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Language-use Extension in Linguistic Normalization Processes: General Patterns and the Catalan Experience
Albert Bastardas-Boada

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LANGUAGE-USE EXTENSION IN LINGUISTIC NORMALIZATION PROCESSES: GENERAL PATTERNS AND THE CATALAN EXPERIENCE

ALBERT BASTARDAS-BOADA

I. GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PHENOMENON AND BASIC CONCEPTS

We define as *linguistic normalization* — the descriptive term conceived by Lluís V. Aracil (1965) — those processes which certain linguistic communities, politically dominated over a long period of history, adopt in order to create the necessary conditions for ensuring in full their normality and stability as a human group with a distinct language of their own. This process generally entails the supplanting of the alien language, viz. that of the dominant national group, by a linguistic code of their own, derived from the autochthonous community itself, as the vehicle for serving all the internal functions which the other language had until then monopolized by reason of the political dependence of the subject community.

These communicative functions, carried out in the linguistic code of the alien national group wielding political and military power, generally correspond to those which, being of a public nature, can more easily be kept under the control of the established political institutions. Thus, the use of the alien tongue and the exclusion of the autochthonous language is often the habitual norm in these cases as regards the conduct of affairs in governmental spheres (political authorities, administrative offices, etc.), organized education, the mass media, business correspondence, and public announcements and notices in general, etc. Thereafter, its use can extend, depending on circumstances, to areas of a more private nature, such as written personal intercommunication, literary works and even to informal oral exchanges with other persons — at first of alien origin and subsequently within the subordinate national group itself.

These historical situations involving political dependence, generally the result of dynastic unions, military conquests or diplomacy agreements can finally culminate not only in processes tending towards ever-extensive use of the dominant nation's language, but also very often in the commensurate reduction of the functions of the linguistic codes of the subjected groups themselves. This dynamic may inexorably lead to the gradual extinction of the mother tongues of the dependent communities, an objective which in fact is often consciously sought after by the dominant powers in pursuit of their desire for linguistic assimilation of the annexed peoples. This is clearly exemplified in the cases of the Celtic languages in Great Britain, of Provençal, Breton, Basque (Euskera) and Catalan in France or Galician, Basque (Euskera) and Catalan in Spain. The retention of political power by the dominant nation enables its ruling classes to impose progressively on subordinate peoples – sometimes openly, but often surreptitiously – the particular normative principles which increasingly tend towards the introduction of the use of the allochthonous language and the prohibition of the use of the native tongue in the conduct of affairs of an institutional and public nature, as has previously been pointed out (vide Balibar & Laporte, 1976; Ferrer, 1985; Aracil, 1983 and 1986).

Faced with such actions of a State power wielding the monopoly of violent coercion and, as so often in these historical cases, bereft of any recognition of their democratic rights even at individual level, oppressed communities have inevitably had to adapt themselves to the situation and consequently carry on gradually bilingualizing themselves throughout the whole social scale – a dynamic enormously aided in more recent times by the existence of a general educational system and by the need to use the language which such a regime provides if one wishes to have the opportunity to advance oneself socio-economically.

In this setting, the phenomenon of generational substitution of the population favours linguistic learning and behavioural change, factors which tend to boost the acceleration of the gene-

ralized bilingualization of the subordinate society, and, equally, the overall abandonment of its own native tongue even as the customary language in conducting private personal communications. At this stage, the natural transmission of the subordinated language to the next generation will be interrupted and its extinction will follow. Conversely, in a similar manner and depending on the historical context, the generational renewal can give rise to the growth of resistive ideas and attitudes and of loyalty to the mother tongue. This development can not only perpetuate the use of the autochthonous language in private spheres but can also lead to the burgeoning of movements aimed at the reassertion of national liberty and linguistic normalization.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it has been possible for many of the situations deriving from political dependence and linguistic subordination to be modified, mainly due to the emergence and growth of ideologies favouring the democratic system; those which during the period of romanticism held in esteem national as opposed to alien attributes and, later, those which defended nationalist groups in their quest for self-determination. These new ideas inspired within the subordinate communities the formation of movements — some more powerful than others, depending on the circumstances — campaigning for self-government and for what we now call today *linguistic normalization*.

