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## Language in social networks as a communication strategy: public administration, political parties and civil society

### Abstract

**This paper studies the language of political actors on social networks from the concept of digital language with a communicative perspective. Attention is paid to tweets by political parties, public administrations and civil society related to Catalan politics over the last eight months. The main trends of digital language are confirmed for political language on Twitter, but are relativized by the majority use of a more formal register. In addition, the political language appears as hybrid, heterogeneous, multimodal, a continuation of the offline arena and with little narrative innovation. Within these general characteristics, the activation of innovative linguistic orthographic, lexical, syntactic or coherence elements draws specific strategies for each actor, without common features for the sectors but shows that they do converge at specific moments forming sociolects that seek to promote belonging to a community and protest against specific facts or the *status quo*.**

### Keywords

**Political communication, social networks, language, Twitter, organizational communication, digital communication, political parties, associations, companies.**

### 1. Introduction and state-of-the-art

The language used in politics is immersed in hybridization processes (Chadwick, 2013; Hamilton, 2016) and in the search for new narratives (Gander, 1999; Jenkins, 2003; Scolari, 2014; Shin & Biocca, 2017), common to other areas of digital communication. Digital language is multi-channel, polysynthetic and inclusive (Díaz Noci, 2009; Salaverría, García-Avilés & Masip, 2010) within a narrative with hyper-fragmented texts and dozens of narrative characters and programs (Guerrero-Pico & Scolari, 2016), where the combination of different elements and actors participating in the elaboration of the message is sought (Herring, 2015; Adami, 2016). Language in the networks is also taken as a legitimate social weapon to consolidate the domination of the hegemonic power, as a subversive tool against the *status quo* and as a cohesive element for a certain community (Álvarez-Noreña, 2013).

Its concept and theorisation evolve in line with advances in linguistics and technologies, as summarised below using the three major points in the research: language, digital language and political language.

Approaches from different disciplines study language as a symbolic communication system which can convey complex information, create discourse and produce speech acts (Solé, Corominas & Fortuny, 2013), and assess it –language– as a field of social forces and communicative action. Perspectives focused on a more formal analysis of language are used in an instrumental way, so that their study does not focus on the structural component of levels of linguistic symbols, on the cognitive processes in an ideal environment –following Chomsky’s matrix grammar, or on the expository dynamics of the text following Sperber & Wilson or Ducrot. The pragmatic perspective adopted in this research understands language within a concrete context of production and interpretation with constant changes the causes of which causes were presented in earlier research (Bot & Stoessel, 2002; Rosa, 2016; Dediu, Janssen & Moisiuk, 2017) and broadly implemented to communication (van Hout & Burger, 2016).

This approach to linguistic pragmatic is methodologically adaptable to the analysis of digital language (Bolander & Locher, 2014), with particular interest not only in the production but also in the message flow, with the potential participation of various enunciators and, in some cases, languages and modalities. The first theoretical investigations describe digital language as a homogenous one, different from the previous languages which is, on occasion, undecipherable (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004), and is characterised by its multimodality – taken to be the integration of semiotic resources (images, videos, audio) (Vulchanova, Baggi, Cangelosi & Smith, 2017). Although this language may have originally been understood as homogenous, it was soon classified attending to different factors (Crystal, 2002; Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). There is still no consensus on the existence of a new language, a modality of language, a single multi-channel language or languages for each and every channel and different contexts (Cunliffe, Morris & Prys, 2013; Castro, Pérez & Amatta, 2016) and even specific languages for every social network (Altman & Portilla, 2012).

Research in this field has increased over recent years (Bolander & Locher, 2014) and insists on the relevance of technology as a constant factor of change (Ke, Gong & Wang, 2008). A first level of analysis addresses the materiality of the signifier, the change of typographical syntax, and describes adaptations with the use of the same spelling for the same phoneme, the abbreviation and simplification of words to achieve greater creativity and efficiency in communication, and the presence of new elements such as emojis (Eres & Almeida, 2009; Wiggins & Browsers, 2011; Park, Baek & Cha, 2014; Vázquez-Cano, Fombona & Bernal, 2016; Sampietro, 2016; Torrego-González, 2017). The digital language was also studied from a lexical and morphosyntactic perspective (Vázquez-Cano, Mengual-Andrés & Roig-Vila, 2015), and from sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics with a gender-based approach, with the dialect-standard variation, the use of language in the evolution of virtual communities and the construction and management of personal or group identities and memes (Metoyer-Duran, 1993; Huffaker; Calvert, 2005; Vázquez, Castello & San Miguel, 2010; Georgakopoulou, 2011; Mocanu, Baronchelli, Perra, Gonçalves, Zhang & Vespignani, 2013; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015; Bayerl & Stoykov, 2016).

