ARTICLE

Sociolinguists and their publics: Epistemological tension and disciplinary contestation over language in Catalonia

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Abstract

This article aims to investigate the relationship of sociolinguists with the publics in Catalonia and to disentangle the complex interrelationships among academics within the discipline. By examining material from mainstream media outlets and data from interviews with a selected number of sociolinguist scholars, we show how the public sphere is a site in which competing epistemological and disciplinary visions contest for discursive dominance in language-in-society matters, institutional authorization, and resources. Rather than seeing the engagement of sociolinguists with publics as a disinterested activity of knowledge dissemination and the provision of facts, we argue that the publics are better conceived as a terrain toward which sociolinguists direct institutional, disciplinary, and professional interests. Ultimately, our article contributes to a more encompassing understanding of ourselves as sociolinguists.

KEYWORDS
authority, Catalonia, expertise, language debates, publics, sociolinguistics

Resum

Aquest article pretén investigar la relació entre sociolingüistes i l'esfera pública (que inclou l'audiència i

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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS: #, short pause; ##, long pause; (xxx), uninterpretable speech; [%], laughter; <[>], simultaneous speech; < … > [?], unclear speech; X, anonymized information

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diversos altres agents acadèmics) a Catalunya per entendre millor la complexitat de la interconnexió entre acadèmics en la disciplina. Partint de l'anàlisi de material publicat en mitjans de comunicació i d'entrevistes amb un grup de sociolingüistes, mostrem com l'esfera pública és un àmbit en el qual visions epistemològiques i de disciplina oposades competeixen pel domini discursiu en relació amb temes de llengua i societat, per autoritat institucional i per recursos. En lloc d'entendre la dialèctica entre els sociolingüistes amb l'esfera pública com una activitat desinteressada de disseminació de coneixement i de bases factuals, argumentem que l'esfera pública s'ha d'entendre com a terreny en el qual els sociolingüistes hi projecten expectatives institucionals, disciplinaries i professionals. En definitiva, l'article ajuda a entendre'ns com a sociolingüistes de manera més àmplia.

1 | INTRODUCTION

One perennial issue that has haunted sociolinguists for decades concerns the way(s) in which they engage in the public realm. The "Dialogue" section of one of the earliest issues of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* contains a number of sharp reflections by experts recounting their own experiences when venturing outside the normally safer grounds of the ivory tower (see, e.g., Heller, 1999; Laforest, 1999). The conception of publics, however, is an evolving and complex one (Bauman, 1987; Giddens, 1991). In the context of late modern publics, sociolinguistic notions such as expertise and authority are sometimes called into question because different frames of reference are perceived as equally valid. In these relatively tensioned discursive spaces, public authority is a complex matter, and defining who speaks from an authoritative position and who does not, particularly in language-in-society debates, is not a pre-given fact (Jaspers, 2014; Milani, 2007).

A recent special issue in the pages of this very journal is precisely devoted to understanding the sociolinguistics of late modern publics. While the notion of "late modern publics" seems to play a secondary role in the public debate context that we analyze, we agree with the guest editors, Theresa Heyd and Britta Schneider, that it is crucial to critically scrutinize our own relations with the publics (Heyd & Schneider, 2019) and, more concretely, to think about the nature of our speaking position and how we construct our authority. For decades this was constructed on the basis of "linguistics" as "scientific expertise" in a positivist frame. The interpretive and reflexive turn in the social sciences beginning in the 1980s and heightened in the early 21st century has both incremented public debate on matters that might have remained out of the public eye before and called into question the warrant for sociolinguistic intervention. Such change has resulted in an epistemological tension around what an academic sociolinguist should or might say in the public arena.

This article examines this tension as it visibly and audibly manifested itself in Catalonia around the language ideological debate regarding whether or not bilingualism threatens the fate of Catalan, with the *Manifest Koiné* (more on this text in the background section below) as a particularly illuminating example in these developments. The public debate in question is not only about language, of course, but

also about the nature of the nation state and the role of language in it. By using a meta-perspective (cf. Jaspers & Meeuvis, 2013), our purpose is to disentangle the complex and sometimes hidden interrelationships among scholars and so contribute to our self-understanding as sociolinguists. We examine (1) how sociolinguists in the Catalan context occupy positions with respect to central ideological notions in the publics of sociolinguistics such as expertise, authority, and power; and (2) how such positioning in the public sphere contributes to conserve or transform the structures that are constitutive of the field of sociolinguistics. We show how the public sphere in Catalonia is a terrain in which competing professional visions struggle for discursive dominance in language-in-society matters, for institutional legitimacy, and for resources. We conclude by outlining the implications of this case study for the current discussions on sociolinguistics and its publics.

2 | THE PUBLICS OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

"Publics" is an overarching concept that includes the public sphere, the audience, and academia (Spitzmüller, 2019, p. 507). By using the term "publics," we signal our theoretical position that there is no unitary entity "the public." Dynamics such as new forms of mediated communication, the reconfigurations of power relationships, and the fragmentation of knowledge systems have provoked new forms of scrutiny of dominant positions, which now require new strategies of legitimation (Heyd & Schneider, 2019). While modernity assigned the central role of "collective owners of knowledge" (Bauman, 1987, p. 4) to experts, intellectuals, and scientists, late modernity has contributed to the erosion of expert authority. As we will see in our study, authority is no longer an inalienable property of a given group with previously established authority (linguists and early sociolinguists), but something fluctuating within a wider structure of stances and groups. As a result of the dialectic relationship of sociolinguists and publics, expertise blurs, voices of authority are both enacted and contested, and even the notion of evidence itself can be challenged. Consequently, sociolinguists are now confronted with complex social and political configurations in trying to find their role vis-à-vis publics (Fleck et al., 2009; Johnson, 2001).

The above is not intended to indicate that we simply align ourselves with postmodern takes on publics. In fact, an assumption that underlies our article is that modernist language ideologies and semiautonomous spheres of knowledge production characterize the Catalan and Spanish contexts. We believe, with Jaspers (2014), that exploring contrastive conceptions of sociolinguistic expertise in the interactions among sociolinguists in the media can contribute to checking the pulse of late modernity. Take, for instance, the idea that societal bilingualism leads inevitably to the disappearance of the dominated language. This vision of bilingualism, normally presented in public debates as rooted in the early days of Catalan sociolinguistics (Aracil, 1966; Ninyoles, 1971), has become axiomatic in such debates, a kind of transparent truth detached from any ideological distortion (Bauman & Briggs, 2003) that needs no justification because it is self-evident (see Woolard, 2020). Disciplinary groups such as linguists sometimes legitimize their authority to arbitrate in controversies about bilingualism with references to their epistemological commitments, objective truths, and the scientific nature of an argument (Soler & Erdocia, 2020). However, as we will show, such authoritative statements by truth-carriers of expert knowledge and the objective vanguard (Bauman, 1987) are no longer binding and are contested by a new wave of sociolinguist scholars within other professional fields of reference and with different epistemological ascriptions (e.g., interpretive and practice-oriented positions).