Some circles within the subject nationalities began to show the seeds of self-determination and irredentism and to form civil-political organizations aiming at the achievement of these goals. Depending on factors such as the fortuitous evolution of the international politico-military state of affairs: the degree of acceptance of these new ideas within the subordinate group: and the ratio of interdependence between the established state structure and the subject nations, some of the latter were successful in constituting themselves into politically differentiated units, either as nation-states (Hungary, Finland, Norway, etc.) or else as confederated, federated or autonomous entities within state or-

ganizations shared with more than one other nation (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Belgium, U.S.S.R., etc.).

As the vindictory movements continued to triumph and to reverse the former situation of total political subjugation, the successful linguistic communities, moved by a feeling to affirm their own national identity and to differentiate themselves from the formerly dominant group, initiated deliberate processes of linguistic normalization aimed at their consolidation as a separate cultural and linguistic entity and, at the same time, bestowed on a common referential form of the autochthonous tongue the social functions which up to then had been performed by the language of the hitherto dominant nation. As, in many cases, the functional absence of the native tongue in the conduct of public affairs had made it impossible for the existence of the grammatical and lexical norms usually observed by the population in general, the sub-process known as normativization, viz. codifying or standardizing, had to be put into effect so as to establish formal unitary and supradialectal precepts, and thus enable the autochthonous language to be used without constructional problems in the public spheres where such aspects are important.

In many instances there already existed either linguistic propositions conceived more or less on the lines of the unitary form, or else, literary traditions observed to a greater or lesser extent in certain private circles. Generally, however, these had to be revised by an official normativizing body and ratified by government authority before they could start to be used in public affairs and thus disseminated widely throughout the population as a whole (vide Garvin, 1953 and 1976; Haugen, 1966).

However, the mere fact that the autochthonous language may have a unified form dedicated to official use does not automatically and immediately mean that this linguistic form is in fact used in all social intercourse by the formerly subordinate nation. There has to begin, at that point, a *sub-process to extend* the use of this native language form; that is to say, a sequence of actions having as their objective the acquiring of knowledge of the for-

mal characteristics of the new language by part of the total population, and culminating in actual use of the language in all internal communicative functions of the linguistic community.

Replacement of the previously dominant public language by the native tongue will tend to be an irregular process, and one which is not homogeneous throughout the population concerned. As regards messages of a public nature — official and non-official — government bodies can continue to lay down norms for gradually introducing the new code and for suspending use of the formerly dominant tongue, so that communications issuing from institutions can progressively be regularized by specially trained staff who, during the transitional stage, see to it that public messages are circulated in the autochthonous idiom, thus contributing to the general diffusion of that language.

The stability of the previously subordinate linguistic community will carry on gaining ground *pari passu* with the degree to which its own language continues to perform all the internal communicative functions of this group, in both public and private areas, with the consequent recession of the allochthonous idiom.

In fact, it will very probably be linguistic usage in the public areas that will in the long run determine private area usage, as would seem to be indicated in recent history by the mechanisms governing the processes of overall substitution of one linguistic code by another. Continuity of the native language will therefore be achieved when its generalized presence in the public functions of the community make it unnecessary to use the old dominant code, and the native tongue is thus also the one normally used in the family circle — the medium responsible for the natural transmission of the first language of the generations to come.

2. POPULATION, POLITICAL POWER AND THE LINGUISTIC CODE IN COMPLEX SITUATIONS

In situations in which the majority of the population has already lost its proficiency — primarily oral and dialectal — in the native idiom, i.e. has already acquired as its first language that of foreign origin, as is the case, for example, in Eire and Euskadi, the process of extension of the use of the normativized version of the language is customarily slow and protracted and is not totally generalized before the emergence of a new generation schooled in the new language, the process of linguistic normalization becomes rather more complex and of a considerably longer minimum duration.

