Defining pragmatic and symbolic frames: Newspapers about the independence during the Scottish and Catalan elections[1]

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Abstract
This research article determines the predominant media frames used during electoral campaigns in Scotland (2007) and Catalonia (2006) in relation to the independence referendum project. The researchers studied seven major newspapers published in the days preceding the elections in both countries and collected items (131 for the Scottish elections and 172 for the Catalan elections) referring to independence and related semantic fields (e.g., self-determination). The analysis, which defined the main frames for topics, concepts and metaphors, was organised according to symbolic, pragmatic, positive (pro-independence) and negative (anti-independence) axes and pointed to notable different results for each context. The predominant symbolic and pragmatic negative frames for the Scottish elections called for the 'breakup' of the United Kingdom and referred to the economic non-viability of a separate Scotland. A more symbolic (and also negative) debate took place in relation to the Catalan elections, with a high degree of trivialisation of independence.
Keywords: media framing; pragmatic frame; symbolic frame; independence; political journalism, elections; Catalonia, Scotland

Marcos interpretativos simbólicos y pragmáticos. Un estudio comparativo de la temática de la independencia durante las elecciones escocesas y catalanas

Resumen
Este artículo determina los marcos interpretativos mediáticos predominantes usados durante las campañas electorales en Escocia (2007) y en Cataluña (2006) en relación a los proyectos de referéndum de autodeterminación y a la independencia. Los investigadores estudiaron siete de los periódicos más importantes durante los días precedentes en ambos países y analizaron un corpus de noticias (131 en las elecciones escocesas y 172 en las catalanas) referentes a la "independencia" y a campos semánticos relacionados (por ejemplo, "autodeterminación"). El análisis –que identifica los marcos principales de la temática, conceptos y metáforas–, fue organizado de acuerdo a los ejes de simbólico, pragmático, positivo (pro-independencia) y negativo (anti-independencia) y apunta resultados muy diferentes en ambos

contextos. En la prensa escocesa, los marcos predominantes negativos simbólicos y pragmáticos básicamente apelaron a la ruptura de el Reino Unido *(break up metaphor)* y se refirieron a la no-viabilidad económica de una Escocia independiente. En las elecciones catalanas se asistió a un debate mucho más simbólico (y anti-independencia), con un alto grado de trivialización del proyecto soberanista.
Palabras clave: marcos interpretativos mediáticos, marco pragmático, marco simbólico, metáforas, independencia, elecciones, Cataluña, Escocia.

1. Introduction

This article explores the coverage that seven main newspapers in Scotland and Catalonia did on two electoral periods (2006 and 2007, respectively) in which Scottish National Party (SNP) won for the first time in the history and accessed to rule the country and the Catalan Convergència i Unió (a nationalist party coalition) also was the party more voted despite not getting the government after a coalition of three leftish parties (one of them independentists). The moment was crucial in two stateless nations that are currently moving to parallel processes of organizing consultations to evaluate the citizens' support to the independence from United Kingdom and Spain in 2014.

The major theoretical contribution that the authors aim to state is the articulation of the concepts of symbolic and pragmatic frames, being the electoral moments selected and the topic of the independence a fruitful scenario to test them, as analytical categories for the study of media discourses. Therefore, the article offers a theoretical approach to frame analysis, grounded on the concept of 'media frame' and, after drawing a picture of the Scottish and Catalan contexts, explains the results of a quantitative and a qualitative analysis and articulates how the concepts of 'pragmatic' and 'symbolic' frames could be applied in a media research and specifically in political communication filed.

2. Theoretical approach

Following the distinction suggested by other authors (e.g., Entman 1991, Scheufele 1999, Matthes and Kohring 2008), frame research can be approached from two perspectives, one analysing how the media report on specific issues and the other concerned with the impact of these frames on the public's understanding of these issues. The framing paradigm is based on the idea that how a topic is presented "can have an influence on how it is understood by the audiences" (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007: 11). Scheuffele (1999: 106) defined media frames and individual frames as how the media report and construct social reality and how citizens perceive this, respectively. The media frame is understood to be "a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson and Modigliani 1994: 376).