This study is, therefore, oriented to the public realm, in which negotiations and competition over academic, professional, and political meaning emerge. But we are particularly interested in the lines of division and the relations of power within the academic field and, therefore, draw on the Bourdieusian

(1993) conceptual tool of "field." A field is a relational configuration or network, in which agents can take positions to conserve or transform the structures of power. The authority, experiences, and practices of agents, and the location of those agents in the field shape their actions and reactions to these structures and relations of force. Bourdieu's field theory is concerned with power dynamics and emphasizes social phenomena such as changes in the composition of a discipline and the prestige of groups, and competition between newcomers and existing agents. In the scientific field, what is at stake is the monopoly of scientific authority, and we can expect, for example, that academics strive to set out their own definition of their research object and categories of perception of the social world, and to have them recognized as legitimate and endowed with authority (Bourdieu, 1988).

However, the production of statements of truth in the academic field is not reducible to individual academics; it concerns the social organization of a given discipline, which dictates the procedures and conventions of thinking and speaking within the field. This is what Foucault (1977) calls "regimes of truth," according to which scientific and epistemological truths about the social world are the outcome of contingent historical forces, political commitments, and systems of power. Language-in-society research is one of these regimes of truth of which linguistics and sociolinguistics are, either separately or jointly, constitutive elements. Gal (2001, p. 32) showed that language debates in 19th-century Hungary were about establishing "linguistic expertise as disinterested, scientific knowledge which could be relied upon," and this idea has not altogether disappeared from contemporary language ideological debates. However, as Heller (2020) notes, these debates do not simply revolve around scientifically or objectively authoritative versus uninformed stances but around different stances toward what constitutes authority, what counts as evidence, and how it is acquired and interpreted.

In the publics of sociolinguistics, the field of sociolinguistics converges with that of the media. Both fields are sites of competition and contest in which scholars and journalists lay claim that they are presenting the legitimate vision of social phenomena (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 2005). The interaction of these two fields serves as a site of struggle where academics can gain fame that enables them to access appropriate resources (e.g., funding, academic and government positions) and allows them to influence language policy choices (Soler & Erdocia, 2020). Methodologically, then, in order to examine the ways in which sociolinguists (and disciplinary groups with which they align) position themselves, their patterns of discourse, and how they are perceived, we must analyze the particular historical trajectory of sociolinguistics in Catalonia, including the history of academic involvement in language ideological debates; and we must take account of the actors' structural positions both within the fields of sociolinguistics and media and in their interaction with other fields (e.g., government). This will allow us to grasp how language-in-society debates in the public sphere may serve as a terrain for professional contestation. In the case study we present below, we find resonances with Gal's (2001) historical analysis of the competition between two elite camps to define the essence of the language and the nation in 19th-century Hungary, a competition held in and about the publics and where "science, professionalism and political authority were intertwined" (p. 43).

3 | BACKGROUND: SOCIOLINGUIST(IC)S IN PUBLIC LANGUAGE DEBATES IN CATALONIA

The struggles over positions of authority that may emerge in language ideological debates among competing stakeholders are, of course, not unique to Catalonia; indeed, readers familiar with other conflict-ridden sociolinguistic contexts will find parallelisms (see for example Laforest, 1999, on the struggle over "good French" in Quebec). In Catalonia, one instance during which the competition between different stakeholders became clear took place in April 2016, when a group of language

professionals and activists published a manifesto that became popularly known as the *Manifest Koiné* (Llengua i República, 2016). At a time when there was an important debate inside Catalan nationalism about the path toward a potentially independent state, this manifesto denounced what its authors perceived as a lack of awareness of the importance of language matters for a future independent Catalonia.

The text of the manifesto opens with a short introductory paragraph that provides the justification for its production and explicitly gives the professional profiles of the steering members of the group: language activists, philologists, linguists, teachers, writers, translators, jurists, and other language-related professionals. The text itself is relatively short and divided into three parts, where the authors "state" (*constatem*), "denounce" (*denunciem*), and "declare" (*manifestem*). Briefly put, *Koiné* endorses the idea that bilingualism is but a transition stage toward language death; it challenges what the authors perceive as a general acceptance of the current status quo of the relationship between Spanish and Catalan; and it calls for the civil society to take firmer action in relation to the long-term sustainability of the Catalan language (see Soler & Erdocia, 2020).

It is noteworthy that *Koiné*'s promoters made attempts to ground the authority of the text in the disciplines of philology and linguistics. In addition to the self-identification of some of them as "linguists" and "philologists," the promoters officially launched the manifesto at a highly formal event in the Aula Magna of the University of Barcelona, a historical building that houses the Faculty of Philology. One of the keynote speakers at the event was Juan Carlos Moreno Cabrera, a linguistics professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid and expert in linguistic typology. These are important details, in our view, because they reveal the background and the terms in which language-in-society debates can be framed in Catalonia. Indeed, in such debates, it has traditionally been self-identified "linguists" and "philologists" who have been taken as the authoritative voices, the ones who could pontificate from their position of "language knowers" on social aspects of the language. Linguists who have become influential in language-in-society debates have normally held dual roles: they have been professional linguists within academia (e.g., syntactician, grammarian, etc.) and language activists in public discourse. A recent case in point in Catalonia was Joan Solà (1940–2010): a renowned expert in Catalan grammar and syntax, who collaborated regularly at *Diari Avui* for almost 20 years, with an op-ed column where he would offer assessments on issues of sociolinguistic nature (see Solà, 2009, for a collection of the last ten years of his newspaper articles). In 2009, Solà was awarded the *Premi d'Honor de les Lletres Catalanes*, one of the most prestigious distinctions in the Catalan language, and he would then be invited to deliver a speech on the status of Catalan in Catalonia's Parliament.