To arrive at the situation of having a consolidated linguistic community, the normalization process will have to accomplish in cases of this nature, first, that the autochthonous language is mastered as a second tongue, and later, that it is transmitted as first language to a new generation which will have it as an habitual and spontaneous native language, and be able to continue passing it on equally naturally in the future (cf. the case of Hebrew in Israel).

In cases where the subordinate national group may not have succeeded in establishing itself as a totally sovereign and independent entity, and finds itself sharing the state organization with other nations demographically superior in numbers (and often globally superior in power), the degree of self-government which it has achieved and the linguistic principles on which it has created the new state can equally be very decisive elements in the development and success of the process of linguistic normalization. The fact that sharing use of the same state institutions also generally involves participating in the same physical and economic space with no internal barriers means that a close interrelation in many other aspects will progressively develop between the various national component groups. Because of the numerical inequality between the populations — for generally the domin-

ant national group is that which is demographically superior — this will tend to create the need for the subordinate group to know and to use the language of the community in the majority, rather than the reverse. If to this existing *natural* imbalance has to be added a political superstructure which does not guarantee, or even puts difficulties in the way of, the use of the language of the subordinate community in the exercise of all the dependent functions of government administration, advancement of that language can find itself impeded by this lack of its total use in functions of official business, even though the subordinate community enjoys a certain level of self-government. This type of situation results when the linguistic provisions of the new state are not based on the principle of officially monolingual areas existing in juxtaposition with equal coofficial status for the language of each national group in the common institutions (viz. the system to be found, for example, in Switzerland, Yugoslavia or — with the exception of Brussels — in Belgium). When the multinational state is not linguistically structured in such a way, with the result that only one language of the constituent communities — that of the majority — is recognized as official in the institutions common to all, the remaining different language groups will be condemned to a bilingualization of the *entirety* of their citizens and to non-execution in their own language of all functions in public spheres.

Such a situation can result in a perpetuation — albeit to a degree distinct from that experienced in the former phase of total subordination — of instability in the minority linguistic community, given the persistent official interpositioning of the other language and the tendency towards the *natural* predominance of that tongue by reason of its being the language of the hegemonic national group in the multipartite state.

The difficulties facing processes of linguistic normalization can increase still further in those cases in which not only does the subordinate community have no possibility of reserving exclusive linguistic functions for its own language but also substantial

contingents of people of the dominant national group have moved in to live in the territory of the minority group. Within such conformations — to be found today, for instance, in Wales, Euskadi and the Catalan-speaking countries themselves — the situations generally reveal from the outset an overall bilingualism on the part of the autochthonous group, and conversely, a much lesser degree of knowledge and usage of the language of the territorial community among the group of alien origin, due to the fact that intergroup intercourse tends to be conducted more in the dominant tongue — which everyone knows — than in the language of the subordinate community, of which the immigrant population are ignorant at the time of their arrival. In this scenario the process of extension of the use of the native language can encounter formidable obstacles in the form not only of the intrinsic disadvantages facing the minority language on the constitutional plane but also the very composition of the population subjected to the process. In this case, the situation can be more complex than that characterized by the loss of proficiency in the autochthonous code on the part of the population itself of the subordinate national community, since the numerous migrant individuals speaking the dominant language will probably not interpret the situation in the same terms as the natives who, despite the fact that the language of the indigenous group is now not spoken, can still cherish its identity and experience an irredentist motivation. In the case of a population becoming dehomogenized by migratory irruptions, the alien groups can very easily feel no sense of identity with the politically subordinated community and can even, on the contrary, have ties with the ethnic identity of the dominant state group, within which they can feel themselves included, on the perceptive plane.