In this article we work with media frames as an independent variable in which the research question is what kind of media frames are published in newspapers. Framing politics implies that language models a particular worldview. In the framing process, we understand that political parties use media not only to set but also to shape topics; thus, framing is done primarily by political parties through the media. However, journalists also play an important role as reframers of discourses coming from party public relations consultants (Castelló and Montagut, 2010).

Electoral contexts change the behaviour of the media and political actors in several ways: political parties are highly active (sending out press releases constantly, offering interviews, making public speeches, etc.), the media pay more attention to political communications during campaigns and, finally, some media try to be more balanced by offering information on a range of candidates and policy proposals (Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006, p. 97-98). Using strategic framing in political communications can also have pernicious consequences; one of the most studied is growing cynicism and political alienation (Cappella and Jamieson, 1996; Valentino et al., 2000). However, conveniently used as an electoral tool, a correct framing strategy can help a political actor establish a series of meanings as ordered understandings of problems and their possible solutions; this is because frames are not mere definitions of social issues but also offer ideological proposals for solving problems –what Entman (1993, p. 52) refers to as moral evaluation and treatment recommendation–.

Taking the Entman (1993) definition of frames, we would like to contribute with another category that differentiates frame dimensions as symbolic and pragmatic, given that social issues can be grounded in very different ways. The symbolic frame dimension appeals to symbolic and cultural meanings and facts as arguments for the evaluation and treatment of an issue; examples in political communication are history, common culture, social values and identities backing or sponsoring specific political and social actions. By a pragmatic frame dimension we refer to frames appealing to praxis and more material aspects as arguments for the evaluation and treatment of an issue; an example is the claim for more funds or social services or an appeal based on economic costs and benefits.

In electoral contexts much discourse refers to projected policies, ongoing public debates, social conflicts and economic threats and opportunities. Of course, the media is not the only site where these discourses circulate, but they are surely the principal tool for spreading and projecting issues already modelled by the way they are explained. These discourses can assume a more symbolic frame dimension when they feed symbolic artefacts like history, identity, race, social values, religion or similar: for example, attacks on immigration are often based on these type of arguments. But the media usually also connect with the pragmatic frame dimensions of issues, e.g., economic costs, funding, social services, the health system, etc. The same attack on immigration can be pragmatic when, for example, lack of work for nationals while immigrants are being contracted is being denounced.

Scholars have also differentiated issue-specific frames from generic frames in the news (de Vreese, 1999, 2003). The former are specific issues treated during a delimited period within the campaign: for example, Jasperson et al. (1998) studied press

handling of the US budget deficit. The latter are more general fields for formatting messages that imply the adoption of a specific language belonging to a field (e.g., the language of conflict or war, game or sports frames, etc.). In our case, we study issue-specific frames, as we have based our research on an analysis of media frames about the independence issue. Another typology of frames that we found useful for our aims is the valence frame (Schuck and de Vreese 1999, de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2003), understood as a frame which refers positively or negatively to an issue. Schuck and de Vreese (2006) have noted that valence frames have been applied particularly in psychology, marketing and health communication studies in order to evaluate perceptions and behaviours. This category can also be useful in the sense that a positive or negative frame can influence electoral positions; this was tested by the same authors in recent research in which they found that exposure to positive news about the EU constitution among the Dutch public mobilised voters but, at the same time and more strongly, mobilised skeptics against the constitution, i.e., the potential no-voter (Schuck and de Vreese 2009). Regarding the case study analysed here, the campaigns for the Catalan (2006) and Scottish (2007) parliamentary elections were influenced by a debate on a self-determination referendum. In this regard, both electoral campaigns were also a communicative arena that shaped early political frames about what a referendum for self-determination, namely independence, would mean. In the Scottish and Catalan elections, the independence referendum and independence were both electoral topics affecting the parliamentary elections.