One of the reasons why sociolinguists may have tended to remain more silent than one would expect when it comes to public language debates relates to the vision that the very discipline has had of itself, in Catalonia and beyond. In an early characterization of the field in Spain, Calero Fernández (1989, p. 35) writes that "under the label Sociolinguistics, works have been written that belong to other fields, such as the Sociology of Language, Ethnolinguistics, or Psycholinguistics" (our translation from the original in Spanish). Calero Fernández refers to an earlier distinction proposed by Rona (1970) of a "a linguistic sociolinguistics and an a-linguistic sociolinguistics," where the former holds the disciplinary pedigree and the latter uses language to "understand the functioning of a community"—that is, to theorize about society—which would fall outside the parameters of sociolinguistics proper (Calero Fernández, 1989, p. 35). These ideas are now considered outdated among experts, although they are not completely gone.[1] To an extent, then, this conceptualization still may have an impact on sociolinguists being viewed as authoritative sources of knowledge in language-in-society debates. In fact, this and the reason explained in the paragraph above may also help explain the historical lack of direct involvement of sociolinguists in language policy making in Catalonia. Vila (2011) laments the lack of institutional

interconnection between academics and policymakers, particularly in the area of language-in-education policies, which he dates back to at least the late 1980s.

This is not to suggest that Catalan sociolinguists feel unable to contribute their opinions to public language debates in the media. On the contrary, some sociolinguists are regular contributors in newspapers and other media outlets. During the *Koiné* debate, in fact, one novel aspect (of high importance for our article) was that a group of sociolinguists dissented openly from *Koiné*'s theses, opposing the idea that bilingualism leads inevitably to the death of the subordinated language (Pujolar et al., 2016). Such a direct challenge, coming from within Catalan sociolinguistics itself, needs to be read as a relatively recent phenomenon, connected to a reappraisal of what the very concept of bilingualism means (Woolard, 2020). This new element can bring about an additional set of tensions in the struggle for an authoritative position in public language debates, tensions that can be played out in disciplinary and professional terms ("linguists" versus "sociolinguists"), which we explore in more detail below.

As we will explain, we use the labels "linguists" and "sociolinguists" with the caveat that they may be somewhat artificial and overlapping in nature. We use the term "sociolinguists" to refer to linguists who engage with social approaches to language, and the term "sociolinguistics" to refer to the field within which they work, except when we are explicitly discussing an opposition between linguists and sociolinguists; in those cases we use the terms following the distinction that is made by our interviewees or in the other data gathered for the study. The use of these two terms allows us to show the opposition between two broadly defined groups of stakeholders that defend different views of the Catalan language struggle (linguists: with a more positivist and structuralist stance; sociolinguists: with a more constructivist and critical interpretation; more about these two stances below). Indeed, previous language ideological debates in Catalonia have tended to be saturated by voices connecting the Catalan language and the Catalan nation rather directly, projecting a monolithic view of the nation (of only L1 Catalan speakers) (see Pujolar, 2007). This ethnic-nationalist orientation to language matters in Catalonia has been subject to critique in recent years, in line with the documented de-ethnicization of language choice (Pujolar & Gonzàlez, 2013). We posit that in recent years, a schism has progressively consolidated itself within the pro-Catalan side of the Catalan language struggle (i.e., among those who think that Catalan must be protected, promoted, and developed). Such different orientations to the language conflict, then, are at the basis of the epistemological and disciplinary tensions that we explore below.

The *Koiné* debate served as a catalyst for such tensions to emerge in public language debates in Catalonia more clearly than ever before. This is important for an understanding of the context in which the interviews that we conducted took place. The debate around *Koiné* had happened only two years before we interviewed the academics who volunteered to participate in our study, and as such, it formed part of the relevant background against which our conversations with them were set.

4 | THE STUDY

Our methodological approach involves working with two sets of data from sociolinguists: interviews and media sources. Although our analysis focuses primarily on data from interviews, we also rely on material from mainstream media outlets (radio and newspaper; see Soler & Erdocia, 2020), which provides examples of position-taking and essential background and contextual factors (e.g., academic and professional contexts) that inform our conversations with the sociolinguists. This is in line with the approach that positioning research (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008) recommends for interview narratives.

We used interviews to stimulate participants to comment on the production, interpretation, use and dissemination of sociolinguistic discourse, and we invited interviewees to position themselves vis-à-vis their field of enquiry and the field of the media. We assigned our participants the role of constructors of personal stories in accord with their actions, experiences, and expertise. In short, we used interviews as a means of prompting narratives and enactments of positioning towards indexical anchor points (Spitzmüller, 2019) such as authority, authenticity, expertise, and types of knowledge. We conducted a total of five in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a set of predetermined questions to open topics and allow respondents to produce narrative accounts and storylines, and to take the narrative telling in different directions.

The five academics that we interviewed are all well-established scholars with a solid academic reputation. Gender balance was a part of our selection criteria, and we had three male and two female participants, who we will refer to using the pseudonyms Antònia, Anna, Carlos, Bernat, and Jaume. Two of them—Antònia and Jaume—self-identify as linguists, while the remaining three—Carlos, Anna, and Bernat—self-identify as sociolinguists; all have different research interests and are from various Catalan universities. It should be stressed that all participants have a pro-Catalan language stance, albeit with a range of different nuances. The academics were first contacted by Soler, with whom they had had different sorts of academic exchanges in the past. To reduce the risk of any potential conflict of interest, interviews were conducted by Erdocia, who had no previous relationship with the interviewees, nor with academic life in Catalonia. Four interviews were conducted in Spanish while in the other the interviewee responded in Catalan. The interviews lasted for an average of one hour.

To analyze the data, we examine how members of a group use categorizations of themselves and others (e.g., linguists, sociolinguists) to explain actions and to attribute properties and responsibilities to the people so categorized. We also adopt a narrative positioning approach (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) in our analysis to attend to the biographical trajectories of the interviewees, their construction of stance in their discourse and in interactional conversation, and the identity claims that emerge in the interview narratives. We identified and selected units of meaning, primary categorizations, positionings, and sequences of narratives, but we did not code them thematically. For the interpretation, we considered both the conditions surrounding the interview and the global circumstances of narrative production.

Researchers tend to sympathize with the group under investigation or even to embody its values. This is partly the case in the present study. The authors are open to arguments in favor of historically minoritized languages, in Catalonia and elsewhere, and value multilingual societies and plurilingual individuals. Also, we are sociolinguistic scholars and have a broad vision of language as an object of enquiry. Therefore, our stance aligns with the views of some of our sociolinguist participants. We assume that the outcome of this study is influenced in particular ways by our biographies, epistemologies, and subjectivities, albeit unintentionally. However, following Salö (2018), we strove to adopt an epistemic reflexive lens throughout the entire research process and tried to be aware of our own gaze and its impact on our analyses.

