand our differences.

3. Analysis and results

3.1. Context and perspectives at stake on 1 October 2017.

The conflict sparked by the referendum that took place on 1 October 2017 in Catalonia is preceded by the controversial approval of the so-called laws of rupture (*leyes de ruptura*) in the *Parlament* by the Catalan independence parties on 6 and 7 September 2017, which legitimize the holding of this referendum of self-determination. From there everything centres on 1-O: whether or not it will be held and if Catalonia intends to become an independent republic in the case that it is indeed held, and the yes vote wins.

The Generalitat (the Catalan government) defined the 1-O referendum as a binding referendum claiming that the very purpose of a democracy is to vote (ignoring the argument that an independence referendum, according to the current Spanish Constitution, should be voted on by the entire Spanish people). The Spanish State prosecuted it as an act of disobedience that threatened the unity of the nation and treated it as a crime through the process of denunciation in the courts. On the other side, a part of the non-independence left supported the referendum as a protest or a non-binding citizen consultation.

El País and *Ara* accepted the frame of a binding referendum, following most of Spain's mainstream media, and clashed in that territory. Other perspectives remained on the margins of this great confrontation. For some, for example, the referendum was a "trick," a political move to gain certain advantages, such as an improved tax accord or more autonomy to continue building a path to independence. According to this interpretation, the Generalitat would pretend to have the strength of a state to compel the central government to negotiate.

The Constitutional Court immediately suspended the "laws of rupture" and the Supreme Court prosecuted and ordered numerous members of the Generalitat imprisoned. The opposition parties to Catalan independence stressed the break-down of legality, the trampling of the rights of the Spanish population and almost half of the Catalan population, who voted against independence, and the risk of social and political rupture, while the bloc of the independence parties insisted on the right and will of the Catalan people to carry out the referendum and in the dignity that voting confers.

Here, Canetti's conception of conflict gains credibility, in which he claims that each party argues that it has been attacked and is forced to defend itself; each party defines the situation as if it were the victim: we (the "we" of the enunciation) have been attacked (Canetti, 1981:175). Similarly, Berlant's aforementioned notion of national sentimental rhetoric, which would unite promise and self-evidence of one's suffering and the duty to eradicate it, becomes apparent. In the stories of both sides, democracy

appears as the central value. From the point of view of "constitutionalism", Catalan nationalists and the referendum endangers the unity of Spain, the basic principle of the Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2006 (*Estatut*), terms synonymous with democracy. For Catalan nationalists, they are denied the essential right of every democracy to decide by voting. As we see, in the very definition of the 1-O Referendum case, a fundamental conflict about the definition of the political subject "we" of democracy comes to light (Mouffe, 2005). For the constitutionalists it is "all Spaniards" who can change the common norm, the Constitution, not just a portion of them, as the unilateralists who hold power in Catalonia intend to do. For the independentists, this subject, the Spaniards, is not relevant in its decisions about "their" country, Catalonia. This association of each position with democracy implies an "agreement on the context of disagreement" (Saiz-Echezarreta, 2019; Venturini, 2010), from which conflicting strategies of meaning and affect, non-negotiable in the moment, are formed.

3.2. El País's Strategy

3.2.1. El País 1 October 2017



The front page of El País of 1 October 2017 has an unusual composition, since, in addition to a title, a large headline, 4 subtitles and a photo, it includes under the photograph the titles of four opinion articles by very well-known authors: Juan Luis Cebrián, Mario Vargas Llosa, Santos Juliá and Fernando Savater. Additionally, the lower strip features the beginning of an editorial.

The headlines read:

- *Decisive Day for the Independentist Challenge*
- *Spanish Democracy Faces its Greatest Challenge*

Reto and *desafío*, two near-synonyms for 'challenge,' head the page. That which is threatened today in the "greatest" way, alarmingly, is the supreme value of our coexistence, democracy. The photograph seems to contrast with this tone of alarm, as it presents a scene marked by normalcy: a well-known Barcelona promenade in which people and families enjoy themselves with complete tranquility while passing between them young people with Spanish and traditional Catalan flags, not the pro-independence flag. The caption reads,

- *Barcelona's La Rambla yesterday afternoon, shortly after the protest against the illegal referendum*

Just as the image highlights the small group of young "unionists" with the constitutional flags at its centre, the caption focuses the demonstration against the "illegal referendum", precisely on the day on which this referendum was held. The headline alludes to this referendum, without explicitly mentioning it, as a major political act. If we understand *La Rambla* as a symbol of Barcelona, we can read this scene as a representation of the occupation of the Central Catalan space by young constitutionalist citizens. Their youth can be associated here with strength and spirit within the general sense of the normalizing photography of national non-independence symbols in Barcelona. This image that illustrates the day of Catalonia's "greatest challenge" to Spanish Democracy allows us to see the affirmation and normalization of constitutionalist symbols in the heart of Barcelona.