The evolution of the process of linguistic normalization in this type of setting will therefore not depend only on the actions of the political power but also the form taken by the global relations between the human groups in contact with one another. Of particular importance will be such factors as the quantitative pro-

portion of each group, their residential location — elements these which will have a bearing on the frequency with which they meet —, and the differences in economic rating and social status together with the posture which the autochthonous community adopts towards the migratory phenomenon. These factors are important in deciding how each group will define the other.

Linguistically, it is clear that the massive presence of individuals all speaking the dominant language will tend to be an element of confusion and probably also tension in the normalization process, since it can delay and, depending on the circumstances, even make it impossible for the adoption of specific governmental measures aimed at fostering the autochthonous code as opposed to that of the newcomers. Because the process of linguistic normalization takes place in a democratic setting in which, at least in theory, every citizen enjoys equality of vote and of rights before the law, the dominant language group can exercise important pressure when it comes to defining the concrete linguistic policy of the autonomous government, within the limits that constitutional principles allow it, that is. The fact that an important part of the population within the territory may not be of autochthonous origin, added to the fact that the self-governing institutions of the subordinate community are obligatorily subject to the general State principles governing linguistic matters, can give rise to an insecure and unstable process of normalization and one which is finally not at all clear. The impossibility of implementing effective measures for the advancement of the autochthonous code and the withdrawal of important functions of the dominant tongue, together with the mechanism of absorption of the mixed marriage, can increasingly lead to a progressive demolinguistic diminution of the autochthonous community in relation to the immigrant group. This may make it impossible, in the long run, for the attainment of the minima objectives of stability and viability of the subordinate linguistic community.

3. THE CATALAN CASE

In the context of the ideological backwardness of Spanish political structures, which has repeatedly obstructed the consolidation of a democratically-based system and made possible the perpetuation of absolutist and dictatorial situations until very recently, the Catalan-speaking community, comprehensively subjected to governmental denationalization programmes from the xviiith century as regards France and more specifically, in the case of Spain from the xviiith century, has tried from the end of the xixth and beginning of the xxth century to undertake seriously the process of normalizing its autochthonous language in order to constitute itself into a distinct and stable linguistic community in the Spanish and European context. In Catalonia particularly — the leading zone of the modern national reassertion movement within the Catalan-speaking area —, but also in the Valencian Country and the Balearic Islands, there haven been attempts to advance towards this objective each time the setting-up of a democratic system has occurred in Spain in the xxth century. From the political institutions at differing levels to which members of the Catalan linguistic community have been able to gain entry they have been undertook policies to promote the autochthonous as opposed to the alien code so widely imposed by political bodies of outside dependence. However, as democracy so often suffered continual periods of interruption throughout the century, every attempt to normalize Catalan has met with the same fate. Bearing in mind this context, the task which has been achieved in this field has been immense, particularly in the normativisation or codification of the language — an essential aspect of any normalization process — which has enabled the process to be restarted in this new historical era from a more advanced stage than if it had had to be commenced anew.

The situation of the Catalan-speaking community, when the new period delineated by the Spanish Constitution of 1978 began, was characterized by a general absence of the public use of

Catalan, both in official and non-official matters, an absence interrupted only by the voluntary actions of cultural bodies and persons acting a private capacity, and by the allotting of a few short periods on official radio and television programmes, generally in off-peak hours. In this institutional framework of absolute predominance of Castilian and the corresponding absence of Catalan, the population in general had become bilingual at the oral level and, conversely, unilingual on the written plane, having been taught only in Castilian at School. However, use of the autochthonous idiom tended to be general in oral intercommunication of a private nature between persons of native origin, except in certain sections of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie which had abandoned use of their own language even in private circles. Written communications between official and economic bodies and between these and the citizens were in effect exclusively in Castilian, and oral exchanges, in general, were also predominantly in Castilian except, however, in the ambit of small and medium private companies, in which spoken Catalan continued to be widely used. But the population in the Catalan-speaking territories was not entirely of autochthonous origin; a substantial percentage — possibly more than 40% in Catalonia — came from geographical areas belonging to the Castilian-speaking linguistic community and were integrated and interrelated, at least economically, with the Catalan community. Due to the fact that, generally speaking, the learning of Castilian by Catalans had been enormously assisted by their schooling exclusively in the alien idiom, and that the use of that language was, as a result of political events, absolutely indispensable in public life, intercourse between autochthons and immigrants was for the most part in Castilian, always supposing that the latter had not already been many years in Catalonia, or been born there, or else had arrived there as small children and encountered a social context conducive to Catalanization.