In recent years, research has focused primarily on systematic findings in specific settings, also using the cyberpragmatics which analysed the shift system, the maintenance of thematic coherence, mood, register and the relationship of parties with their voters (Ballesteros & Díez-Garrido, 2018).

In this regard, Yus (2010) talks about a cyberpragmatics 3.0 which assumes features of digital language: oral/written and visual/verbal duality; the ubiquity of Internet; the emergence and consolidation of hybrid interactive networks; the transference of information

from the Internet to mobile devices; the transference of contents towards the web; the consolidation of the web 2.0, participative culture and user contents.

What is presented in this article is not a formal linguistic approach but rather communicative-pragmatic perspective of the language that should be conceived from its planning as a digital language and mobilised with a certain logic linked to a specific situation. Also, its analysis is deemed important, because language is understood as power, as a strategy for social control (Foucault, 1981; van Dijk, 1994). The users of the language are considered members of organizations and it is assumed to that they speak, write and understand from a specific social status, and use language as a tool intended to produce and emulate structures and power positions (van Dijk, 1996). The concept of ideology coined by the linguistic anthropology for symbolic representations with a specific purpose is shared (Woolard, 1998; Eagleton, 1991; Thompson, 1984).

Within this importance given to language, the research focuses on political ideology as public understanding of the world, public values that shape choices and visions that the public wish to be real (Brock, Huglen, Klumpp & Howell, 2005).

From this perspective, the language analysis undertaken in this research refers to a specific context –the political one–, in which three main players act: political parties, civil organizations and public administrations. In general, political language is linked to the transmission of power (Minim-White, 2017) and to classical deliberative oratory, with an audience comparable to a mass assembly and with the following characteristics –traditionally focused on political parties: its collective authorship, multiplicity of amendments, and its oratory and commitment (Pérez-García, 2003). There is still no consensus on the definition of online political language but, within the hybrid strategies developed by political parties (Enli & Moe, 2013; Maarek, 2014; Shah, Culver, Hanna, Macafee & Yang, 2015; Casero-Ripollés, Feenstra & Tormey, 2016; López-García, 2016), this kind of language does not contradict but rather complements oral and printed languages.

Likewise, three processes stand out among the communication strategies and practices of political activists, and impact on language: auto-mediation, monitoring and reverse agenda-setting. These processes were described by Andreu Casero (2015) and, from this approach various classifications of political language emerge, and this research uses those focusing on the participating communities (Edelman, 1985; Mazzoleni, 2014).

Studies on language in political communication using Twitter are infrequent, according to a recent compilation of research (López-Meri, 2016), but the first ones also show trends towards uses of the language of playful and relaxed info-entertainment, (Hernández-Santaolalla & Rubio-Hernández, 2017). Research on social networks focus on a specific language (Orkibi, 2015; Campos, 2017) with the incorporation of a new vocabulary such as tweeting, googling and whatsapping. They all stress the importance of studying language to understand the political panorama and attitudes towards change, rhetorical strategies, political frameworks and public motives that link political action with ideology (Brock *et al.*, 2005).

## **2. Methodology**

Given the relevance of language in digital political communication, the main aim of this research is the characterization of language in the various political actors in social media, from the incorporation of the concept “digital language” and from an epistemic-pragmatic perspective. As described above, language is a complex object of study. For this reason, the following objectives were pursued:

1. Analysis of the characteristics of social media language in political communication.
2. Investigation into the specificities of language in the three sectors: public administrations, political parties and civil organizations.

3. Study of the linguistic features used by each of the actors.
4. Monitorization the creation of linguistic communities.