However, if we read the image in relation to the headline, as well as the subheadings, some of which read:

- *Thousands of people march for unity in Catalonia and in the rest of Spain*
- *Pro-Russian networks redouble their interference in defence of the referendum* and in relation to the titles of the prominent opinion articles on the front page:
- *Political Carnival in Catalonia* (J.L. Cebrían)
- *The Zero Hour* (M. Vargas Llosa)
- *The National Populist Separation* (S. Juliá)
- *The Shield of Liberty* (F. Savater)
- *El País With the Estatut* (editorial)

we observe how the front page as a whole adopts the same rhetorical stance: convincing the audience that "our" most precious object, democracy in Spain, is being threatened and we rise to defend it, it is our cause.

The editorial highlighted on the front page equates the situation with a coup d'état. Its title literally quotes the title of the editorial that this newspaper published to position itself politically during the attempted coup of 1981. Then "*El País with the Constitution*", now, "*El País with the Estatut*", assuming that for its public, Constitution and *Estatut* are synonymous with democracy, as we have pointed out. The statement is formed as a proclamation, which expresses the attitude of the publication towards the authoritarian pronouncements or "coups" of Colonel Tejero in 1981 and of the independentists today. The article situates the reader in front of a possible split in Spain and a collapse: "What is being wagered today is if the rupture and collapse of the statutory order, already undermined in the *Parlament* and by the *Govern* is consummated. Or, on the contrary, if the full force of the *Estatut* and the Constitution is restored." Faced with such a serious diagnosis of the situation, *El País* urges its readers to mobilize: the democratic citizens, and with them the publication, are obliged to act. The editorial discourse becomes activist; it is placed in a framework of struggle with certain equivalences in the terrain of the presupposed, the meaning of which is not questioned:

Journalism = *El País* = Democracy = Constitution (= *Estatut*)

The supreme value, democracy, presupposed as part of "our" indispensable values, of both the media and the public, and identified by the name of *El País* (which means 'The Country'), allows it to adopt the position of one who does not just represent a party to a political conflict, but instead represents the whole, the Spanish nation and its central value. The current extreme danger in which that value, democracy-Constitution, finds itself pushes "us" to mobilize.

Of the four articles featured on the front page of the 1-O issue, Savater's challenges us in the same vein. From its title, "The Shield of Liberty", it urges us to defend this value (liberty, also synonymous with democracy), acting ourselves as its shield at a time "just when our democracy suffers one of the worst and most reactionary attacks of our entire post-war period." Savater thusly equates ETA massacres and independence mobilizations. Both attack our democracy and we must go out and defend it as we did with ETA.

Santos Juliá takes up the editorial's argument. His article, "The Populist National Break," concludes: "What is already clear is that what has happened to this day is not just about nationalism; it is also a break with democracy from state institutions previously occupied by populist parties."

Vargas Llosa's piece, "The Zero Hour," carries an enlightening subheading: "Catalan independence would be tragic for Spain and Catalonia, which would have fallen into the hands of demagogues that would lead to its ruin." He then recalls the bloodthirsty and aberrant nationalisms that have terrified Europe: "We

must persuade Catalans that nationalism is one of the worst enemies of freedom and that this dark period must be left behind, like a nightmare that fades upon awakening."

Juan Luis Cebrían titles his article "Political Carnival in Catalonia", with a clear tone of contempt, which denies Catalan politics the possibility of participating "seriously" in politics in general. The subheading speaks of strength, of Spanish unity, and of weakness, of great danger: "The independence challenge does not so much affect the possibility of a rupture of Spanish unity, which will not occur, as to the stability of the political and economic process and to the very survival of the present state." The carnival reappears in the lead of the article, where the author recalls the "Franco carnival" of 1966. Cebrían links the current situation with the Franco dictatorship, which in 1966 called a referendum to ratify the State Organic Law, which was, in the words of *El País*'s former director, a "pathetic attempt to institutionalize the regime around something that might resemble a Constitution".

