

A Case of Misreckoning: The Catalan Election of 2012*

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Abstract

The 2012 snap election for the Catalan Parliament raises some statistical issues. Opinion polls failed glaringly, suffering from the well-known concealment of the non-nationalist vote and the so far rather disregarded over-representation in the samples of the Catalan-speaking population. In this paper we investigate the dynamic between the 2010 and 2012 elections, using a simple indirect statistical approach. Language turns out to be a key factor, and data on the linguistic structure of Catalonia are provided. The fact that the support of nationalist parties has remained constant between 2010 and 2012 results from this support increasing among Catalan speakers and decreasing among Spanish speakers.

Keywords: Concealment of the vote, nationalism, language, Catalonia, Spain.

MSC (2010): 62P25, 91F10.

Un caso de fallo de cálculo: las elecciones catalanas de 2012

Resumen

Las elecciones de 2012 al Parlamento de Cataluña plantean algunas cuestiones estadísticas. Las encuestas se equivocaron claramente, adoleciendo del bien conocido ocultamiento del voto no nacionalista y de la hasta ahora poco considerada sobre-representación en las muestras de la población catalanoparlante. En este artículo investigamos la dinámica entre las elecciones de 2010 y 2012, utilizando un sencillo enfoque estadístico indirecto. La lengua resulta ser un elemento clave, y se proporcionan datos sobre la estructura lingüística de Cataluña. El hecho de que el apoyo a los partidos nacionalistas haya permanecido constante entre 2010 y 2012 es consecuencia de que este apoyo ha crecido entre los catalanoparlantes y decrecido entre los castellanoparlantes.

Palabras clave: Ocultación del voto, nacionalismo, lengua, Cataluña, España.

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1. Introduction

On 25 November 2012 a snap election for the Catalan Parliament took place. The (Catalan) nationalist alliance in Government, CiU (*Convergència i Unió*), put forward to the electorate that it was the right moment for the Catalans to start the process of “national transition” towards a state of their own within Europe, including the calling without delay of a self-determination referendum. This difficult process would need a strong leadership, that of CiU and its leader, Artur Mas. The CiU, in minority government, sought a sufficient parliamentary majority from the Catalan people to carry out this task.

The significance of this election went beyond the regional level, and it is no exaggeration to say that it had European repercussions. Issues like the right to secede of part of a state, the fiscal redistribution of resources among rich and poor regions (or individuals), the territorial integrity of states or the status of minority languages were directly involved.

Seen from another angle, the Catalan electoral process of 2012 raises issues of a statistical nature, as for example the influence of statistical data (good or bad) on decision makers or what to do when the searched data are unobtainable.

The results of the election were perhaps among the most unexpected of all the elections held in Spain since the end of Franco’s dictatorship. The heavy losses of CiU were a surprise. Also, the general expectation of an increase in the support of the (Catalan) nationalist parties with respect to the previous election of 2010 did not materialize.

The snap election was called in view of an apparent upsurge of nationalist feeling in Catalonia since the previous election of 2010. On 11 September of 2012 a large demonstration was held in Barcelona under the slogan “Catalonia, new state of Europe”. The following day the two main Catalan newspapers agreed that this was a historic moment and interpreted the will of Catalonia in their headlines: “Catalonia mobilizes more than ever for independence” (*La Vanguardia*) or “Catalonia clamours for independence” (*El Periòdico de Catalunya*, internet edition). Two weeks afterwards the president of the Catalan government (*Generalitat*), Artur Mas, called the election. A poll of the Centre d’Estudis d’Opinió (CEO), dependent on the Catalan government, published during the election campaign, predicted an overall parliamentary majority for CiU and a combined support for the nationalist (parliamentary) parties of 55.7% of the electorate.