There are few comparative research studies on how the media cover elections in relation to frame analysis (e.g., Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2010), but we are of the opinion that a cross-national comparison can offer valuable insights. Catalonia and Scotland belong to different media models and the political party system and its functioning are very different in the two countries. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Mediterranean, or "polarised pluralist model", to which the Catalan system belongs, does not follow the predominantly liberal norms of journalism, based on neutrality and watchdogism. The Scottish press belongs in the liberal tradition and, in fact, London-based companies own most of the press in Scotland; the authors also noted the importance of the influence of political parties on this model. The political culture and social contexts are also profoundly different in the two countries, although they both share the status of stateless nation within a larger state. This status and other similarities have favoured other comparisons regarding their political systems (Keating, 1997; Moreno, 2006; Solano 2007) or even media products like the television fiction (e.g., Castelló et al., 2009; Castelló and O'Donnell 2009).

3. Contextual note

One clear difference between the Scottish and Catalan contexts is the position of the state powers and political parties regarding recognition of the legitimacy of national claims by the regions. In the case of Scottish independence, almost nobody questions its legitimacy, described by Keating (2007, p. 131) as a "striking feature of the debate". Thus, Scottish nationhood is not questioned, not even by the Scottish Conservative and other unionist parties. In general terms, nationalist feeling has been growing for

decades in Scotland (Keating, 1997) and the Scots see devolution as an unfinished project (McCrone and Paterson, 2002). As for Catalonia, although the Spanish state recognises its "nationality", it does not legally recognise it as a "nation", as this would imply the right of self-determination for the Catalans, given that the Spanish state has ratified the UN Charter in which it is stated that "all peoples have the right of self-determination". Not considering Catalonia to be "a nation" is not to consider its people to have this right. The latest important conflict regarding this issue was the cancellation by the Constitutional Court of several important articles in the Catalan Statute of Autonomy, after it had been approved by the Spanish courts and the Catalan parliament and voted for in a referendum of the people of Catalonia. The Spanish Constitution and the Constitutional Court which interprets it came into being to re-establish democracy and protect people's freedoms and plurality; these have, however, become a cage for Catalan self-governance claims. Other authors (e. g., Cardús, 2010, p. 26) suggest that there is less autonomy in Spain today than in the early days of democracy, with centripetal forces gaining ground in the political and media fields.

But why did we focus in 2007 and 2006 elections? We defend that in both context these were an exceptional political contest in which nationalist support by population was notably increased. In 2007 the Scots witnessed a very disputed election between the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party (SNP). The SNP was the only party backing independence in its manifesto; during the campaign, Labour -in government- and the Liberal Democrats explicitly opposed any possibility of holding a referendum. The parliament resulting from the 2007 elections shifted the power balance, with the SNP adding 20 seats (reaching 47) and all the other parties losing representation. The majority parties in both contexts, the SNP and Convergència i Unió (Convergence and Union, CiU), are based in Edinburgh and Barcelona, respectively. The SNP has a more centre-left ideological profile than the CiU, which is a coalition between two centre-right parties, Unlike the SNP, the CiU demands more power and cultural rights but not independence. In the 2006 elections, the only pro-independence party with representation in Catalonia was Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia, ERC). Finally, and regarding the output of the elections, the SNP runs Scotland as a minority government with support from the Scottish Green Party; in Catalonia, the three leftist parties –Partit Socialista de Catalunya (Socialist Party of Catalonia, PSC), ERC and Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds (Initiative for Catalonia-Greens, IC-V)– entered into a tripartite agreement on two occasions to prevent CiU from entering government. Despite the inclusion of a pro-independence party (the ERC), the second Catalan tripartite experience was based on a more softened programme than the original Tinell Pacts; labelled a *govern d'entesa* (government of understanding), it was based on achievable milestones.

But the backing for pro-independence parties does not seem to coincide with support for actually breaking up Britain or Spain, with the polls providing very polarised data on the support for independence in that moment. Table 1 provides results for polls carried out by diverse institutions and published in different dailies and dates close to the elections analysed here. They should not be read as a progression but as results that depend on context, the system used and the publisher of the information. Great dif-

ferences arose for example between polls published by *The Daily Telegraph* in 2007 (Yougov, 29% of Scots supported independence) and *The Herald* in 2008 (TNS, 41% supported independence). Perhaps the most striking results are the disparity between polls published in the same week in 2010 after the Constitutional Court had curtailed the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia: in *La Vanguardia* (Instituto Noxa, 47% backed independence) and in *El Periódico de Catalunya* (only 19% backed secession compared to 47% defending a federal state and 28.7% wanting to keep the status quo)[3].