This rhetoric of conflict is supported by a collective of enunciation, the set of individual and collective voices that make up this front page. The mention of grave dangers aims to arouse fear, coupled with outrage and moral offense, at the despicableness of the enemy who betrays common political rule and order. This collective of unanimous enunciation traces a story that promotes feelings of indignant fear and contempt for politics, those of Catalonia, identified with totalitarianism. The only hope must come from confrontation, from the struggle of constitutionalist Spanish citizenry, legitimate, peaceful, and calm, just like the young people in the photo.

3.2.2. *El País* 2 October 2017



Like the day before, all the pieces on 2 October 2017 front page are dedicated to Catalonia. It also includes several highly dramatic subheadings, the titles of five opinion articles and the names of their prominent authors – journalists or regular contributors – and an editorial. The full-page headlines are:

- *Serious Institutional Crisis for Generalitat's Disobedience*
- *Government forcibly prevents illegal referendum*

Again, we see terms that state a situation of utmost gravity for the institutions. However, the power of the central government to prevent it is underlined here. The subtitle, also occupying the entire width of the page,

- *Puigdemont claims victory in the vote and announces that there will be a unilateral declaration of independence in the coming days,*

presents the president of the Generalitat as determined to consummate the "coup". In the image, seven riot officers appear cornered against a gate by a mass of protesters, the end of which is not visible. In the front row, a policeman with a shield separates the citizens from other officers, who carry rifles even though they do not prepare to use them. In front of them, protesters face the policemen in a firm and defiant manner.

In a context of dispute, this representation can be interpreted as a challenge to authority. In Canetti's terms, we understand this image as that of a baiting crowd: The baiting crowd is constituted with the aim of achieving a goal quickly (Canetti, 1981: 120). The baiting of the agents by the crowd presents the institutions and powers of the State as victims and permits them to justify the exercise of force that is recounted in the headline: *The Government forcibly prevents the illegal referendum*. The story can be paraphrased: since the pro-independence citizens are harassing government institutions (mentioned in the subheading) and police forces, the State has been compelled to use force to carry out its legitimate mission (to close the electoral colleges and seize ballot boxes). The caption reads

- *Voters from a Girona electoral college struggle with riot agents from the National Police who came to close the centre and seize the ballot boxes.*

The subheadings show a strong political conflict. The first refers to altercations, such as the one in the photo, splashed on front pages around the world.

- *Police and Civil Guard enter the schools in the face of the passivity of the Mossos*

highlighting the conflict between Spanish and Catalan law enforcement, the Mossos. The three subheadings that follow mention the differences between the leaders of the government, the PSOE party, who asks for negotiation with the (Catalan) Govern, and the Ciudadanos party, who supports the President of Spain.

The editorial takes a clear position: "Against Insurrection, the Law, but Not Only the Law." It is an insurrection, almost synonymous with a coup, so the hard-hitting measures that have been and will be taken by the government and law enforcement are legitimate and necessary, but the publication distances itself from the purely repressive position attributed to the government of Spain: once the constitutional order has been restored, it will be necessary to make policy. The frame changes slightly from the previous day in the articles mentioned on the front page.

- *A story of Spain* (Adela Cortina)

- *The independence of the balconette* (Amelia Valcárcel)

- *This is a referendum... probably* (Theodore Lion Gross)

- *Under the world's watch* (Lluís Bassets)

- *Shame* (Manuel Vilas)

- *Against insurrection, the law, but not only the law* (editorial)

Several pieces reiterate the framework of extreme confrontation and the definition of the situation remain overblown in some of them ("pre-civil war environment" in Bassets' article). On the other hand, in several of these texts, the starting point is the falsity of the referendum, specifically since the Generalitat does not have the strength or sufficient resources to make it binding. Therefore, the authors turn to arguments of contempt, such as that of "The Independence of the Balconette", which refers to a false balcony, as opposed to solemn declarations made in solemn spaces. The subheading highlights the lack of dignity of the independentists, who, even knowing that they do not have the strength to declare independence, organize the referendum: "It is not worthy to mount a referendum that is not one in order to go out again on the balcony to spout proclamations."