Certainly, the opinion polls missed the mark. At least two justifications can be put forward. On the one hand, the characteristic Spanish concealment of the vote (both intended and cast) is specially marked among non-nationalist voters in Catalonia. On the other hand, there has been a misrepresentation of the linguistic reality in Catalonia in the samples of the opinion polls. Catalonia is bilingual, Catalan and Spanish. The fact is that the Catalan-speaking group has been over-represented in the samples of the polls (see Penadés 2012). As justified below, 41.7% of the residents in Catalonia with the

right to vote are either native speakers of Catalan or native speakers of both Catalan and Spanish. Among the polls conducted before the 2012 election only four of them provide information on the language of the respondents. The poll of the official Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) (face-to-face survey), dependent on the Spanish central government, shows 45.9% of respondents being native speakers of Catalan or native speakers of both Catalan and Spanish (a moderate 10% deviation; see CIS 2012b)¹. The parallel figure for the poll of the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO) (telephone survey) mentioned above is 49.3% (a 18.2% deviation), and that of MyWord, commissioned by the SER radio network (internet survey), is 54% (a 29.5% deviation). The poll of GESOP (telephone survey), commissioned by the newspaper *El Periódico de Catalunya*, provides data on the language of habitual use of the respondents; those declaring that it is either Catalan or both Catalan and Spanish are 63.8%².

Even the opinion surveys without linguistic bias lack statistical reliability in order to study the specific characteristics of the voters of the different parties in the elections to the Catalan Parliament, due to the very strong concealment of the vote cast, especially when the issue of nationalism comes to the fore. Thus in CIS (2012a) only 6.9% of those declaring to have voted in the 2010 election acknowledged that they had voted for non-nationalist parties; the real figure was 15.8% (we define below what we understand by “non-nationalist”, “semi-nationalist” and “nationalist” parties). Granting that those in the 6.9% group are sincere, there is no reason to suppose that this 43.7% minority of professed non-nationalist voters are a representative random sample of all non-nationalist voters ($6.9/15.8=0.437$). On the other side of the spectrum, 9.9% of those declaring to have voted claimed that they had voted for the militant nationalist party ERC; this is 141.4% of the real figure of 7%.

There was a crucial miscalculation on the part of those deciding to call the snap election on the basis of a perception of the Catalan electorate. As it is usually the case with miscalculations, there are lessons to be drawn. Also, expectations, satisfied or unfulfilled, are essential in the dynamic of nationalist movements (see Laitin 2007).

The historical background of Catalan nationalism is not to be considered here. The mythical years 1640 (Revolt of Catalonia during the Thirty Years War) and 1714 (fall of Barcelona during the War of the Spanish Succession) come up often (see Linz 2008); not to forget the Middle Ages (see Armstrong 1982). But Catalan nationalism, as many European nationalisms, is born in the 19th century (see Vicens Vives 1961), and “nationalism is the crystallisation of new cultures, not the awakening of old ones” (Gellner 1983: 49).

In this paper we investigate the dynamic between the 2010 and 2012 elections, focusing on the role of language. In order to overcome the lack of sincerity of the voters, we shall

¹ Other surveys of CIS (also face-to-face) show figures that coincide almost exactly with the 41.7% estimate (based on the data of the Catalan Statistical Office), as in CIS (2012a), where 42.4% of residents in Catalonia with right to vote are either native speakers of Catalan or native speakers of both Catalan and Spanish.

² Apart from the fact that the self-perceptions on “language of habitual use” are fuzzier than those on “mother tongue”, in the first case the estimates of data for the population with right to vote are more delicate (see below).

resort to a standard statistical approach: operating with aggregated data. The level of aggregation is that of the 41 administrative divisions of Catalonia (“comarques”), where we have available both the electoral results and statistically significant linguistic data. Of course, we run the risk of the so-called ecological fallacy. The conclusions might be modified by further analyses and data. At any rate, “it is the mark of an educated mind to expect that amount of exactness in each kind which the nature of the particular subject admits”³ (Nicomachean Ethics 1094b).