The starting hypotheses were:

1. The political language on Twitter confirms the hybridization trends.
2. The political language on Twitter is heterogeneous and does not tend towards cohesion among communities.
3. The social network registers the creation of vocabulary and the consolidation of new meanings shared by communities and or specific to each of them.
4. The language in political communication on Twitter individualizes the message as part of an ongoing communicative strategy.

For this purpose, a specific scenario has been chosen: the political events in Catalonia over the eight months between the *Aprobación de la Ley de Transitoriedad Jurídica y Fundacional de la República Catalana* (Adoption of Law on Juridical Transition and Foundation of the Republic) in September 2017 and the closing of the inquiry (release of Carles Puigdemont –former President of Catalonia– from the German prison in April 2018). A linguistic analysis of texts published on Twitter by the various political actors is carried out.

Twenty-two Twitter accounts, representative of the three sectors, were selected (Table 1):

**Table 1:** Analysed accounts.

Political parties	Public administrations	Civil associations
@JuntsXCat	@parlamentcat	@omnium
@Pdemocratacat	@rogetorrent	@jcuixart
@Esquerra_ERC	@ForcadellCarme	@assemblea
@socialistes_cat	@gencat	@jordialapreso
@CiutadansCs	@KRLS	@Bcnisnotcat
@PPCatalunya	@desdelamoncloa	
@catsiqueespot	@marianorajoy	
@cupnacional	@anapastorjulian	
	@Congreso_Es	

Source: Own elaboration.

Messages on days close to the relevant events were chosen (Table 2). On each of these dates, all the tweets were included, besides those of the days before and the day after the event. In total, 4,906 messages were studied, distributed as follows depending on the sender: 3,075 from political parties, 967 from public administrations and 864 from private citizens.

**Table 2:** Nine analysed events.

Moment	Dates	Event
1	07/09/2017	Adoption of Law on Juridical Transition and Foundation of the Republic
2	01/10/2017	Referendum held
3	21/10/2017	Council of Ministers to propose the application of Article 155
4	27/10/2017	Declaration of the Catalan Republic by <i>Parlament</i>
5	02/11/2017	Imprisonment of the former Vice-President of the Catalan parliament, Oriol Junqueras, and seven former ministers
6	21/12/2017	Regional elections held
7	23/03/2018	Imprisonment of Jordi Turull, Josep Rull, Carme Forcadell, Dolors Bassa and Raül Romeva
8	25/03/2018	Arrest of Carles Puigdemont in Germany
9	06/04/2018	Release from prison of Carles Puigdemont

Source: Own elaboration.

Following previous studies, two types of data were used (Corominas, 2017; Percastre-Mendizábal, Pont-Sorribes & Codina, 2017):

1. Basic metrics. The following variables were included: creation date of the account, followers, following, multimedia (images and video) and number of tweets.
2. Linguistic analysis. Qualitative. The following levels were analysed:
  - a. Spelling
  - b. Vocabulary
  - c. Hypertext, multimedia
  - d. Paralinguistic elements: memes, emojis and gifs
  - e. Language
  - f. Rewriting. Embedded contents and citation
  - g. Suitability. Level of linguistic register: formal (academic-professional and standard) and informal (familiar, colloquial)
  - h. Coherence
  - i. Cohesion
  - j. Syntax