Leon Gross's article also upholds the argument of the falsity of the referendum and explains that it is a ruse and that its perpetrators know it. Referring to Magritte's famous painting, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (*This is not a pipe*), Leon Gross titles his article "This is a referendum... probably" and argues that, like that painting, the referendum is a representation because it does not have any of the legal guarantees that would validate it, just as you can't smoke the pipe in the painting.

Fear of consummation of the "illegal referendum" is countered by the power of the government. But the result does not appear as a victory and political divisions also suggest that there is nothing to celebrate, not even the triumph of legality (since "not only the law" can resolve this situation, as the editorial claims). The fear and threat that persist, since the Constitutional legality does not impose itself fully, are compensated with contempt for a false battle, of the balconette, of an unworthy enemy.



On 3 October, the front page is almost all dedicated to the Catalan affair, with the exception of the news related to the main photo which shows three young people fleeing a shooting at a concert in Las Vegas and a brief note about the United Kingdom. The trend marked these days by *El País*, and on this very front page, of highlighting the Catalan issue, might lead us to think that photography would also be used to address the Catalonia issue, but we see that in principle it is not.

However, the kicker situates us before the unmistakably high tension typical of war-like events:

– *Decisive week of the institutional crisis in Spain*

The expectation that this text refers to something 'decisive' is immediately dashed by the headline:

– *Rajoy and Sanchez do not reach a common response to separatism*

A negative enunciation about the leaders of the two main political parties, which implies a reproach for their incompetence (the lack of a "response") in solving a serious crisis. Next to this large headline, another smaller one heads the front page

– *The Generalitat picks a day and gathers forces for independence*

which paints a picture of an imminent declaration of independence. However, a possible "common response" emerges in the first main subheading,

– *Both PSOE and PP resist applying Article 155 requested by Albert Rivera*

In this "decisive" moment, the two major parties and their leaders, already singled out as powerless, "resist" the proposal of a third party, Ciudadanos, to apply Article 155. This group is referred to twice in the headlines of this front page by the names of its leaders, Rivera and Arrimadas.

The following subheadings address Article 155. One mentions the leader of the PSOE asking for "dialogue" with Puigdemont (on the front page of the previous day he asked for "negotiation"), and the other stating that Congress "has not planned to meet" in the face of the serious crisis. Division and inaction are shown to be key players at this decisive moment, which can only contribute to concern.

The layout of this front page creates a central space for three other subheadings, highlighted with touches of color. The first is

– *INÉS ARRIMADAS, leader of Ciudadanos in Cataluña: "The managing of 1 October by the Government has been a failure"*

The paper does not directly accuse the government, but it voices that accusation on its front page. It does not propose the application of Article 155 but grants space and relevance to that possibility on the front page of the publication. Applying Article 155 of the Constitution involves the intervention by the State in all Catalan institutions (as the government did soon after, although moderating certain measures of control of the institutionality of Catalonia). As suggested in a context we have seen in another of the headlines, claiming that the Generalitat chooses the day and gathers support for independence, might the photograph be related to the headlines? Not directly, but this interpretation remains open in the face of the scenario of imminent danger projected by the front page that could well inspire a similar fleeing.

If on the second day, the framing changes slightly by lowering the tone of a potential coup and projecting the absence of real force of the independentists, on day three we observe another shift of the framework of meaning and the explanatory strategy of the newspaper, this time reproaching and accusing the government and its party, the PP, as well as the PSOE, of failure. *El País* defines the situation as a political disaster. Following Arrimadas' condemnation, negative statements remain in the titles of two articles:

– *Calella expels the Civil Guard*

– *Pessimism without cure*

Through testimonies, both illustrate the deterioration of the image of the Spanish state in Catalonia, the protests and demonstrations against the police and "police violence," the "control of the narrative" by the independentists in the face of the errors, and the impotence of the central government.

As newspapers often do, *El País* presents itself in these discourses as a voice, an actor in the public sphere who, in addition to reporting a selection of what happens, gives events form and meaning through a discourse of its own. In the case of *El País*, this perspective of enunciation is presented as institutional, impartial, and guided by the good of Spain and the values common to democratic citizenship. From this position it judges, justifies, and criticizes actions, while proposing solutions, implying its responsibility as an institutional actor for solving common problems.

3.3. *Ara's Strategy*

The front pages of *Ara*, quite different from those of *El País*, force us to reflect on images in journalistic communication. In *Ara* we see an amplification of the image that formally links its front page to the tradition of the Pasquinade or the political poster. More explicitly than that of *El País*, *Ara's* front page blurs the line between journalism and the discourse of agitation, mobilization, denunciation, etc. typical of an actor, a party in a debate or political conflict.