The main conclusion is that the support for nationalist parties has remained constant between 2010 and 2012 as a result of this support increasing among Catalan speakers and decreasing among Spanish speakers. This has to be analysed in the context of a changing balance between the two linguistic groups (see Section 2). The Spanish speakers are now in the clear majority, although the Catalan speaking group is predominant economically and socially.

2. Economics and language

Beyond laws and political decisions, there are two relevant structural elements to consider in the territories with an implicit or explicit separatist movement: the relative economic position of the territory and its linguistic distribution.

In the regions richer than the state to which they belong, often at least part of the electorate feels disadvantaged by a perceived excessive or unfair redistributive activity of the central government⁴.

The richest regions in Spain comprise Madrid, the Basque Country and Navarre, with a GDP per capita around 30% higher than the Spanish average (see INE 2013b; data of 2011, the latest broken down by provinces). Apart from these three regions, rich Spain, with a GDP per capita at least 5% higher than average, extends along an arch from Valladolid (in the west of Old Castile) to the Balearic Islands; here the highest income corresponds to Catalonia (around 17% above average, with very similar values for its 4 provinces) and the province of Burgos (around 20% above average). In general, the GDP per capita can be broken down into labour productivity level (measured as GDP to employment ratio) and the extent of labour utilization (measured as employment to total population ratio). The labour productivity in Catalonia is a moderate 4% higher than the Spanish average, but the labour utilization is 12% larger (see La Caixa 2012; data of 2010). Concerning the latter, the participation rate is higher and the unemployment rate

³ πεπαιδευμένου [γάρ] ἔστιν ἐπὶ τοσούτων τάκριβες ἐπιζητεῖν καθ’ ἕκαστον γένος, ἐφ’ ὅσον ἡ τοῦ πράγματος φύσις ἐπιδέχεται (see Aristotle 1934).

⁴ In the case of Spain, it has to be considered that two of the richest regions, the Basque Country and Navarre, have an idiosyncratic fiscal system, essentially pre-modern, with the result that the higher than average income of their inhabitants has virtually no extra-regional redistributive effect. Obviously other regions (especially the rich ones) may feel that this is a case of “agravio comparativo” (“offence arising from inequality”), a very Spanish concept. In fact, in the Basque Country most taxes are levied by the three provinces forming it, but not by the region; this circumstance gives appreciable political clout to each of the provinces (see Novo Arbona 2010), making secession attempts more difficult.

is lower in Catalonia than in Spain overall; the difference in the participation rate is essentially due to the larger female participation rate.

Some comparisons could help. As for the temporal dimension, regional differences in per capita income decreased during the Spanish economic boom of the sixties and early seventies. Significant internal migratory flows were instrumental in this process; in particular, Catalonia received a substantial immigration that was to affect the linguistic situation. In 1955 Madrid was 56% richer than the Spanish average and Catalonia 60%, in 1975 the data were 34% and 28% (see Fundación BBV 1999), and in 2011 they were 30% and 17%.

Catalonia has a very particular demographic structure. The larger metropolitan area of Barcelona (in Catalan “Àmbit metropolità de Barcelona”) contains 68% of the Catalanian population.

As for the spatial dimension, comparisons between the per capita income of Catalonia and the per capita income of this or that EU country have been used and interpreted in the electoral campaign of the 2012 election. Caution is called for in piecewise spatial comparisons of income involving large metropolitan areas whose economic influence extends to the whole country or beyond; for instance, a substantial part of the economic activity of these metropolitan areas (such as that related with the headquarters of large companies) may depend on their belonging to this or that country. In general, the Italian case suggests parallels with the territorial conflicts in Spain⁵.

There are 375.000 public employees in Catalonia (first quarter of 2013), i.e. 13.5% of total employment (see INE 2013a). Only 30,000 work for the central government, around 86,000 for the local authorities (municipalities and provinces), and the rest are under the control of the Catalan government (see MHAP 2013)⁶. For those wanting to be admitted to public employment, the Catalan Government is the most important reference point.