### **3. The search for a linguistic identity in social media**

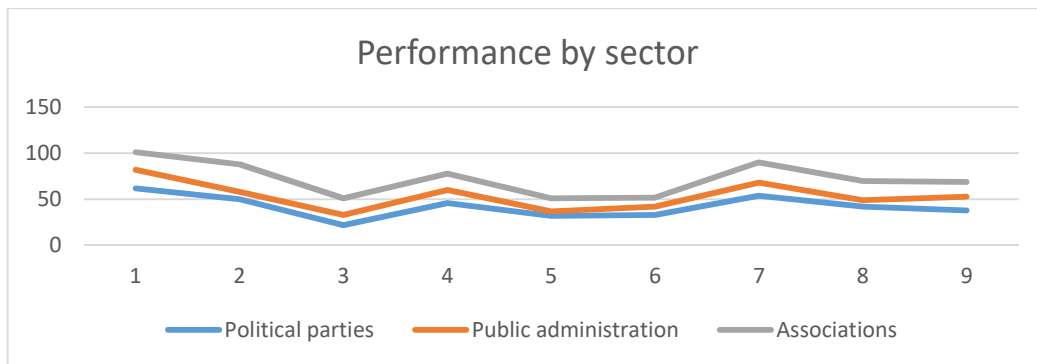
Participation on Twitter was irregular and, except in exceptional cases such as the imprisonment of some of the senders, all the actors construct a narrative of the nine events analysed. From a quantitative perspective, the political parties are the most active, followed by civil society and the public administration. Esquerra Republicana (665 tweets), Ciutadans (530 tweets), Omnium (365 tweets) and CUP (353 tweets) stand out with minor differences. This specific classification of the last eight months coincides with the general activity of these accounts on Twitter (Annex Table 1).

The communicative strategy of each political actor begins with their presence and absence at the events (Graph 1). Thus, the participation of the political parties stands out in events 1 and 2 –with an average of 62.62 and 50.87 messages respectively, especially from Esquerra Republicana (with 97 and 77) and Ciutadans (with 81 and 75). Noteworthy for the former is its intervention for event 7 with 99 messages, not seconded by the remaining parties, with an average of 54.75 messages.

Quantitatively, the public administrations register the most messages for event 1 (average of 20.56 messages), with the adoption of the Law on Juridical Transition and Foundation of the Republic, and for event 9 with the release from the German prison of Carles Puigdemont (average of 15.11 messages). For both events, the Catalan Parliament stands out, with 66 messages for event 1 and 25 for the second one; also, it accounts for 20.88% of messages from the public administration, only followed by Mariano Rajoy –16.27%.

The involvement of associations is represented by Omnium and Assemblea, which increased their intervention for event 2, with an average of 30.8 messages, and for event 8, (21.8).

Graph 1



Source: Own elaboration. \* The numeration of events is included in the method.

The language used in these months on Twitter is hybrid with common uses in the offline environment, an adaptation of linguistic features to the context (and rules) of the social network, to digital language, and the emergence of new elements (spelling, lexical and syntactic features fundamentally). The transmitted tweets are divided into three blocks: a) informative / descriptive; b) embedded content and citation and c) direct appeals to the public, normally seeking their offline mobilization. From a thematic approach, messages are not usually new, rather, the main frameworks and ideas created and broadcast by the offline political actors are briefly harmonized and commented. Although there is a continuity with the political argument in content, the linguistic options adopted individualize each of the actors at the different levels.

Regarding spelling, a formal register is maintained in most of the tweets, and only decreases slightly when appeal is made directly to the citizen. This aspect limits the integration of abbreviations that are usually linked to a vulgar and colloquial functional type. Yet some abbreviations are occasionally used in three accounts: h for hour in @catsiqueespot and in @omnium; traditional Sr (Mr) and TC (Constitutional Court) in @CiutadansCS; “gov” by government in @omnium, which is the most striking, as it appears in the account of JuntsXCat. The usage of capitals with traditional uses deserves special mention: to indicate shouting and to highlight keywords as in “@Omnium: “BCN, DIGNITAT, LLIBERTAT, A’UN VOT, NO ESTEU SOLS!” (Barcelona, dignity, freedom, one vote, you are not alone!).

Regarding the vocabulary, a formal-standard register common to all sectors is usual, except when there is a direct appeal to the receiver. In those cases, the register is usually colloquial. The words most used are Catalan articles and prepositions: *per*, *com*, *les*, *que del*, *por*. However, again some issuers personalize their use and include in their linguistic strategies the continuous repetition of a noun, coinciding with its main frames and messages. This is the case of Carme Forcadell with the repetition of the word *presó* (prison); Jordi Cuixart with *cause* (cause) and Assemblea with *República* (Republic) as the words most used in his account.