But the image-text of these front pages participates in the same process as in all communication. Each act of communication starts from a conjecture about the interpretation of the other (Eco, 1990), a conjecture that adapts and develops when the receiver's feedback can be incorporated (as seen in "market" and audience studies, and as is commonly done in conversations). Understanding an act of communication requires understanding the dialogue between the participants' systems of meaning, which is done in both words and images, as Danto suggests. Audiences must interpret, translate, and reformulate what they receive from their own encyclopaedias, their stores of knowledge, and experiences of meaning, which tend to be more or less similar to those of the utterer. In the case of *Ara* in regard to the 1-O Referendum, the publication presupposes a public which clearly identifies with the position and perspective of the newspaper, that of supporting the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (DUI).

The semiologists, beginning with Barthes in his *Mythologies* (1953/1999), showed the overlap of different systems of meaning and the dominant narratives of an era that occur in the banal images of common culture or in objects of consumption. They suggest that the meaning of a text (be it visual, verbal, or musical) is not produced as a sum of independent elements, but rather as the organization of associations between the elements that make up the structure of the common culture. These are cultures organized in semiotic nuclei and peripheries (Lotman, 1998), in inevitable and unquestioned associations which exclude or marginalize the irrelevant or objectionable elements. Thus, in addressing a verbal-visual text, here the front pages of *Ara*, as an act of communication, it is necessary to question the common ground that the enunciator presumes to share with its intended addressee. These presumptions enable us to understand some of the systems of meaning, value, and affects which the newspaper assumes to share with its readers (an audience with which it has a long-term relationship and knows well). The question of meaning in image-texts will be central to the analysis of these front pages as they relate to the interpretive possibilities that they facilitate, allowing us to respond to what each communicative interaction puts at stake, as we have previously done with the front pages of *El País*. Our central task is to question how the front pages of *Ara*

lead the addressee to see and feel something "in a certain light" and to accept certain assumptions as unquestionable.

3.3.1 Ara 1 October 2017



On Ara's 1 October 2017 front page, a large graphic shows hands grasping blank ballots, followed by a large headline *A les nostres mans* (In our hands), both situated on a yellow background (the colour of the independence movement) that covers the whole front page. Just like *El País*, although in smaller font, *Ara* features this issue's most important contributors on the front page, although it does not include the titles of the pieces, just the authors' names.

To think that something is in our hands, we must assume that we have the power to act on that object. As the public knows, the referendum is prohibited, so this, what Lakoff and Johnson would call an utterance of authority, (Lakoff and Johnson, 2009:103) acquires more value. While *El País* does not specify the "we" in communication with the addressee, we see a "we" of *Ara's* discourse that expressly unites the enunciator with the receiver to recruit them to appropriate the necessary power, power that is "in our hands", at our disposal, to achieve what we desire, a compelling reason to vote. The image and the headline are complemented by a clear rhetorical orientation: we want to achieve the same thing and that requires exercising our collective power and going out to vote.

In the hands, which hold up a ballot, we see a representation of the gesture of clutching. The fingers close around the clutched object – the ballot, in this case – a symbol of democracy. This gesture of clutching, according to Canetti, is the "central and most celebrated act of power" (Canetti, 1981:112). "The hand that no longer releases becomes the very symbol of power." But this front page represents a solid unit of the group reminiscent of crowd crystals: small, rigid groups of people, fixedly limited and constant, that serve to trigger crowds. "Whoever sees them or lives them must feel, first and foremost, that they will never disintegrate" (Canetti, 1981:84). Associated with the statement of the headline, the unity of this determined and firm group of hands represents "our hands", metonymic and explicitly representing "us". It may be paraphrased thusly: "the common goal is within our reach, we are united and determined, no one can stop us".

It is certainly intended to produce an exhilarating effect since what is proclaimed by the gesture is the appropriation of democracy. The seven hands grasp the ballots, lift them above their heads, as a banner or proclamation is raised. They are united with firmness and hope to proclaim something, in this case the right and power of the vote.

- Puigdemont announces that he will implement the outcome confirms the reasons for that hope, that victory is near.

The third block, on the left side of the page, displays the referendum participation data. After the statistics of the decisive victory of the yes vote (with a 42.5% turnout), comes the "tally of the wounded", the index of the decried repression which is a new offense. The day's triumph is marred by offense.