Table 1. Support for independence in Scotland and Catalonia[4]							
	Scotland				Catalonia		
	2005 (1)	2007 (2)	2008 (3)	2009 (4)	2007 (5)	2009 (6)	2010 (7)
Support	46%	29%	41%	38%	30%	32%	47%
Oppose	39%	57%	40%	40%	38%	51%	36%
Don't Know / Don't vote	15%	15%	ND	ND	ND	17%	15%

In general terms, it is difficult to measure the real support for independence in each national context, especially as there is a correlation but not a direct link between national identity feelings or positioning (feeling more/less Catalan/Scottish than Spanish/British) and support for independence. Both Catalans and Scots who state feeling more nationalistic may not directly back secession. In Scotland, Tait (2007, p. 95) argues that the 2007 election did not mean a breakup or no-return choice for Scots regarding independence; Keating (2010: 48) indicates that perhaps the Scots are not immediately supportive of independence. Anyway, it is important to note that in both national contexts there is serious political support for the holding of a referendum

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[3] This poll has not been included in the table because the questions are not directly about pro- or anti-independence, but the difference between the supporters for splitting up with Spain are notable respecting the results published by *La Vanguardia.* Source: *El Periódico de Catalunya*, 23 July 2010: http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/politica/20100723/mas-autogobiernono-independencia/400791.shtml [last accessed 28 september 2012]

[4] Several sources: TNS System Three [accessed 28 July 2010]: http://www.tns-ri.co.uk/_assets/files/Poll_on_support_for_independence_April_2005(1).pdf;
(2) Yougov poll published in *The Daily Telegraph* [accessed 28 July 2010]: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/scotland/6637020/Independence-and-SNP-support-down-Telegraph-poll-shows.html)
(2) TNS System Three published in *The Herald* [accessed 28 July 2010]: http://www.heraldscotland.com/41-of-scots-back-the-break-up-of-the-union-1.828649
(4) TNS System Three published in *The Herald* [accessed 28 July 2010]: http://www.heraldscotland.com/scotland-on-a-knife-edge-1.827194)
(5) Insituto Noxa published in *La Vanguardia* [accessed 28 July 2010]: http://www.lavanguardia.es/premium/publica/publica?COMPID=53403881282&ID_PAGINA=3744&ID_FORMATO=9&PARTICION=2006&turbourl=false&PAGINACIO=-1
(6) Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, on-line [access 28 July 2010]: http://www.icps.cat/archivos/sondeigs/SC2007.pdf
(7) Instituto Noxa published in *La Vanguardia* [accessed 28 July 2010]: http://www.lavanguardia.es/politica/noticias/20100718/53967434806/el-fallo-del-tc-catapulta-el-respaldo-a-la-independencia-que-roza-el-50-tribunal-constitucional-inst.html.

(more than 30% in Scotland and more than 50% in Catalonia attending last polls). The Alex Salmon administration and the current Catalan government have established 2014 to be the year to celebrate these consultations[5].

4. Method

Our selection of the object was composed of seven major newspapers in Scotland and Catalonia, dailies and weekend editions of *The Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph, The Guardian/Observer* and *The Herald/Sunday Herald* for Scotland[6] and the dailies *El Mundo, El País, La Vanguardia* and *Avui* for Catalonia. We combined a quantitative and a qualitative approach to analysis. Thus, the statistics regarding the frame treatment represent preliminary results and a starting point. The quantitative data was completed by a qualitative analysis of metaphors and lexical choices. In this, we departed from the basis of considering language as a "site of power" and media institutions as providers of a place for public discussion (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). Metaphor analysis was conducted on the basis that metaphors are not only a use of language but also keys to structuring meaning and even perceptions and understandings of social reality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). We also evaluated some discursive strategies in politicians' statements. To select the corpus we preferred not to use an automatic search tool fed with concepts but to carefully read each article and qualitatively decide its inclusion or exclusion. The final corpus was composed of all articles reporting on the independence issue and related semantic fields (e.g., self-determination, separation, etc.). Thus, a series of decisions were made individually for each item. The texts were collected in the 18 days prior to the Scottish elections (n=131 articles) and in the 17 days prior to the Catalan elections (n=172 articles). All genres were included (news, interviews, reports, analysis articles, editorials and commentaries) and articles were selected if they included "independence" or a semantically related concept.