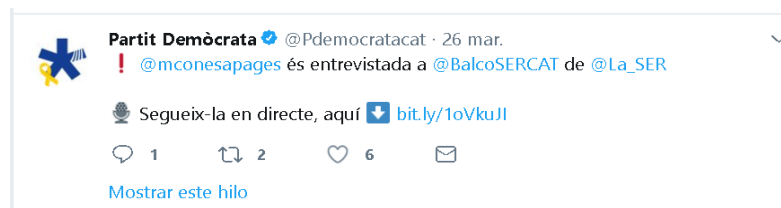
The vocabulary individualizes messages and does not usually create connections between sectors and actors as do the hashtags. The innovation in this case is marked by the incorporation of accounts, hashtags and icons (usually PNG images) as words, as seen in Images 1 and 2.

### Image 1



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: The members of parliament Laura Borrás and Aurora Madaula speak to the international media Al Jazeera and the BBC.

### Image 2



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: Mercè Conesa Pagés is interviewed at the radio station Cadena SER. Follow live, here.

In the case of accounts, apart from promoting Twitter and the brand of the cited author, it means an objectification of the person who is reduced to an account on a social network, which is especially notable in @Pdemocratacat.

The most relevant case is the icon. A list of those most used can be seen in Table 2. A significant number of media objects (cameras, microphones, notepads) and arrows are included, and their use is increased when the appeal is direct. The use of a classical building as a symbol of the Catalan Parliament is significant, as it denotes the special consideration and a support for the institution by ideologically different actors, as seen in Images 3, 4 and 5.

### Image 3: Political party.



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: As the Parliament is being used as a set, we should try to give an institutional and political response to the grave violation of rights that we are living in our country.

**Image 4:** Public Administration.



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: At 5 pm, Mariano Rajoy (at that time President of Spain) receives the President of the political party Ciudadanos at La Moncloa.

**Image 5:** Political party.



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: Mertixell Batet and Adriana Lastra have just registered the Commission to analyse and modernize the territorial model at the Congress.

**Table 3:** The icons most used.

Emojis	

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the icons published.



The use of icons is common to all political actors. However, again, in some cases, their use denotes a particular linguistic strategy that seeks the identification of the author and the ideological transmission. Thus, some create ambiguous signifiers that contribute to the ideological sintonia with the recipient, insofar as by taking away their precise meaning and a clear referential content, they open up the possibility that the issuers share the same ideological scenario. As an example, we find the use of the yellow ribbon and the flags (as a symbol of solidarity with the independence process in Catalonia).

The name of the user linked to the profile pic is another word element with special relevance for the issuers' linguistic strategy on the network, which some actors always use as an element of identity, dissemination and consolidation of the brand (@catsiqueespot); others vary, seeking the inclusion of party members (@Ciutadans\_cs); in other cases, the change in colour implies support for prisoners; and others decide to expand with a link and make a declaration of intent. That is the case of @Omnium "Demà pots ser TV" (Tomorrow you can be TV), which indicates "Lengua, cultura, país, cohesión social, educación" (Language, culture, country, social cohesion, education) and in @KRLS "130 è President de Catalunya [@catalan\_gov] #FreeCatalanPoliticalPrisoners #CatalanRepublic. Berlin, Germany, governpublica.org.

Thus the institutionalization of a new lexicon (icons, accounts, hashtag, username) is detected, whose elements are consolidated with a common symbol, regardless of the actor using it (the case of the parliament and icons related to the media, for example), but their specific use results in an attribution of ideas, feelings and adjectives to different realities, identifying a symbol with a single meaning, which brings about the exclusion in its use by other actors nonaligned to that cause and continuous repetition in others. The vocabulary then constitutes a unifying thread for an ideology, the occasional alliance of different actors against a cause, such as the colour yellow. This creates a sense of belonging, of mobilization, makes searches and writing easier, as it includes more complex messages within one word, colour and icon.

A significant example is the creation of new meanings for common vocabulary as the CUP does with the word "mambo", provoking messages of very connotative meaning that only the people inside that particular context would be able to interpret: VOTAREM #mambo (referring to a video published by the political party CUP). The political organization begins with this sociolect mark in September and contributes to the identification of belonging to a community through goals and values.