The Catalan language maintains a vigorous cultural activity in spite of the strong presence in Catalonia of Spanish, one of the main world languages⁷. Language is also the core of Catalan nationalism (but not the other way round).

Catalan is presently the language of instruction in both primary and secondary education in Catalonia, and it is predominant in higher education (at least at the undergraduate level). From the standpoint of comparative politics, the linguistic requirements for access to public employment are also relevant in government language planning. These

⁵ There are some parallelisms between Italy and Spain: similar per capita incomes, some rich regions advocating fiscal devolution, and two large metropolitan areas in each case (Milan and Rome in Italy, Madrid and Barcelona in Spain) with an extensive range of influence. Lombardy has approximately the same income per capita as Madrid, and that of Lazio is similar to that of Catalonia (see EUROSTAT 2013).

⁶ The data of MHAP, showing 306,000 employees at 1st January 2013, are only complete for the central government. As for the Catalan government, the employees of public bodies with their own legal personality (“organismos públicos” in Spanish law) are not included; the same can be said for the local authorities, although here the numbers are lower.

⁷ As for *abilities*, 77.5% of the residents in Catalonia can speak Catalan and 99.8% can speak Spanish (see Fundacc 2011).

requirements have been subject to relatively quiet acceptance and the issue has not been so far particularly salient in political debate in Catalonia.

In fact, 35.3% of residents in Catalonia (14 or older) have Catalan as their mother tongue, 39.4% declare that Catalan is their own language (identification language) and 39.5% that it is their language of habitual use⁸ (data taken throughout 2010; see Fundacc 2011⁹); the figures for Spanish are 56.7%, 55.1% and 56.2%, respectively. The study of the flows between each first language and each identification language is revealing. Approximately the same proportion (in the range 13%-15%) of initial Spanish speakers change to Catalan as the other way round; the higher number of initial Spanish speakers means that the proportion of those identifying themselves as Catalan speakers is larger than that of initial Catalan speakers. On the other hand, among those having an initial language other than Spanish or Catalan (roughly, the immigrants not coming from Spanish speaking American countries¹⁰), the proportion of those changing to Spanish is five times as large as that of those changing to Catalan. It follows that the future of Catalan depends essentially on the evolution of the proportion of those having Catalan as their mother tongue. In this sense, what is really relevant is the proportion of those Catalan-born having Catalan as their mother tongue. Indeed, 56.7% of the Catalan-born have Catalan as their mother tongue, compared to only 2.9% of the non Catalan-born. Approximately, 60% of residents in Catalonia are Catalan-born, while 20% are born in the rest of Spain and the same proportion are born abroad.

Among the Catalan-born, the proportion of Catalan native (mother tongue) speakers is remarkably similar for the age groups up to 44 years old, at around 45%; for the older groups the percentage of Catalan native speakers increases sharply with age (see Table 1; data of Fundacc 2011). In the long term, *caeteris paribus*, the overall proportion may be predicted to stabilize at around 45%. Assuming that the proportion of Catalan-born keeps at 60%¹¹, and that of non Catalan-born Catalan native speakers remains at 3%, it follows an overall long-term proportion of 28.2% for native Catalan speakers, in contrast with the present proportion of 35.3%.

⁸ It is clear that the answers to questions on language can be affected by the wording of the questions, the way in which the answers are elicited, the behaviour of the interviewers and the character of social pressure when the poll takes place. The figures for "identification language" and "language of habitual use" are very important, but less "robust" than those for mother tongue.

⁹ The sample size of this survey (31,000) provides statistically significant data disaggregated according to (1) geographical sub-units, (2) age and (3) nationality (Spanish or non-Spanish).

¹⁰ Nationals of Spanish American countries make up approximately 30% of foreign residents in Catalonia, a proportion similar to the overall Spanish average (see INE 2013c).

¹¹ It is difficult to make long-term predictions of the proportion of Catalan-born. On the one hand, the population tends to be increasingly mobile; on the other hand, the present figure of non-Catalan-born is inflated because of the massive foreign immigration between 1998 and 2009. These immigrants are relatively young and mostly inclined to become Spanish speakers if they are not already so (see above).