Table 2. Entry categorisation for each item		
Objective data fields	**Communicative fields**	**Meaning and framing fields**
ID (unique identification number)	Sender (journalist/writer, politician, citizen, other)	Semantic field
Page	State (yes/no)	Valence frame (positive, negative, neutral)
Date	Political party (if sender is a politician)	Explicitness (yes/no)
Length (range 10 to100)	Extracts	Frame dimension (symbolic, pragmatic, none)
Newspaper	Comments	Key concepts
Author		
Title		
Lead		
Front page (yes/no)		

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[5] 2014 marks the 300th anniversary of the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714); after the war, in reprisal for its support for the losing side, Catalonia was ruled directly from Madrid.

[6] Despite the fact that these newspapers are dailies and the Sunday newspapers are independent, we treated these binomials as a unique publication

The categorisation was subdivided into three kinds of decisions (see Table 2): objective fields, communicative fields and meaning and framing fields. In the first group we collected information on the page, date, length, newspaper title, author, title, the lead (first tenses of the news pieces) and whether the article was referred to on the front page. For the second group we determined the sender (whether a journalist/writer, politician, citizen or other), checked whether the core concepts were presented as direct speech between commas or as indirect speech, and collected extracts and comments from encoders. Finally, as the most interpretative set of codes we used a range of semantic fields (independence, self-determination, referendum (referring to independence referendum), separation/union/anti-union, devolution (for Scotland); *independència* (independence), *autodeterminació* (self-determination)/*dret a decidir* (right to decide), *autogovern* (self-government)/*autonomia* (automomy), *federalisme* (federalism), *referendum, estatut* (statute)/*competències* (policy areas) (for Catalonia); the valence frame (positive or pro-independence; negative or anti-independence; or neutral reporting regarding the concept/project of independence); explicitness (yes/no) of the valence frames; the frame dimension (symbolic, pragmatic or neither); and, finally, the key concepts (metaphors, concepts and lexical choices with an impact on the frame configuration). In this interpretative set of categories, semantic field, valence frame, explicitness and frame dimension were closed-choice categories, whereas the key concepts field was open. Some of these categories need further explanations.

The semantic field was automatically "independence" when the concept appeared in the text, except when "independence" qualified "referendum" ("referendum for independence", "independence referendum"), when the field was marked, logically, as "referendum". The semantic field was a very specific entry, as is implied the inclusion/exclusion of the entry in the sample; any article that did not refer to the topic was excluded. The valence frame was only marked as "positive" (pro-independence) or "negative" (anti-independence) when the article contained connotative values, adjectives, concepts, moral judgments, etc. For example, the articles discussing the cost of independence for Scotland and the Scots was marked as negative and articles referring to "*ruptura*" (breakup), "*desmembramiento*" (dismemberment), "*sinsentido*" (nonsense) or even "*amenaza*" (threat) were marked as negative. When an item contained negative and positive statements, the encoders balanced the decision according to the weight of the text (relevance, length, etc.). It was decided that this field needed a second category to mark its explicitness ("yes" or "no" if "negative" or "positive", respectively, and empty if "neutral") when we tested the categories in a first coding round, as some articles were feeding a negative frame by "positivising" unionism. In this case, we found it relevant to distinguish between explicit negative positioning on independence and a negative position resulting from defence of union (this was, in fact, a discursive strategy for some political parties like the Scottish Conservatives, commented below). The frame dimension was decided depending of the range of topics arising from the text and the existence of pragmatic proposals. For example, articles referring to "union", "union breakup", "common history", "shared culture and values", "national culture", etc., were coded as symbolic, whereas those relating to specific "policies", "bread-and-butter topics", "devolved areas of policy", "economy",

etc., were coded as pragmatic. The field was left empty when no clear topics or trivialised handling of the issue were evident[7].