The hashtag, in addition to fulfilling the vocabulary function, has other functions such as drawing ideological lines. Political parties habitually use them as a cohesion strategy and as a search for effective information at the end of the text (@catsiqueespot; @marianorajoy; @socialistes\_cat). The most striking is #llibertatpresopolitics (#freedomtopolitical prisoners) which was the most used by @ForcadellCarme; @jcuixart; @jordialapreso and @omnium. Other political parties choose their relationship with the #Parliament in most cases.

The use of memes is not detected, and emojis appear sporadically (always with a smiley face).

In relation to the traditional elements of digital language –hypertext and multimedia–, we observe an important use of multimedia, especially a fixed image with a short text. The use of video is relevant, but no specific trend is detected among sectors or actors, indeed the practice responds to a rigid policy in syntax, as it will be seen.

Links are part of the strategy and are usually self-referential (institutions to which the actor belongs and pages from supporters), and also refer to the media, especially in 2018 and basically to those media supporting their arguments (Image 6):

## Image 6



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: "Holding second elections would be a disaster for Catalunya, considering the rise in unemployment and the economic data" (link to a news clip with the number of registered unemployed).

The most frequently used languages in the chosen events are Spanish and Catalan, although some accounts use others as a part of their strategy, as in the case of Carles Puigdemont, @KRLS.

Embedded contents and citations are widely used and part of hybridization. Media messages are the most employed, notifying an intervention and including videos of some already carried out. These messages are usually preceded by one or two sentences included in the video; with the support of the party (in the case of the Spanish socialists) and on few occasions are commented (Image 7).

## Image 7



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: A Spanish former minister calls for a xenophobic boycott against Catalunya. Some collect signatures, others call for boycotts. And nothing happens.

The linguistic concept of coherence perhaps reaches the maximum degree, as the messages are homogenous and continuously repeated, even with offline messages, and is shared by all actors.

As regards syntax, a specific linguistic practice may also be noted for each actor with common features (with few elements of connection) linked to the media (brevity) and to political communication (normally formal use with standard and professional variant) and with very marked structures that are repeated in a way that facilitates (almost standardizes) its production. The one among those showing a clear syntactical strategy is JuntsXCat: they frequently use presidential statements with a video or several photographs; Esquerra Republicana uses a sentence with a verb in the present tense (similar to *explains*, *says*) and an account like the PSC and the PP of Catalonia, in the latter cases, without a verb.

No evidence of particular linguistic practices is detected among the sectors except for the more formal professional tone, which is usual in the public administration, and seeks an aseptic image through formal vocabulary such as “Good morning” in the Moncloa (the presidential palace); but which shares multimedia elements (even icons) with other sectors. The register also varies when they make direct appeals to the citizens and becomes colloquial, a point on which they coincide with the other actors (Images 8 and 9).

### Image 8



Source: Twitter’s API. Translation: Tomorrow the Minister for Finance, Cristóbal Montoro, delivers the project of the Spanish State Budgets for 2018 to the President of the Congress, Ana Pastor. Do you know how they are processed?

### Image 9



Source: Twitter’s API. Translation: Merry Christmas from the staff of the Congress, our visitors and even some tourists from Finland!

Especial attention should be paid to the accounts of Carme Forcadell and Roger Torrent, as both their situations have changed in the last eight months. Forcadell, imprisoned on 24 October after leaving office as President of the Catalan Parliament, at an early stage, offers messages from the public administration with a personal long register; in a second period, the account is managed by her team and messages are brief and the register is formal. In the case of Roger Torrent, President of the Catalan Parliament since 17 January, the use of irony is noteworthy, and most of the time he uses messages from other actors and he replies with almost private conversations with public access (Images 10 and 11). The CUP is also noteworthy, as they use poems and songs as differential elements and, to a lesser extent, the use of the creators of *Tabarnia* for their humour and irony.

### Image 10



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: Cynicism (practical definition): application of Article 155, intervention on institutions, suspension of programs and call-ups. Some weeks later, they apply what was planned and receive a "medal". Indecent cynicism.

### Image 11



Source: Twitter's API. Translation: This too.