The political setting which now enables the sub-process of extending the use of Catalan to be reinitiated again, as a fundamen-

tal part of the process of normalization of this linguistic community, is basically characterized by the removal of many of the obstacles which organs of state power earlier put in the way of the public use of Catalan, by its present-day recognition — albeit gradual in practice — by certain departments of the peripheral central State administration in Catalonia, and at the same time by the creation of self-governing Catalan bodies which have Catalan as their own language while having to observe an official Catalan/Castilian bilingualism. Catalan is therefore a coofficial language now in Catalonia but not in the common central state organisms, while the dominant idiom, Castilian, continues to be the only official language of the central state bodies and, in addition, also enjoys coofficial status in Catalonia and the rest of the autonomous communities in the subordinated linguistic area. The autonomous local Catalan institutions then can now have Catalan as the language of customary internal use and pursue a certain policy for promoting the use of Catalan, by means of external messages not strictly of an administrative nature, through the school system, by creating and maintaining means of communication, by encouraging its use in the public activities of private concerns and in artistic creation, etc. However, these actions in support of Catalan can often encounter interference — or else, in fields for which the state is strictly speaking responsible, disinterest — from or on the part of the central state bodies which, still having ample areas of power affecting the non-Castilian linguistic communities, and sheltered under a judicial power inevitably influenced by the ideological paradigm of the nation-state, continue to tend generally to seek after the diffusion and predominance of the use of Castilian in all territories integrated within the common state.

In this political context, the communications of privately-run institutions and bodies — of enormous influence in present-day society — continue to adapt themselves slowly and irregularly to a new situation which, as stated earlier, although it depenalizes and legalizes the use of the native tongue in the Catalan-speaking

area included in the Spanish state, does not exclude the use of the dominant code, Castilian, either, but rather blesses it as being coofficial in the autochthonous territory and the only official language in the common central state organs. Catalan then is being increasingly used in certain private institutions performing a public service in Catalonia, but with less force and conviction in many other profit-making concerns, although it is generally found alongside Castilian, the language which continues to be in greater use globally — though formerly it was exclusively in use in practice — in public announcements and notices. A decisive contributory factor in this is the continual arrival of messages in the dominant idiom, not produced in the autochthonous territory but coming from the rest of the state (television, radio, periodicals, informative, booklets, publicity, commercial labelling, etc., etc.) which, in the absence of any legal precept establishing distinct territorial linguistic areas, regards the state's territory as being a single economic and consumer unit and, consequently, generally transmits its communications in Castilian only.

In parallel with these circumstances, the evolution of the population would seem to be tending towards a slow but steady reduction of the overall percentage of individuals having the autochthonous idiom as their first language and, conversely, towards a progressive increase of those who have had both languages as *mother tongues* (the case in mixed marriages) and those who only have Castilian. The trend of this process — with its initial causes still rooted in the previous political phase — in these first years of the new democratic era would seem to suggest therefore a progressively minority demographic presence of persons of the population itself having the autochthonous idiom as their first language and, correspondingly, not only the mere continuance of population having Castilian as the first language but even an increase in the percentage of these, although physical immigration may at this moment have come to a stop. Thus, although taking the total overall population living in Catalonia the proportion between the two groups may favour the autochthonous group, or

at least balance out equally, the figures to be observed in the new generations show a marked imbalance in favour of Castilian, the language which is the *mother tongue* for more individuals than is Catalan. Against this however, the number of persons of immigrant origin who understand Catalan and, in the new generations, the global number of those who know how to read and write it, is increasing at the same time, as a result of the measures adopted in the new situation. Nevertheless, it has to be borne in mind that increased knowledge of Catalan does not automatically imply the same degree of growth in its usage, given the possibility, in this case, of using another language known by the whole population with the norms of usage predominantly in its favour.