5 | SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN CATALONIA

Public discussions about language in Catalonia often take place in an ideologized and politicized context, and, perhaps inevitably, many commentators on language matters in the public realm link their readings of the linguistic situation with competing ideologies of identity and nation. In a context

where other societal fields converge and compete to shape their vision of Catalan and Spanish society (Erdocia, 2020), scholarly activity does not escape political interpretations and uses. A sense of ideological engagement and contestation is embedded in the conflict model adopted by early Catalan sociolinguistics, which differs from the approach taken in sociolinguistic research in other parts of Southern Europe, such as Occitania (Lagarde, 2012). In our interviews, Bernat, a sociolinguist with an extensive career, particularly engaged with the idea of predetermined language ideological positions. Bernat noted that the linguistic situation in Catalonia is very complex and that the "two camps" (pro-Spanish and pro-Catalan, following Bernat's terminology) do not understand this complexity. After Bernat explained some of the prejudices of the pro-Spanish camp (e.g., "Spanish is in danger in Catalonia"), referring to the political and social groups against the promotion of Catalan in public life, Erdocia asked him about the pro-Catalan camp. Bernat's response illustrates the idea of expert knowledge as inherently interactional, involving the participation of both producers and consumers of knowledge (Carr, 2010). Excerpt 1 shows the role of Catalan sociolinguistics in the dissemination of knowledge about language and in shaping public opinion.

Excerpt 1 (Bernat, sociolinguist)

Erdocia: Has hablado de los prejuicios de un bando, digamos, utilizando tu vocabulario. ¿Podrías decir alguno del otro bando? Si es que hay, no sé …	**Erdocia**: You've spoken about the prejudices of one camp, let's say, using your own terms. Could you provide some of the other camp? If possible, I don't know …
Bernat: Prejuicios hay por los dos bandos [%]	**Bernat**: There're prejudices in both camps [%]
Erdocia: Sí, sí. ¿Podrías poner ejemplos del otro bando, por favor?	**Erdocia**: Yes, of course. Could you give examples of the other camp?
Bernat: Sí, pues bandos, en catalán, por ejemplo, también hay # o sea hay un prejuicio o hay una extendida opinión, digamos, sobre el peligro de extinción del catalán, ¿no? Porque, en Cataluña, una de las creencias que la propia sociolingüística inicialmente difundió es la de que el bilingüismo siempre lleva a la sustitución lingüística y esto es una creencia que se extendió.	**Bernat**: Yes, well camps, in Catalan, for instance, there's also # I mean there's a prejudice or a widespread opinion, let's say, that Catalan is under threat of extinction, right? Because in Catalonia, one of the beliefs that the field of sociolinguistics itself originally disseminated is that bilingualism always leads to linguistic substitution and this is a belief that has spread.

The connection between societal bilingualism and language decay or extinction purportedly dates to the foundation of Catalan sociolinguistics in the 1970s and still endures (Woolard, 2020). What is noticeable in Bernat's statement is that he depicts this idea as a belief that sociolinguistics popularized, which led to it now forming the basis of an important part of the discussion around language in the publics of sociolinguistics in Catalonia. This sociolinguist's observation not only questions the validity of the connection between bilingualism and language extinction but blurs the line between language activism and academic research.

Bernat goes on to describe people who hold this belief, which he situates within the pro-independence movement, as displaying a sense of victimhood. In line with the narratives of other

participants, Bernat frequently associates academic and political issues. Importantly for this account, he explains how a selective or spurious interpretation of data reinforces this stance toward the actual state of Catalan in the public sphere, as can be seen in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2 (Bernat, sociolinguist)

Bernat: En la cuestión independentista pues no se ve el éxito que tiene # para [el futuro del] el catalán el hecho de disponer casi completamente del control de la educación y, por tanto, de la (xxx) educativa. Esto no se ve, no se valora; se ignora. Todo es un gran victimismo, todo va mal en ese sentido cuando (xxx) las estadísticas pues no van tan mal; sí que hay elementos preocupantes o negativos, pero no es que sea totalmente todo negativo (xxx) que no se avance en el < conocimiento del catalán > [?], en el uso. Esto es (xxx). Otro sector, en cambio, acepta, la mayoría de población acepta, digamos, una convivencia de lenguas tranquilamente, pero hay sectores pues que, en ese sentido, más ideologizados o radicalizados o preocupados que, incluso ignoran las estadísticas.	**Bernat**: In pro-independence positions, they don't see how successful it is for [the future of] Catalan to have almost full control of education and, therefore, of the educational (xxx). This isn't seen or valued; it's ignored. They hold a feeling of victimhood, so in that sense everything is wrong when (xxx) surveys indicate that [the state of Catalan] is not so bad; there are of course worrying or negative elements, but it is not true that everything is wrong (xxx) that the < knowledge of Catalan > [?], its use, isn't progressing. This is (xxx). Other sectors accept, the majority of the population accepts, let's say, a calm co-existence of the languages, but some sectors are, in this sense, more ideologized or radicalized or worried, so they'll even ignore the statistics.

Bernat's criticism goes beyond the use of causal reductionism to explain a given linguistic outcome, namely, the idea that societal bilingualism inevitably leads to language death. This delegitimation statement is intended to discredit the position taken by a part of the public. But with his references to "statistics" (an aspect that the *Manifest Koiné* criticizes), the sociolinguist is presumably targeting certain academic linguists and language-related professionals, such as the group behind the manifesto. If this interpretation is correct, Bernat not only directs his criticism to a disembodied public that uncritically accepts a dubious claim but also levels his criticism at a recognizable group within an academic discipline. He depicts this group's stance as ideologized, as opposed to that of a set of sociolinguists whom he represents, as a group whose opinion is substantiated by a more appropriate "epistemic project" or social project of disciplinary enquiry (Agha, 2007). As we will see below, the use of surveys, in particular, seems to be a method of enquiry that leads to confrontations between various groups interested in language-related matters in Catalonia.

During the interviews, issues surrounding the *Manifest Koiné* emerged again and again and sparked off lively comments. Excerpt 3, from Carlos, another sociolinguist scholar, exemplifies this point. Erdocia has just asked Carlos how, in his opinion, notions such as "language contact" and "societal bilingualism" are impregnated with moral, political, or ideological values in the public realm. Admittedly, Erdocia's question presents sociolinguistic notions as value-laden, but this is a presupposition that Carlos seems to agree with.

Excerpt 3 (Carlos, sociolinguist)

Carlos: Hay algunos, como los del *Manifiesto Koiné*, que todavía están en esa visión muy dicotómica de los años 80, ¿no? ## yo creo que la nueva oleada de sociolingüistas ha problematizado bastante esas visiones tan dualistas de # y la idea esa de que el castellano se va a comer al catalán. Pero todavía hay una parte de la sociolingüística sobre la lengua catalana que está en esa visión. Cada vez menos, pero hay todavía hay algunos # no sé si tanto de la sociolingüística catalana como de la lingüística. Entonces, actúan como sociolingüistas gente que no tiene conocimientos, porque muchos de los que firmaron ese manifiesto [%] no eran sociolingüistas, sino que eran lingüistas y muchos luego confesaron que no lo habían leído. Sí, sí.	**Carlos**: There are some, such as those of the *Manifest Koiné*, that have a very dichotomist vision like in the 80s, right? ## I think that the new wave of sociolinguists has strongly problematized these overly dualistic visions of # and this odd idea that Spanish is going to eat Catalan. But there's still a part of the field of Catalan sociolinguistics with that mindset. Fewer and fewer, but there're still some people # I'm not sure whether it's so much within Catalan sociolinguistics as within linguistics. So some people act as sociolinguists even though they don't have the knowledge, because many of those who signed the manifesto [%] weren't sociolinguists but were linguists and many of them later admitted that they hadn't even read it. Yes, indeed.