Table 1

Percentage of Catalan native speakers among the Catalan-born

Age	14-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	≥ 64
Catalan speakers	45	46.5	43.6	45.6	57.7	73.6	83.8

Only Spanish citizens (18 or older) can vote to elect the Catalan Parliament. As 15.4% of residents (14 or older) in Catalonia are foreigners (data of 1 July 2010; see INE 2013c), and assuming that virtually no foreigner has Catalan as mother tongue, it can be inferred from the data of Fundacc that 41.7% of residents in Catalonia with right to vote are native speakers of Catalan ($35.3/(1-15.4)=0.417$).

Often opinion polls contemplate the possibility of speakers with both Catalan and Spanish as mother tongues; it is not the case of the data of Fundacc. An extensive survey of the Catalan Statistical Office shows 36.2% of Catalan native speakers (15 or older) and further 2.5% being both Catalan and Spanish native speakers in 2003; the figures are 31.6% and 3.8% in 2008 (see IDESCAT 2013). Considering that 15.1% of residents (15 or older) in Catalonia are foreigners (data of 1 January 2008; see INE 2013c), it follows from the 2008 data of IDESCAT that (also) 41.7% of residents in Catalonia with right to vote are either native speakers of Catalan or native speakers of both Catalan and Spanish ($(31.6+3.8)/(1-15.1)=0.417$). The Catalan Statistical Office also provides data for the language of habitual use in 2008: 35.6% for Catalan (46% in 2003) and 11.9% for both Catalan and Spanish (4.7% in 2003). An estimate of the corresponding data for the population with right to vote is now a more delicate exercise.

The proportion of Catalan speakers is thus declining in recent years. We have few statistically reliable linguistic data before 1975 (the death of Franco). In a good survey (see Fundación FOESSA 1970) carried out in 1969 among “amas de casa” (here “ladies of the home”¹²), 55% of respondents had Catalan as “mother tongue” (literally), and a further 2% both Catalan and Spanish; the figures for “father tongue” are 58% and 1%. As for the language of habitual use (in this case, language preferred to speak with the husband), the data were 59% for Catalan and 2% for both Catalan and Spanish.

Table 2 (based on the data of the Catalan Statistical Office and FOESSA) summarizes the evolution of the percentage of Catalan native speakers, with the caveats mentioned above for the data of 1969 (here the data for “mother tongue” and “father tongue” have been integrated tentatively, in such a way that the 1969 Total is a lower bound estimate).

¹² The universe of the survey were the women, younger than 61, running or supervising some household (not necessarily housewives); the province of Girona was not considered.

Table 2

Evolution of the percentage of Catalan native speakers			
	1969	2003	2008
(1) Catalan	55	36.2	31.6
(2) Cat. & Spanish	4	2.5	3.8
Total (1)+(2)	59	38.7	35.4

In a relatively short period, Catalan has become a minority language in Catalonia. Spanish is now the language of the majority of the residents there, and even of the majority of those with the right to vote. This fact sometimes goes unnoticed because of the social and economic predominance of the Catalan speaking group and its higher level of political mobilization.

3. The election

The Catalan Parliament is elected by proportional representation through closed party-lists. Each one of the four provinces (*Barcelona, Girona, Lleida* and *Tarragona*) constitutes a district, with an electoral threshold of 3%. The province of Barcelona (73% of the population of Catalonia) is sub-represented in the allocation of seats, which favours nationalist parties.

The following parties obtained representation in the Catalan Parliament in 2012, in ascending order of (Catalan) nationalism (as perceived by the electors, see CIS 2012b: question 30).