In this context, the linguistic usages of the population in general have undergone little change with regard to the former situation, although there continue to be important advances in the possibilities for using Catalan, particularly orally, in dealing with official local government organs in Catalonia, especially those dependent on autonomous bodies, and also with some local offices which are the responsibility of the central state government. In other, private, spheres, the possibility of being attended to in Catalan in dealings with entities and companies with which this was previously impossible, is still in a backward state, particularly because of a lack of policy in this sense on the part of many of these organizations, and in spite of the prevailing autonomous legislative provisions which, however, have not been pressed home to any great extent. In effect, the main problem could reside in those positions of a public relations nature occupied by persons of allochthonous origin who did not find themselves in a Catalanizing social and institutional context at the time of their arrival in the Catalan area, and who have therefore not developed Catalan as a spoken idiom, notwithstanding the fact that the great majority of them understand it. This fact, in concert with the norm of usage of Catalans which predominates in intergroup intercourse and which favour the use of Castilian, provokes a si-

tuation in which being attended to in Catalan is infrequently insisted upon, a phenomenon which at the same time contributes to the non-awakening of any interest in the subject on the part of many executives of these entities and companies who, enveloped in the inertia, probably never succeed in consciously recognizing the problem. In fact, the norm of using Castilian and not Catalan in the daily exchanges of individuals of one or other linguistic group is a situation which recurs in every type of social encounter and seemingly cannot be easily altered, although one has the impression that there has been some advance in the use of the autochthonous code in mixed meetings, despite the fact that it would seem for the most part that autochthonous individuals still revert to using Castilian when addressing themselves personally to speakers of immigrant origin.

4. FUTURE PROSPECTS

In this state of affairs in Catalonia, of progressive diminution of Catalan as the first language of the new generations (as was the case at least up to the end of 1981) and the slow but steady growth of that code as the second language of Castilian-speaking immigrants and as the written code — together with Castilian — of the whole population, but with a tendency also towards perpetuating the norms of interpersonal usage originated in the previous political situation, the evolution of the process of normalizing the use of Catalan appears to be ambiguous and fraught with problems. The fact that, in general, individuals habitually prefer to use the language they have developed in the first place and that it this language which generally defines their ethnic identity — with all the consequences that this entails — would seem to be an extremely important factor in the evolution of the situation, more especially as it could lead to a change of majority linguistic group in Catalan society, a phenomenon which would have marked political, and obviously linguistic, repercussions on the future of

the autochthonous community. Therefore, unless this tendency is halted in the next few years and the proportions of the two linguistic groups in the new generations balance out or the scales come down once again in favour of Catalan, the spread of Catalan as the second language among immigrants and as a written code among the autochthonous population can already be elements of secondary importance in the whole normalization process which, if the gradual demographic reduction of the autochthonous group itself is confirmed, may drift towards still more complex, conflictive and difficult phases.

In actual fact, a fundamental rôle in this evolution will be played by the degree of transformation of the linguistic usages in the official and non-official bodies of the Catalan-language territorial area. If for the most part the reaction of these entities is to maintain the inertia which has characterized their earlier behaviour and to continue predominantly (or even exclusively) Castilian and not embark upon the restoration of internal and external linguistic usages favouring the habitual predominance of Catalan — both oral and written —, the sociolinguistic process can tend, taking into account the present situation of the norms of linguistic behaviour of the population, more and more towards conserving the supremacy of Castilian in both institutional and private functions and thus make the future normalization of the Catalan linguistic community impossible. If important changes are not forthcoming — even though in a gradual form — to make it a reality that Catalan be preminent in the linguistic usages of teaching, public and private enterprises, means of communication and official institutions, it could prove difficult to bring about behavioural changes in individuals which would not only make possible a reversal, in favour of the autochthonous code, of the tendency presently favouring Castilian in the intergenerational transmission of the first language, but also the simple predominance of Catalan current interpersonal usages.