Overall, specific features without links to the different sectors are detected; rather, they are specific to each actor, especially in the case of political parties, where priority is given to the construction of a linguistic brand and the establishment of core elements that do not usually change: message, vocabulary and similar syntactic structures, which lead us to think about a communication strategy based on linguistic protocols and guidelines. The linguistic elements are adapted to the network and some common innovations and are strategically selected to identify the author of the message, regardless the content, and imply the existence of individualizing stylemes (idiolects). These stylemes or idiolects imply an individualised strategy that creates a linguistic identity on Twitter through orthotypographic features, their own vocabulary (with the presence of new elements), hashtags, icons, links, syntax, and the presence and absence that begins to individualise the already-mentioned common innovations and to create linguistic identities on the social network.

#### 4. Conclusions

The paper continues research into political communication on the situation of Catalonia, begun in earlier months by other authors (Carrasco-Polaino, Villar-Cirujano & Tejedor-Fuentes, 2018; López-Meri, 2016; Coromina, 2017), and simultaneously fills the gap in studies on social media language for political communication and cross-community research with different players and sectors involved.

On the one hand, the paper confirms the use of Twitter as a source of topics shared by the offline environment and hybridization (Chadwick, 2013; Hamilton, 2016), and, to a lesser extent, the search for new narratives detected in other areas of political communication (García-Orosa, Vázquez-Sande & López-García, 2017).

Language can create a symbolic communication system within the studied context, in which the linguistic signs converge to support the strategy of political actors. The mere absence and presence at the main events during the last eight months seek the visibilization of those who stand as the main promoters of the cause and a decrease in messages among those who want to deny the fact or assume a low-intensity strategy.

The activation of elements of language in orality and in print uses ideological strategies, seen in a broad sense as understanding and position in the context, specific to each actor, without common features for the members of each sector but that come together at given times to create sociolects that seek the promotion of the sense of belonging to a community and, in the case of study, the struggle or protest against a *status quo* (referendum) and some facts (imprisonment of political actors).

In this convergence, some features of digital language emerge, those belonging to the social media and the characteristics of political language. This language is not homogenous, nor characteristic of Twitter. Rather, it may be observed that the political actors activate all linguistic levels in the service of their respective strategies. These imply the creation of community profiles –orthotypographic, lexical, syntactic, coherence, cohesion, register–, but also individual profiles for each actor. The different communicative actions make the most of all linguistic resources.

Within the apparent structural rigidity of Twitter (colour, icons, character limit), these actors are mobilised to draw a particular linguistic identity for that channel, which makes it attractive for social media recipients, while at the same time individualising them.

The coincidences are also interesting with other aspects studied from the perspective of linguistics and sociology collected in the first section of the article, although always filtered by the majority use of a formal record, standard and professional in different cases, such as the combination of abbreviations and the simplification of words.

But, at the same time, the political communications reveal intensive creation of certain symbols such as icons, accounts and hashtags with the creation of new words. Therefore, common trends in the Internet language are confirmed, albeit with the particularities of political communication.

This creation of their own elements is used to bring communities together in an ephemeral, occasional way as a protest against the *status quo*. It cannot be said that the language is homogeneous; rather, each actor forges their main hybrid idiolect, characterised primarily by a particular use of syntax and, to a lesser extent, of the vocabulary that occasionally adopts elements of others (for instance, the use of the colour yellow to vindicate freedom of the prisoners involved in the case studied, which makes use of different communicative levels such as images, hashtags, icons, spelling).

This linguistic identity shares the basic features of digital language, of the social media environment and is part of the communication strategy of institutions.

This confirms the hybridization mentioned in the first hypothesis. It also identified a heterogeneity in the language used (Hypothesis 2), which, with the data obtained in the

research, impedes reference to a social media language common to all the members of the same sector. Rather, occasional idiolects and sociolects are detected, and confirm Hypothesis 3, as the social network registers the creation of vocabulary and the consolidation of new meanings shared in some cases by communities and in others, as part of the strategy of each actor in the search for an identity, also linguistic, on the network. As a result, the language in political communication on Twitter individualises the message as part of an ongoing communication strategy (Hypothesis 4).

A non-homogenous and hybrid language therefore emerges, used by different players within a linguistic strategy of online differentiation which, on occasion, works as an element of cohesion between actors and an element for the creation of communities and protest against an event and the *status quo*. The trends in political language on social media in the case analysed, are interesting due to the intensity of participation of all sectors and to the heterogeneity of selected events, and should be contrasted in future scenarios in order to consolidate the definition of an online political language as a core element in understanding the political scenario and attitudes towards change.