The manifesto turns out to be an important element of an in-group/out-group boundary. Moreover, group differences also appear in the form of a generational divide. In this sociolinguist's opinion, younger scholars, including him, are calling into question core assumptions that underlie particular stances on language endangerment which are represented as voices from the past. Consequently, a new generation of scholars that problematizes some of their tenets from within the same pro-Catalan stance is challenging dominant departmentalized forms (Agha, 2007) and, consequently, the status of a well-established group of academics. In sum, by questioning the authority and expertise of linguists, as represented by the *Manifest Koiné*, some sociolinguists are claiming that they are the ones with genuine authority over language-in-society matters.

6 | THE DEBATE IS OPEN

In the aftermath of the publication of *Koiné*, several Catalan sociolinguists openly disagreed with the received interpretation of bilingualism as a stage in a process that inevitably leads to language death. Both individually (Branchadell, 2016; Vila, 2016) and in a group (Pujolar et al., 2016), they explained their reservations about the manifesto and in particular with the idea that "bilingualism equals language death" is a scientific fact supported by sociolinguistic theory. In Excerpt 4, Joan Pujolar, professor of sociolinguistics at the Open University of Catalonia and then president of the Catalan Sociolinguistics Society, expresses this in an op-ed piece signed together with other colleagues.

Excerpt 4 (Pujolar et al., 2016)

Considerem necessari fer constar que algunes de les seves [del manifest] afirmacions no són generalment compartides dins els àmbits professionals i científics de referència. Si bé és cert que el bilingüisme social generalitzat és una *condició* per a la substitució lingüística, l'estudi i la comparació de la multiplicitat de situacions de multilingüisme al planeta confirma l'abast mundial del contacte entre llengües i permet afirmar que no totes les formes d'organitzar la diversitat lingüística condueixen necessàriament a la desaparició de la llengua més feble. El bilingüisme no és, per tant, *la causa* de la substitució.	We find it necessary to highlight that some of the statements in it [the manifesto] are not generally shared within the professional and scientific fields of reference. While it might be true that a generalised situation of societal bilingualism is a *precondition* for language death, the study and comparison of the multiplicity of situations of multilingualism around the planet confirm the global status of language contact and allow for the conclusion that not all forms of management of linguistic diversity lead inevitably to the disappearance of the weaker language. Bilingualism, therefore, is not the *cause* of language death.

This group of sociolinguists also elaborates other points in which they make some critical observations on aspects of the manifesto, including the way in which the manifesto discusses linguistic surveys and the immigration of Spanish speakers to Catalonia (an "involuntary instrument for linguistic colonization"). We asked our sociolinguist participants for their opinions about the reasons behind the public positioning of this group of sociolinguists and their criticism of some of the points in the manifesto. In Excerpt 5, Anna considers that, in her view, this group wanted to indicate that there were alternative views.

Excerpt 5 (Anna, sociolinguist)

Anna: [Creo que querían] utilizar un poco # el rótulo de "sociolingüística" para # que se vea públicamente que hay otras posiciones que tienen un apoyo ## en el bando catalanista que tienen un apoyo # significativo y que son diferentes que lo que dice este manifiesto.	**Anna**: [I think they wanted to] use a bit # the label of "sociolinguistics" to # make publicly visible that there are other positions that have support ## in the pro-Catalan side, that have # significant support and that they're different to what this manifesto says.

Although the use of the label "sociolinguistics" here is also for authoritative purposes, it constitutes a marker of group identity that delineates disciplinary boundaries. The article by Pujolar et al. (2016) can be interpreted, on the one hand, as an act of self-positioning within the Catalanist movement and, on the other hand, as an act of public disassociation from the group of linguists represented by the manifesto. The members of *Koiné* and the sociolinguists who signed the newspaper article carried a discussion that can be seen as a competition between groups for the hegemonic position in language-in-society matters from the academic realm into the public sphere. Individuals and groups have their epistemological and disciplinary visions, and the public sphere can become a site of internal scholarly struggle (Bourdieu, 2005), in which actors compete for recognition and authority by attempting to set out their own vision—in the case of the publics of sociolinguistics, their own vision of the linguistic situation in Catalonia.

Importantly, these examples of public positioning reinforce the idea that mass media outlets play an important role in language ideological debates not solely by spreading forms of knowledge about language that can influence the audience and convince them of a particular point of view, but also by allowing certain positions to mobilize public support or to become dominant (see Soler & Erdocia, 2020). The mass media may also articulate representations of an academic community by emphasiz-

ing the compartmentalization of disciplines, therefore preserving the unity of each group. As in the case of other intellectuals (Bauman, 1987), we see that authoritative pieces in public language debates represent the modernist role of experts as producers of legitimated knowledge and does not sit comfortably with the postmodern idea that sociolinguists should see expertise as constructed and contingent in public debates.

The positioning–alignment dynamics also emerge from the narrative of Antònia, a scholar who self-identifies as a linguist and whose views align with those expressed in the *Manifest Koiné*. In Excerpt 6, Antònia refers to the intervention of Pujolar et al. (2016) in the debate.

Excerpt 6 (Antònia, linguist)

Antònia: La resposta dels sociolingüistes va ser un atac de banyes ## perquè vam qüestionar # el triomfalisme de la política lingüística del govern català […] Nosaltres qüestionàvem unes enquestes en les quals tots aquells senyors cobren ## perquè són els que fan la interpretació oficial […] Nosaltres el que vam qüestionar va ser, no tant el paper d'aquests senyors, sinó les enquestes; qüestionàvem les enquestes ##—que ells, en privat #, a vegades, critiquen	**Antònia**: The sociolinguists' response was that they had a jealousy attack ## because we questioned # the triumphalism of the Catalan government's language policy […] We questioned some surveys from which these gentlemen receive money ## because they're the ones who make the official interpretation […] What we questioned was not so much the role of these gentlemen, but the surveys; we were questioning the surveys ##, which in private #, sometimes, they also criticize

The "us" versus "them" differentiation between fields of scholarship in this extract is very clear, with four instances of "we" in this short statement (two using the explicit pronoun *nosaltres* "we," two others marked through verb morphology), and four instances of the opponents, the others ("sociolinguists," "these gentlemen" twice, and an explicit pronoun *ells* "they").