- PP (*Partido Popular*). The major centre-right Spanish party.
- C's (*Ciudadanos*). Catalan party (in practice), without reference in Spain. Centre-left.
- PSC (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*). Although an independent party, it has a complex association with PSOE (see Gutiérrez and Llamazares 2013), which is the major centre-left Spanish party.
- ICV-EUiA (coalition between *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds* and *Esquerra Unida i Alternativa*). It blends communist and eco-socialist elements. Usually contests the Spanish elections in alliance with IU (*United Left*).
- CiU (alliance between CDC, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya*, and UDC, *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*). Both CDC and UDC are centre-right, the latter with a Christian democratic character. CDC, certainly the senior member of the alliance, is more nationalist than UDC.
- ERC (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*). Centre-left, although its main perceived sign of identity is strong nationalism.

- CUP (*Candidatura d'Unitat Popular*). Anti-capitalist. The party advocates the constitution of a new state embracing the so-called “Catalan countries”, i.e. the area where Catalan is claimed to be the main language (including the Balearic Islands and part of the Valencia region).

The electoral turnout of Catalans is lower in the elections for the Catalan Parliament than in those for the Spanish Parliament (*Cortes*). The political landscape of Catalonia has been structured around two big poles: PSC and CiU. The former has obtained in the Catalan Parliament elections from 1984 through 2006 results in the range between 25% and 31% (with the exception of the 1999 election, when it reached 38%); afterwards it has decayed (18% in 2010 and 14% in 2012). CiU has had two periods, corresponding to its only two leaders so far. In the first period, under Jordi Pujol, obtained values around 45% in the first three elections from 1984, with a moderate decline in the subsequent two ones (41% and 38%), keeping always the government of the *Generalitat*. From the election of 2003 onwards, CiU assumes a profile increasingly nationalist, under its new leader, Artur Mas. In 2003 CiU has to cede the power to a heterogeneous centre-left coalition around PSC, only to recover it in 2010 after the government of this coalition becomes much discredited. In all the elections after (and including) 2003, CiU obtains approximately 31% of the votes, except in 2010 (38%).

In order to classify the Catalan political parties according to their level of nationalism, we contemplate two key issues: (1) the independence of Catalonia; (2) an appreciable level of government language planning in favour of Catalan, understood mainly as language immersion (in Catalan) in education. As a result, three categories appear:

- Nationalist parties, when both (1) and (2) are advocated: CiU¹³, ERC and CUP.
- Semi-nationalist parties, when (2) is supported, whereas the position on (1) is either negative or neutral: PSC and ICV-EUiA.
- Non-nationalist parties, when (1) and (2) are opposed: PP and C's.

4. The results of the election

Between 2010 and 2012 the electoral turnout increased from 58.8% to 69.6% (and the percentage of blank votes decreased from 2.9 to 1.4). The rise in turnout took place both in predominantly Catalan-speaking and predominantly Spanish-speaking areas. In absolute terms, the number of votes received by the three categories of parties increased from 2010 to 2012 (in 2010 CUP did not contest the election, and *Solidaritat Catalana per la Independència* (SI), a militant pro-independence alliance, obtained parliamentary representation). Out of 5,343,091 potential voters in the electoral register of 2012, the nationalists gathered 1,734,852 votes (+209,928 over 2010), the semi-nationalists 882,190 (+76,133) and the non-nationalists 746,122 (+252,902).

¹³ The minor member of the alliance, UDC, is lukewarm on the independence of Catalonia, officially advocating a “confederation” with the rest of Spain.

In relative terms, the results of the snap election of 2012 are in Table 3, compared with those of the previous election of 2010 (percentages of valid vote are indicated). Two components can be observed in the results of 2012:

1. The predicted increase of the nationalist parties (taken together) did not take place. In fact, their aggregated percentage of vote remained approximately as in 2010 (at a level essentially constant since the election of 2003).
2. In the nationalist preferences dimension, there was a shift towards more militant positions. The drop of CiU was almost completely compensated by a rise of ERC, a clear winner of the election. An analogous effect took place on the other side of the spectrum: the increase of C's may be related with the fall of PSC.

The combination of (1) and (2) brought about the heavy losses of CiU.