It is important then, to pay attention to the fact that the future of the normalization process depends fundamentally on *ins-*

titutionalized communications, which are those that can in the final instance bring about a change in the *individualized* behaviour of the whole population. Therefore, to the extent that it is possible to transform the public messages as a whole that are published and received within the setting of the Catalan-speaking community, so the process of linguistic normalization will forge ahead or come to a standstill. Another factor which should also not be overlooked is the ecological functioning of the sociocultural system — the existential background of all languages. Consequently, we must equally take notice of the interrelationship of all the elements that can have an influence on the process. For example, the extension of the use of Catalan in school can have only slight repercussions on social relations as a whole if, in parallel, a similar dynamic is not produced in the rest of the linguistic usages of the other institutions of the society, — and, especially, in those most closely connected with the economic activity of individuals — given this interdependent characteristic of all the elements which influence linguistic usage. However efficacious the school system may be in imparting proficiency in a given language, the use of that language will always be subject to determination by many other, totally extrascholastic, social factors. In fact, the determinants of the use of one or other linguistic code have to be sought in a complex conglomerate of factors, among which will probably be the social norms currently predominating, the language preminent in the socio-economic positions and activities of higher *status*, and those transmitted through the school system and the mass media, etc. Equally, it will only be after a personal evaluation by the community as a whole of the relevant factors affecting them most, that individuals presently living in the territory of the Catalan linguistic community decide on the transmission of one language or the other to their descendants, and thus make possible the continuance or extinction of the autochthonous tongue.

The basic responsibility for taking intelligent action on a change of institutionalized linguistic usages resides fundamental-

ly in the political organisms of the Catalan-language community and, specifically, through the legal dispositions and actions which they make undertake directly in order to assist and promote the process, and through the regulatory proposals which, jointly with the political representatives of the autochthonous population in the organs of the common central parliament, they may put before these bodies and the state executive for approval and implementation. From this perspective, although the present political phase has made possible the reinitiation of the process of normalization of Catalan, the principles which as regards linguistic matters are hallowed in the constitutional texts and, especially, the interpretations which various courts of law are wont to put on them, seem to contain the same limitations and restrictions which make difficult the gradual adoption of specific measures necessary for the complete stability of the Catalan-speaking community in Spain. This state of affairs can easily lead to a deterioration of the situation and an increase in the level of conflict, especially if interpretations within the prevailing constitutional framework do not evolve in the near future towards clearer principles, which would permit the necessary promotion of Catalan and the limitation of Castilian in the whole ambit of institutionalized communications in the territories of the Catalan-speaking community, in accordance with the will of their democratic representatives.

The process of normalization of the Catalan language is therefore complex and, moreover, diversified according to the various regions of the territory of the linguistic community. The Catalan case reveals at the same time two of the major factors of instability to be found in this type of process: on the one hand, the presence of a high degree of political interference on the part of the dominant national group and, on the other hand, the existence of important sectors of population — of autochthonous as well as immigrant origin — which do not have as their first language the native tongue of the community but, conversely, do have that of the dominant national group, with varying degrees of lin-

guistic knowledge and motivation to press on with a process of normalization of the autochthonous code. On the success of the performance of the autonomous political powers and on the stance taken by the central state bodies controlled by the dominant national group, will therefore depend whether the process of linguistic normalization advances towards stages of greater stability and consolidation, or else bogs down in phases of continuous drawn-out hierarchical stalemate — and, hence, the relegation of the weaker to minority status — in the relations between neighbouring linguistic communities associated within the same state.

ALBERT BASTARDAS-BOADA

BARCELONA

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