At one point in the interview, where Antònia was commenting on how she participates in public debates about language, Erdocia shifted the focus to the notions of authority and legitimacy in language-in-society matters. The aim was to incentivize Antònia, a linguist, to position herself in relation to sociolinguists. Her initial reaction was to describe the scope and boundaries of sociolinguistics and other subdisciplines within language sciences. Erdocia insisted once again, and this second attempt and Antònia's response can be seen in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7 (Antònia, linguist)

Erdocia: ¿Te has sentido en alguna ocasión, quizás, deslegitimada por algún sociolingüista que te diga "pero bueno tu área de conocimiento no es tanto la sociolingüística, sino que es la lingüística"?	**Erdocia**: Have you ever felt perhaps delegitimated by a sociolinguist who said "but well your area of knowledge isn't so much sociolinguistics but linguistics"?
Antònia: No. A part d'aquest article que esmentaves, que va anar contra Koiné, no contra una persona en concret, i que, si el llegeixes coneixent les estructures i les xarxes clientelars i qui cobra de qui # fas un sociograma expressant qui ataca qui, i els senyors que ataquen aquí veuries que tots cobren de Política Lingüística	**Antònia**: No. Aside from the article that you were referring to, which was framed against *Koiné*, not against a specific individual; and if you read that article aware of the client-based networks of who earns from whom # if you draw a sociogram showing who attacks whom, and see the gentlemen who attack here, you'd see they all are paid by [the Catalan government's Department of] Language Policy

Antònia's response points to collective positioning processes in the public realm. This scholar of linguistics introduces a new body into the network of actors at play: she aligns the "other" group, namely,

sociolinguists, with the regional government, on the basis that they are the beneficiaries of public funding and because they espouse the official reading of the sociolinguistic situation. But interestingly, one of our sociolinguists (Anna) does not concur with Antònia's view (see also Vila, 2011). Anna explains that the relationship between sociolinguists and policy authorities has been subject of much debate within a learned society in Catalonia and exemplifies the debate with two questions.

Excerpt 8 (Anna, sociolinguist)

Anna: ¿cómo puede ser que no haya más relación entre los sociolingüistas académicos y la Dirección General de Política Lingüística? ¿Cómo puede ser que no se esté construyendo un discurso acerca de la política lingüística en Cataluña, un discurso en el que participen los sociolingüistas?	**Anna**: How is it possible that there isn't a closer relationship between sociolinguistic scholars and the Language Policy Department? How can it be that a discourse about language policy in Catalonia is not being constructed, one in which sociolinguists participate?

Going back to Antònia (Excerpt 7), the group that she sides with, by contrast, builds on oppositional discourses by adopting anti-establishment rhetoric and self-representing as an autonomous group that is not subject to the influence of power centers. As a result, this linguist positions herself and the group of linguists with which she aligns far from the official discourse that emanates from the governmental and institutional spheres. That said, since expertise manifests in power relations (Foucault, 1977), one of the potential aims of groups such as those behind the *Manifest Koiné* is to destabilize and reshape institutional control over discursive production and interpretation (Soler & Erdocia, 2020). As seen above, for some linguists the current institutional control on language policy matters is under the influence of sociolinguists, something with which sociolinguists themselves do not seem to agree.

Excerpts 6 and 7 raise methodological concerns about the methods that are used to collect evidence in the sociolinguistic studies that are funded by the government and, ultimately, about the decisions around language policy that are informed by those studies. What is more, Antònia criticizes the integrity and professional ethics of sociolinguists when she says that some sociolinguists concur with linguists' critical view on surveys. This "destabilization from within," an idea that is included in the *Manifest Koiné* (Soler & Erdocia, 2020), could affect the trust that members of the publics of sociolinguistics might have in government actions and policy decisions that are reliant on advice, data, and evidence provided by sociolinguists. In sum, by entering the space of public action, this group of linguists and language-related professionals formalizes a group that embodies open contestation with other actors over language policy choices.

7 | THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MEANING OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Apart from an exchange of views in the form of newspaper articles, the confrontation between those in favor and those against the propositions of the *Manifest Koiné* was also played out in other media formats, including live debates on radio and television. In one such debate, a revealing argument took place between F. Xavier Vila (professor of sociolinguistics at the University of Barcelona), who was critical of the manifesto, and Lluís de Yzaguirre (professor of linguistics at Pompeu Fabra University), one of the signatories of the manifesto. Excerpt 9 is an extract of a debate held on the Catalan public radio station Catalunya Ràdio in which the two of them were invited to participate, along with Maria Carme Junyent (professor of linguistics at the University of Barcelona) and Lluís Cabrera (a Barcelona-based musician and writer). In the extract given here, Vila and de Yzaguirre clash over the issue of

who has the authority, from a disciplinary angle, to offer authoritative judgments about language issues: sociolinguists, according to Vila, versus linguists, according to de Yzaguirre.

Excerpt 9 (broadcast on Catalunya Ràdio, April 6, 2016)