The research has been carried out within the framework of the national I+D+i plan: *Uses and preferences in the new media map in Spain: media models for mobile devices* (ED341D R2016/019), belonging to the Spanish National Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation, a national subprogram of Knowledge Creation from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, and the Xescom Network (Redes 2016 GI-1641 Xescom).

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**Annexes**

**Table 4:** General data on accounts.

Account	Tweets	Following	Followers	Joined	Multimedia (pics & video)
@JuntsXCat	5522	102	71.2 K	June 2016	2451
@Pdemocratacat	24.3 K	47.8 K	216 K	November 2007	10.9 K
@Esquerra_ERC	86 K	100 K	349 K	October 2009	21.6 K
@socialistes_cat	86.2 K	692	110 K	June 2008	11.7 K
@CiutadansCs	33.1 K	2.571	18.9 K	September de 2014	10.1 K
@PPCatalunya	50.7 K	984	67.3 K	September de 2009	4686
@catsiqueespot	15.1 K	1354	20.4 K	July 2015	4148
@cupnacional	80.8 K	3641	275 K	November de 2009	10.9 K
@parlamentcat	20.6 K	204	216 K	February de 2009	2.119
@robertorrent	6.968	860	105 K	November de 2010	921
@ForcadellCarme	2915	284	303 K	February 2014	874
@gencat	14.8 K	6765	182 K	March 2009	1266
@KRLS	15.9 K	3.801	718 K	December 2007	1.416
@desdelamoncloa	30.9 K	89	551 K	July 2009	2124
@marianorajoy	24.5 K	14 K	1.66 M	July de 2011	4394
@anapastorjulian	4964	270	76 K	May 2011	1562
@Congreso_Es	16.9 K	857	161 K	June 2009	7956
@omnium	24.7 K	1309	256 K	April 2008	4627
@assemblea	32.9 K	36.9 K	357 K	February 2011	6241
@jordialapreso	251	515	75.2 K	November 2017	132
@jordicuixart	9100	1596	101 K	November 2010	1163
@Bennisotcat_	996	27	59.8 K	October 2015	323

**Table 5:** Data mining sheet.

<i>TWITTER ACCOUNT</i>						
<b>Text tweet</b>						
<b>Publication date</b>						
<b>Language</b>	Catalan	Spanish	English	Combination	Others	
<b>SPELLING</b>						
	Resemblance to traditional spelling					
	Specific modifications					
	Innovative elements					
<b>VOCABULARY</b>						
<b>Words most used</b>						
<b>New words</b>						
<b>HASHTAG</b>						
<b>Included or not</b>	Not included					Included
<b>Number of hashtags</b>						
<b>Type of hashtag</b>						
<b>PARALINGUISTIC</b>						

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<b>ELEMENTS</b>							
<b>ICONS</b>							
<b>Included or not</b>	Not included						Included
<b>Number of emojis</b>							
<b>Referent of emojis</b>							
<b>Relation with its textual referent</b>	Accompaniment						Replacement
<b>MEMES</b>							
<b>Included or not</b>	Not included						Included
<b>Number</b>							
<b>Referent</b>							
<b>Relation with its textual referent</b>	Accompaniment						Replacement
<b>EMOJIS</b>							
<b>Included or not</b>	Not included						Included
<b>Number</b>							
<b>Referent</b>							
<b>Relation with its textual referent</b>	Accompaniment						Replacement
<b>MULTIMEDIA</b>							
<b>Nature of contents included in the tweet</b>	Only text	Only image	Only video	Text + image	Text + video	Others	
<b>Links to video platforms (YouTube, Vimeo)</b>	No			Yes			
<b>Links to picture platforms (Flickr, etc.)</b>	No			Yes			
<b>HYPERLINKS</b>							
<b>Included (not linked to pics and video)</b>	No			Yes (which one):			
<b>INCLUSION OF GIFS</b>							
<b>Included or not</b>	Not included				One		
<b>Nature of GIF</b>	Cine / TV	Musical	Animals	Other			