Table 3

Results of the Catalanian election of 2012

	2010	2012		2010	2012
CiU	38.4	30.7	Nationalists	48.7	47.8
ERC	7.0	13.7			
CUP/SI	3.3	3.5			
PSC	18.4	14.4	Semi-nationalists	25.8	24.3
ICV-EUiA	7.4	9.9			
PP	12.4	13.0	Non-nationalists	15.8	20.6
C's	3.4	7.6			

It is not our aim to describe the events after the election. CiU, much weakened, went on to govern in minority. Certainly, many expectations were unfulfilled.

5. Language and voting dynamic

It is common knowledge that there is a high correlation in Catalonia between the mother tongue (Catalan or Spanish) and the intensity of nationalist feeling. Whereas 57.6% of those having Catalan as mother tongue are in favour of an independent Catalonia, only 17.1% are for it among those having Spanish as mother tongue (see CIS 2012a: the crossing between questions 47cI and 12aI have been provided by CIS); the overall figure is 33.7%. The figures for those in favour of a right to secede (in principle) are similar: 63.5% (Catalan), 19.8 (Spanish), 37.4% (overall)¹⁴ (see CIS 2012a: the crossing between questions 47cI and 12 have been provided by CIS).

Another question is the *change* of nationalist feelings between the elections of 2010 and 2012, as taken shape in votes. How language has had an influence? While the nationalist vote has kept stable overall between 2010 and 2012, has it kept unaltered in each of the

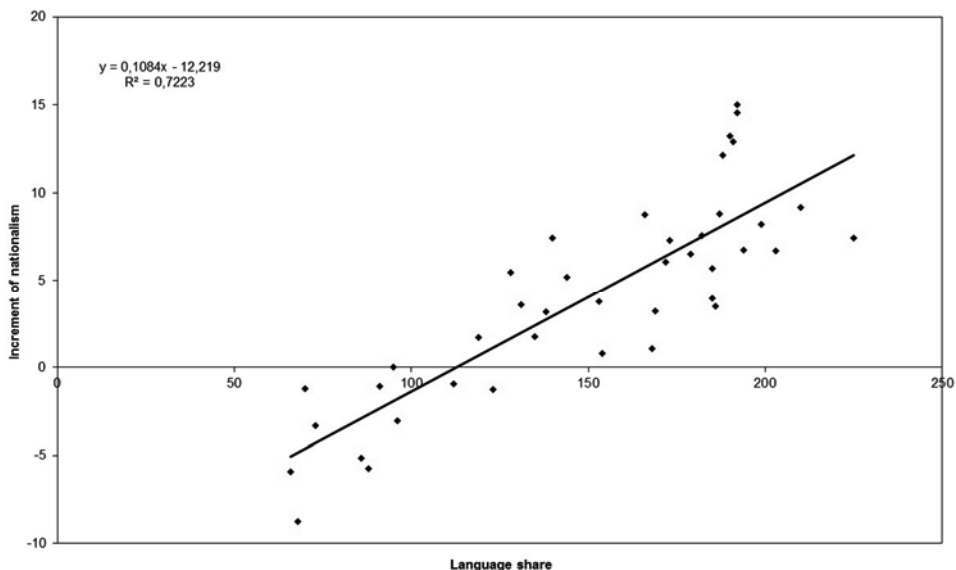
¹⁴ In 1979 they were (overall) 44.5% (see Gunther, Sani and Shabad 1986); admittedly, in contrast with that survey, the question of CIS was not dichotomic (e.g., federalism was one of the alternatives to the right to self-determination).

two language groups? Certainly opinion polls are not of much assistance to answer this question, as explained above.

We adopt an indirect approach to find out how the nationalist vote changed between 2010 and 2012 in each language group: Catalan speakers and Spanish speakers. We consider the 41 administrative divisions of Catalonia. Fundacc (2011) offers data (taken throughout 2010) on language of habitual use, statistically significant for the administrative divisions. In one half of the administrative divisions of Catalonia the share of Catalan speakers is above 66%. On the other side, the lowest values are in the metropolitan area of Barcelona (27.9% in the administrative division of Barcelona proper), the urban area of Tarragona and the Aran Valley.