MT: Amb el diagnòstic, com deia el Lluís de Yzaguirre, que marca el manifest, hi esteu d'acord?	MT: Do you agree with the assessment made by the manifesto, as expressed by Lluís de Yzaguirre?
XV: No	XV: No
LlC: < [>] Jo tampoc eh	LlC: <[>] Me neither eh
MT: < [>] No eh	MT: <[>] No eh
XV: No, i crec que hi ha diferents elements. D'una banda hi ha una anàlisi més o menys històrica, sobre la qual es poden dir tota una sèrie de qüestions, però a veure, el manifest no està fet realment per especialistes en sociolingüística, està fet per gent que es dedica a	XV: No, and I think there're several elements. On the one hand, there's a more or less historical analysis, about which one could say a number of things, but let's see, the manifesto hasn't been written by experts in sociolinguistics, it's been written by people who
LlY: Per la gent que sap de llengua, pels lingüistes, perquè recordem que els sociolingüistes no són lingüistes	LlY: By people who know about language, by linguists, because let's not forget that sociolinguists aren't linguists
XV: < [>] Em permets	XV: <[>] May I?
LlY: < [>] Són sociòlegs de la llengua	LlY: <[>] They're sociologists of language
LlC: < [>] Tots són lingüistes	LlC: <[>] They're all linguists
XV: Jo sóc doctor en lingüística #	XV: I have a PhD in linguistics #
LlC: I jo també	LlC: and me too
XV: Continuo	XV: I go on
LlY: [%] però no fas lingüística, < [>] fas sociologia	LlY: [%] but you don't do linguistics, <[>] you do sociology
XV: < [>] No, no, perdona, aquest és un error que els lingüistes que no saben com funciona la societat acostumen a fer, dir que els que fem sociolingüística, els que intentem entendre com funciona la llengua en societat no som lingüistes. Al contrari, nosaltres no només mirem el corpus de la llengua, nosaltres no només mirem si hi ha una vocal neutra o deixa d'haver-hi una vocal neutra, nosaltres intentem entendre per què la gent parla o deixa de parlar #, és l'ús de la llengua, són les ideologies de la llengua	XV: <[>] No, no, sorry, this is a typical mistake by those linguists who don't know how society works, to say that those of us who work on sociolinguistics, those who try to understand how language works in society, we're not linguists. On the contrary, we don't only look at the corpus of the language, we don't only look at whether a schwa vowel is realised or not, we try to understand why people speak or do not speak #, we look at the use of the language, at the ideologies about language
LlC: < [>] Aquí està	LlC: <[>] That's it
XV: < [>] I això afecta el corpus. Dit això #, a veure, aquest manifest, com que no està fet per gent que sàpiga com funciona la llengua en societat, què és el que passa	XV: <[>] And that has an impact on the corpus. Having said that #, let's see, this manifesto, since it hasn't been written by people who know about how language works in society, what happens is that
LlY: Això és fals	LlY: That's false
XV: Que	XV: that
LlY: # Això és fals	LlY: # That's false
XV: Deixa'm acabar	XV: Let me finish

MT: Mònica Tarribas, journalist and moderator of the debate; LlC: Lluís Cabrera; LlY: Lluís de Yzaguirre; XV: Xavier Vila.

Regarding the position of de Yzaguirre, a professor of linguistics, one could say, with Latour (1993), that his distinction between the theoretical categories of "language" and "society" and their compartmentalization into discrete scholarly disciplines ("linguistics" and "sociology") is part of the "modern constitution," that is, the study of domains of knowledge as separate and autonomous. Drawing on Latour, Bauman and Briggs (2003, p. 6) explain that this kind of "purification" of language is as much engaged in keeping language walled off from society as it is in keeping the two domains separate. In our example, the linguist's comment that "sociolinguists aren't linguists" is a version of the idea that Agha (2007, p. 220) reports as "yes, but it isn't linguistics"—that is, a depiction of linguistics that suggests that only some parts of language are within the legitimate scope of linguistics as a discipline. This is precisely what the act of removing the study of society from the aims of linguists and the designation of sociolinguists as "sociologists of language" seem to suggest. Such an ideologization of linguistic authority and expertise serves specific positional interests—as does the comment from the professor of sociolinguistics about the lack of "experts in sociolinguistics" in the elaboration of the manifesto.

It is clear that there is a considerable level of epistemological and disciplinary division within the study of the language sciences between the self-assigned categories of "linguists" and "sociolinguists," and discussions in the public sphere seem to exacerbate this dualistic opposition, and to accentuate the lack of a recognized disciplinary home for both linguists and sociolinguists. The tendency to conceptualize the protagonists in any conflict as belonging to discrete groups (e.g., linguists vs. sociolinguists) applies to the present language debate, in which scholars define themselves by their oppositional and sometimes antagonistic relations with other groups.

8 | THE INNER SPHERE OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

We have seen how scholars anchor their narratives in the subdisciplines to which they belong. This suggests that academic allegiances and group affiliation are determining factors used by academics to position themselves in public matters relating to language in society. Yet, far from being homogeneous structures, groups have a varied internal composition and their own system of relationships among factions, strands, disciplinary orientations, and, of course, individuals, who are the ultimate constituents of academic life.

These group–internal relationships are sometimes problematic and suggest, first, that expertise is inescapably ideological because it is implicated in "evolving hierarchies of value that legitimate particular ways of knowing as 'expert'" (Carr, 2010, p. 17), and, second, that academic authority is distributed among multiple levels. The following examples provided by Carlos serve to illustrate these points. He is a sociolinguistic scholar who belongs to a department that is not a department of Catalan philology or similar. In Excerpt 10, Carlos provides a new angle for understanding the relation between group membership and authority.

Excerpt 10 (Carlos, sociolinguist)

Carlos: Desde mi posición como personal del departamento X, # en algunos momentos no me he sentido demasiado legitimado para participar en según qué debates específicos sobre la lengua catalana.	**Carlos**: From my position as an academic staff member of department X, # at certain times I have felt that it wasn't really legitimate for me to take part in some of the debates about the Catalan language.

(Continues)

Erdocia: Parece que el hecho de que perteneces a un departamento sí que te influye a la hora de tomar otras iniciativas quizás, más públicas, porque lo has citado en varias ocasiones.	**Erdocia**: It seems that the fact that you belong to a certain department does influence you when it comes to participating in maybe other public events because you've mentioned it several times.
Carlos: Sí, bueno # porque lo he vivido. Compañeros sociolingüistas me han dicho a mí si no estaba legitimado para hacer según qué [sobre el catalán] < [>] eso lo he vivido, sí # entonces, no es sólo una percepción, es que me ha llegado ese discurso [%].	**Carlos**: Yes, well # because I've experienced it. I've been asked by sociolinguistic colleagues whether it was legitimate for me to do certain things [about Catalan] <[>] I've had that experience, yes # so it's not only a perception, I've heard that discourse [%].
Erdocia: Vale, vale y esto te ha influido, ¿verdad?	**Erdocia**: Okay, okay and this influenced you, didn't it?
Carlos: No es que me influya, simplemente, no, me da igual.	**Carlos**: It's not that it influences me, it's just that, no, I don't care.

Claims about who is a legitimate voice now relate to a divide other than that of linguistics versus sociolinguistics, but with a similar stark dichotomy. In Carlos' view, legitimacy is restricted for those academics whose departments, lines of research, and "deviant trajectories" lack the credentials to claim expertise on Catalan. In other words, scholarly activity that is not clearly rooted in an institutional position with a genuine object of study lacks recognition. Carlos represents the publics of sociolinguistics as a field of forces (Bourdieu, 2005) within which traditional sociolinguistics occupies positions to conserve the current structure of forces in debates about the Catalan language. This is a good example of the way in which current publics have become a space where intellectuals battle out their differences "to the extent of trying to exclude competitors from the agora" (Fleck et al., 2009, p. 1). But one's position in language discussions in the public realm is determined by other factors. Carlos goes on to explain this, as seen in Excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11 (Carlos, sociolinguist)

Carlos: Pero hay unas ciertas fricciones, como supongo que ya se ha visualizado <[>] a veces, no fricciones personales, sino fricciones epistemológicas, porque yo hago sociolingüística cualitativa crítica, entonces, la sociolingüística catalana tradicionalmente ha sido muy cuantitativa y muy de demolingüística. Entonces hay cuestiones epistemológicas […] Entonces, bueno, eso ha hecho que mi posición sea un poco periférica en los debates, y bueno queridamente periférica.	**Carlos**: But there are certain frictions, as I believe it will have become apparent by now <[>] sometimes, not personal frictions, but epistemological ones, because I work with qualitative critical sociolinguistics, so, Catalan sociolinguistics has traditionally been very quantitative, of a demolinguistic kind. So there are epistemological questions […] So, well, this has made my position rather a peripheral one in the debates and, well, happily peripheral.