On these front pages, the majority of what is communicated is at the level of assumption. Supporting itself on an established assemblage of preconceptions, definitions, values, and emotions, the publication proposes a narrative to the reader: we are not a free society; we are forbidden to vote. The onus is on the state, which offends us, represses us, and brings us shame, as it brings shame to every democratic citizen. But we head towards the solution: we act as a collective subject with dignity, in the face of the persistence of power and anti-democratic actions.

3.3.3. Ara 3 October 2017



The front page of the 3-O issue is more complex than the previous ones due to the greater diversity of graphic resources, including advertising, which did not appear in the previous two. First, a strapline opens the front page and encompasses the theme: Referendum. This is followed by another line that mentions the bad situation of IBEX-35 companies. Thirdly, the headline reads:

- Puigdemont "Sa Majestat, així no" (Your Majesty, not like this),

accompanied by two other statements in smaller font, also attributed to President Puigdemont

- He warns Felipe VI that he has disappointed the majority of Catalans

- He insists on the path of mediation to find a way forward

This second statement links the headline with the main photograph, which shows the interior of the European parliament, the institution to which Puigdemont appeals. Five MEPs show posters about their position in the Catalan conflict. Two are the same and written in English, "Yes to dialogue, no to violence", while another two are in Spanish. The first reads, "Yes to democracy, yes to dialogue, no to violence", the second, "Rajoy, step down". The image presented by the fifth poster appears to show the police violence of 1-O. The caption refers to the first debate on Catalan independence held in the European Parliament:

- Europe Calls for Dialogue, but Will Not Intercede. Yesterday the European Parliament held its first debate on Catalan independence with few surprises and fewer compromises.

This image is presented as an index of the European Parliament's rejection of the Spanish State's reaction in the Catalan case, through a metonymy that takes the part (the MEPs who denounce state violence) for the whole (the chamber with its 751 members). The idea is reiterated in the caption, which states that, while it will not intercede, "Europe appeals to dialogue" and therefore stands against violence (by the Spanish state).

The rejection of the State is blunt in the headline. Here the State is represented by the figure of its head, the king, and the condemnation comes from the president of the Generalitat: "Your Majesty, not like this". It is an utterance of defiance of authority (Lakoff and Johnson, 2009: 103), because if the president of a community, Catalonia, assumes that he can direct the king's behaviour, it is because he feels as if they have the same rights and privileges; he does not recognize the different state hierarchy. The same rhetorical orientation of challenging the state is repeated in the subtitles that accompany the headline. Puigdemont appropriates the position of he who "warns" the head of state and calls for European intervention.

The figures on these front pages – the anonymous group of hands, the policemen and protesters, the voters, the European parliamentarians, the president of the Generalitat, and the King of Spain – play their respective roles in a story that *Ara* readers know well and which increases in affective intensity at the time of the referendum. Two key aspects of this narrative repeat themselves on these three front pages. Firstly, the absence of democracy in Spain. On the 1-O front page we infer this deficiency from the image of the collective gesture calling for the vote, which proposes to obtain something precisely because it is absent. On day two, this idea is projected through the repression exercised by the state, embodied by the riot police. On the third day it is represented through the MEPs who position themselves against the violence of the Spanish State, taken metonymically as a representation of a protest against Spain by the entire European Parliament.

The second key idea repeated on these days is that of the power of the collective subject of this narrative, the population and the pro-independence authorities. On the first front page, this power is projected with the image of his hands clutching ballots, on the second by the resistance of the protesters-voters and the raised fist of the old woman who had just voted, and on the third by Puigdemont's challenge to the King. They all involve stoking or reinforcing feelings of anger toward an enemy and feelings of enthusiasm for one's own cause and power.

4. Conclusions

At this key moment in the conflict, both sides pull out the big guns. On 1 October the pro-independence movement carried out the prohibited referendum, even with problems of legitimacy, and despite obstacles from police, judges and the central government. Images of police repression attempting to prevent the vote and facing the resistance of the people took over the front pages of the world's main media on 2 October, which caused a serious questioning of the Spanish state. On the constitutionalist side, they maintain that "the government prevented the referendum" (since the vote that was made did not meet legal requirements) and on 3 October proposed the drastic measure of abolishing Catalan autonomy through the application of Article 155 of the Constitution. However, neither side emerges with a definitive victory.