A language share index is assigned to each division: index 153 means that the proportion of Catalan speakers in the division is 153% of the average for Catalonia (39.5%). In the scatter plot of Figure 1 the language share index is on the abscissa axis and the increment (positive or negative) of the percentage of vote for the nationalist parties is on the ordinate axis. The regression line has equation $y=0.1084x-12.219$, with $R^2=0.7223$. Excluding the 4 divisions of the Ebro area (in Catalan *Terres de l'Ebre*, comprising *Baix Ebre*, *Montsià*, *Terra Alta* and *Ribera d'Ebre*), a border area where the nationalist issue is perhaps affected in some way by particular exchanges and relations with the neighbouring regions of Valencia and Aragon, the regression line has equation $y=0.1214x-13.658$, with $R^2=0.7831$.

Figure 1



Thus there is a good statistical backing to say that the increase or decrease of support to nationalist parties between the elections of 2010 and 2012 is highly correlated with belonging to the Catalan-speaking or the Spanish-speaking group. At any rate, the loss of information brought about by the aggregation in administrative divisions entails that we run the risk of the ecological fallacy, and our conclusion is not to be engraved in marble. Alternative approaches may be helpful.

The administrative division of the Aran Valley, in the Pyrenees, is a test case. The neighbouring divisions are strongly Catalan-speaking, and accordingly the vote for nationalist parties increased between the elections of 2010 and 2012. However, for historical reasons, the proportion of Catalan speakers of the Aran Valley is the second lowest in Catalonia: the original language of the valley is not Catalan, but *Aranese*, a variety of Occitan. Now, in contrast with its Pyrenean neighbours, the Aran Valley showed the largest decrease in the vote for nationalist parties between the elections of 2010 and 2012. Language seems to be again a key factor of the dynamic between the 2010 and 2012 elections.

6. Some conclusions

The evolution of the vote between 2010 and 2012, relating to the issue of nationalism, went in opposite directions in the two linguistic groups, the Catalan speakers and the Spanish speakers. In the background are the facts that (1) Spanish speakers are now in the clear majority and (2) the Catalan-speaking group is still predominant economically and socially. It is foreseeable that the proportion of Catalan speakers will decline further.

It is obvious that the leaders of CiU overestimated the nationalist vote in the incoming 2012 election. Besides, taking for granted a hefty upsurge of it, they tried to minimize in the election campaign the transfer of nationalist vote towards ERC by raising the militant tone (without success).

The misreckoning of the nationalist vote by the leadership of CiU has explanations beyond the flop of opinion polls (suffering from the well-known concealment of the non-nationalist vote and the so far rather disregarded over-representation in the samples of the Catalan-speaking population). Beyond surveys, professional politicians are supposed to have a feeling for the opinions of the electorate. In this sense, the leaders of CiU perceived in their environment a growing support for Catalan nationalism. This perception matched up with the truth in the *Umwelt* of those leaders: the Catalan-speaking group. Certainly neither the Catalan media nor the electoral polls were of much help in gauging the prevalent opinions among the Spanish-speaking population.

As already pointed out, the fact that the support for nationalist parties has remained constant between 2010 and 2012 results from this support increasing among Catalan speakers and decreasing among Spanish speakers. The increase among Catalan speakers helps to explain the overestimation of the nationalist vote by the leaders of the governing alliance CiU. The decrease among Spanish speakers, if confirmed in future elections, would undermine the projects of “national transition”, considering the new linguistic structure of Catalonia and its foreseeable evolution. The shift from semi-

nationalist to non-nationalist parties among Spanish speakers may be a side effect of the higher social profile of these projects; if this shift went forward in future elections, the present policies of government language planning in favour of Catalan (in particular language immersion in education) would become a relevant political issue.

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