The struggle here is over representations of social realities and involves two different types of epistemological "brokers" who can claim authority in debates (Blommaert, 1999). In Carlos' view, traditional positivist approaches prevail when it comes to representations of authority within the discipline. So, in Carlos' account, discordant sociolinguistic researchers who adopt an interpretive approach and align with late modern expertise over language (Jaspers, 2014) are the "absent voices" (Piller, 2019, p. 527)

and their object of enquiry are the "absent matters" in public debates. These scholars are still striving for accredited authority in the publics of sociolinguistics. It is undoubtedly the case that individual agency plays a major role in determining one's own final position (Bauman & Briggs, 2003, p. 318) and how much one engages with attempting to claim authority, as Carlos' decision to remain on the margins shows. However, this decision is also determined, at least in part, by an existing epistemological tension around what an academic sociolinguist should or might say in the public arena.

9 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our findings indicate, most significantly, that what is at stake is a competition of scholars with different disciplinary orientations and epistemological positions for discursive influence in language-in-society matters, for institutional authorization, and for resources. The public sphere is the terrain in which scholars play out a part of this competition (see also Gal, 2001).

First, Excerpts 1–5 exemplify one of the central ideas of the publics of sociolinguistics (Heyd & Schneider, 2019): that formerly unmarked hegemonic positions—in our case, represented by self-identified linguists—have become marked and are now in need of other forms of legitimation. Secondly, Excerpts 6–9 illustrate some aspects of the rivalry, which include ideologizing linguistic authority and attempts to disqualify certain scholarly groups from access to public funding and relations with institutional power. Lastly, as seen in Excerpts 10 and 11, institutional authorization is still a mark of legitimacy that can deter other truth claims from reaching the publics. Some of the discursive strategies that we have encountered, which are used to support or destabilize positions of academic authority, are to cast doubt on the trustworthiness of knowledge production (including epistemological and methodological concerns), to use labels ("sociolinguists" and "linguists") for the purposes of (de)legitimizing a group, and to adopt anti-establishment rhetoric.

Thus, contrary to Heyd and Schneider's (2019, p. 438) suggestion that there is no dynamic of destabilizing traditional power arrangements in contemporary publics, our study shows that, at least in the specific field of the publics of sociolinguistics in Catalonia, there seems to be a struggle between dominant discourse producers and their challengers (Bourdieu, 1993). More concretely, we see a subtle yet firm attempt by some sociolinguists to destabilize a group who formerly had academic authority and that, in turn, this move has generated a counteraction by those holding positions of authority, with them re-invoking that authority. To be specific, the data analyzed here seem to indicate that a group of sociolinguists is challenging dominant academic discourses in public debates about language while, correspondingly, some traditional linguists and philologists are attempting to maintain their position as producers of dominant discourses. If this is correct, these push-and-pull discursive movements in the public sphere are probably a sign that the relations of force in the academic realm—and subsequent public influence—is changing along the lines of the shift in the language ideological landscape that Catalonia has been experiencing in the last decades (Woolard, 2016). These developments have resulted in a progressive departure from linguistically foundationalist and essentialist positions that assign authority to certain visions of Catalan language via the ideology of authenticity, moving away from an indexical association between the Catalan language and a rooted community or discrete group. The transitional nature of this period could explain, for instance, the divergence, contradictions, and clashes that we found in the discursive constructions of academic dominance. Of course, the number of sociolinguistic scholars who engage in public discussions in a small region such as Catalonia is limited, and the relatively small number of participants who took part in this study obliges us to take a cautionary tone in our assertions. Further research is, therefore, needed to confirm the correctness of these preliminary observations and to determine to what extent other factors (e.g., com-

petition for resources and access to government positions) play a role in the public engagement of scholars.

In light of the analysis and the discussion about the relationship between sociolinguists and publics in Catalonia presented in this article, our reading of publics does not go so far as to fit within the idea of publics as transgressive and as a multiplicity of voices (Spitzmüller, 2019). Our interpretation aligns (at least partially) with Heyd and Schneider's (2019) linear conception of publics as a site in which erstwhile discursive authorities respond to attempts to destabilize traditional hierarchical orders by reaffirming and reinforcing their position. Yet, our resulting notion of publics is inevitably affected by the "regimes of truth" of sociolinguistics, in which sociolinguists and other interested parties operate (Heller, 2020); that is, in this case, the specific historical conditions, sociopolitical developments and academic intricacies of the Catalan context. We see that scholars seem to have similar ideological principles when it comes to nation and the promotion of Catalan, but they identify different political and policy consequences of these principles (see Erdocia, 2020). Furthermore, the contestation for institutional authorization and legitimacy is intertwined with the defense of competing expert knowledge, evidence-based arguments, epistemological commitments, and professional views about the discipline. In sum, we find that the publics of sociolinguistics in Catalonia have become more complex and interpretive and less prone to previously alleged consensus on language matters.

We conclude by arguing that, rather than seeing the engagement of sociolinguists with publics as a disinterested activity that provides a factual basis from which everyone can shape their own vision of the social world, the publics are better conceived as a terrain toward which sociolinguists direct institutional, disciplinary, and professional interests. The publics of sociolinguistics are, therefore, a site of struggle for the imposition of categories of perception and the principles of vision, division, and exclusion within the academic field, a site in which, once sociolinguists agree to participate, they necessarily have to take a position in the ideological game (Bourdieu, 1988). We end by admitting that the depiction we present here may alter what is at times the discipline's own ideal of addressing the publics "on behalf of Reason" (Bauman, 1987, p. 21). However, rather than uncritically normalizing the discipline's self-consideration as pristinely scholarly, we hope to contribute to a more encompassing understanding of ourselves as sociolinguists.

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ENDNOTE

[1] Indeed, some readers will surely remember receiving rejection letters in response to their abstract proposals for the Sociolinguistics Symposium held in Murcia, Spain, in 2016, indicating that their proposal was too sociocultural and not linguistic enough.

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