We note that the discourses of *Ara* and *El País* reflect the existence of two "emotional communities", sustained by their own standards of evaluation and emotional expression (Rosenwein 2012: 25; Macón and Solana, 2015: 31). As we have demonstrated, emotions, intertwined with beliefs and narratives, are fundamental in the definition of the two "we" subjects who enter into conflict in this situation as well as the definition their enunciative strategies. Both regard themselves as the only legitimate political subject of democracy, which their enemy jeopardizes.

This political danger is projected as a threat that affects each individual and unites individual affective experience with the framework of collective representation. Boucheron and Robin (2019:48) recall that for Hobbes one of a sovereign's most important functions is to decree, plainly and evenly, whether or not a nation is threatened. Fear of this greater danger is key in the narratives of both papers, which identify the object their audience should fear, explain the reasons for their danger, and propose confronting it. The threat against "us" and our values is a central component in forming the "learned feeling" (Berlant 2014) of national identity.

Both narratives present a cluster of outrageous acts, abuses of power, etc. of their respective opponent. This repetition of offenses fulfils the rhetorical role of stoking the recipient's anger and at the same time legitimizing it. This is not an emotional attitude against the other held a priori, but a reaction that is substantiated with evidence and rationally argued. The difference between illegitimate violent rage and

justified, rational, and peacefully expressed rage is key to the mediatization of public protests (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018: 2078). This conception here is also fundamental to give form to an emotion – anger – and present it as well-justified by the improper actions of the other, exposed as "conscious" violation, an "abuse" of and "contempt" to the rights of all.

The discourses of both publications make a moral and affective definition of the situation and their opponent. The enemy arouses "our" strong opposition, anger and contempt. Each side associates the other with vices such as cruelty (because of the harassment suffered by each other), betrayal (of democratic principles), and hypocrisy (some enter the institutions to destroy them and the others are claimed to be led by an anti-democratic state). The insistence on these vices tends to naturalize feelings of contempt and disgust.

But each side also joins these negative emotions (fear, anger, contempt, disgust) to others (Jasper 2012), such as satisfaction in one's own strength, enthusiasm to fight for a just cause, and the desire to prevail, that are indispensable to counter negativity and to try to mobilise its audience for confrontation. The emotions of combat, in any case, are not exalted nor are they an expression of an uncontrolled passionate subject. Quite the contrary, they emerge as controlled and are widely justified rationally; they underline their own non-violence whenever possible, even in the face of the violent actions of the opponent. Violence against the citizenry is incompatible with democracy in our common imaginary (Lorusso, 2011) and the discourses of the parties in conflict try to attribute violence to the opponent or to justify it on their own side. Thus, *Ara* underlines the police repression of 1-O and, with the word "*Vergonya*", alludes to the watchful eyes of a third party, other democratic countries, to whom this repression is unacceptable (given that their public is familiar with the international media's condemnation of this repression, widely collected in common media spaces). Conversely, in *El País's* image, armed police can barely protect themselves from harassment of the crowd.

In addition to channels of affective identification and empathy, does the rhetoric of these speeches offer hope, as does the "national sentimentality," according to Berlant? In *Ara*, the referendum figures as a clearly hopeful step in the "*procés*" towards the ultimate objective of a determined, firm, and just collective movement pursuing their right to independence. The narrative of *El País* is not as hopeful. The offense that constitutionalists face is the threat to the status quo, and to repair that offense is to repair such a status quo. There is no promise of change for the better, except to win the fight, which would amount to returning to the starting point prior to the commotion caused by the "*procés*".

Both narratives are clearly opposed by their definition of their respective "us," by their objectives, and their conception of the enemy, but their enunciative strategy is very similar: given the serious diagnoses of the situation that each party projects, the democratic citizenry is obliged to act. In both cases the editorial discourse becomes activist and adopts the position of those who represent not a party in a political conflict, but rather a whole: the nation (Spanish or Catalan) and its *raison d'être*, the democracy by which it is governed. This approach is much more explicit in *Ara*, which, as we have seen, formally approximates the political poster with its front page. *El País*, on the other hand, uses the mask of impartiality. However, the discourses of both publications show a partisan enunciation. The radicalization of the conflict takes these newspapers away from the sort of enunciation by an impartial observer and clearly shows them as "affect generators" who seek to politically guide and emotionally involve their audiences in their discourses.

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