5. Framing independence
The frame analysis offered quantitative data regarding frame use and qualitative results regarding language use and discursive strategies. One of the evident results of the data obtained refers to the presence of the issues during the election campaign periods. For the Scottish election period we found that the closer the date of the election (3 May 2007 = d), the greater the presence of the independence issue in newspapers. In the last week in particular (from d-7 to d), newspapers reported intensively on the topic, mainly reflecting the more intense debate taking place in the political arena (Figures 1 and 2). Framing of the issue was more negative than positive and this negativity increased to peak level in the last three days before the election. *The Herald/Sunday Herald* was the publication that most intensively reported the issue (78 items), followed by *The Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph* (38) and *The Guardian/Observer* (15). Not surprisingly, and already stated by other authors (Higgins, 2006; Dekavalla, 2010, 2011) regarding the Scottish topics in the greater British press, little importance attached to the issue and to the Scottish elections in general in *The Guardian/Observer*. For the Catalan elections (Figures 3 and 4), all the newspapers provided similar coverage of the topic, independently of the frames: *El Mundo* (49), *La Vanguardia* (46), *Avui* (40) and *El País* (37).

Figure 1. Valence frames for news in Scotland (n=131): positive (pro-independence), negative (anti-independence) or neutral.

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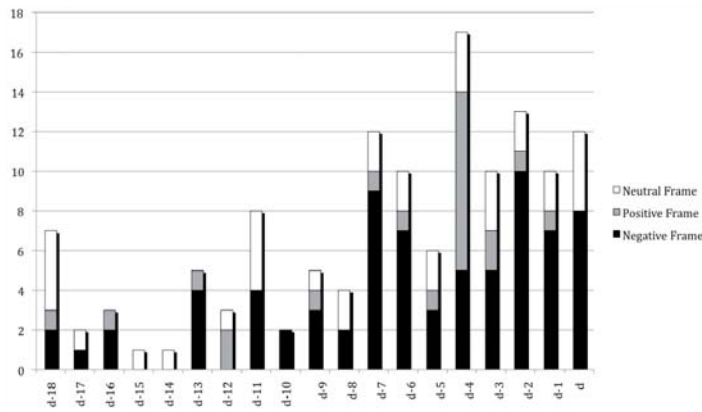
[7] We performed separate reliability checks for the Scottish and Catalan items. Reliability was checked for the four closed categories in the interpretative group (semantic field, frame valence, explicitness and frame dimension) by applying a simple method proposed by Wimmer and Dominick (2000). With 1 as the highest possible value, the former obtained a reliability of 0.75 and the latter obtained a reliability of 0.69. These reliability indexes are within the norm for quantitative frame analysis research; Van Gorp (2005), for instance, worked on a range of reliabilities lying between 0.60 and 0.99 and Matthes and Kohring (2008) obtained reliability results, depending on category, ranging between 0.68 and 0.77 (they applied different content analysis reliability measurement methods of coding coincidence).

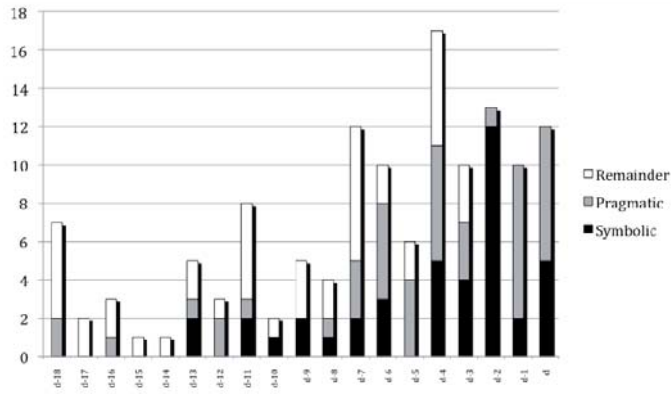Figure 2. Frame dimensions for news in Scotland (n=131): pragmatic, symbolic and remainder.

Figure 3. Valence frames for news in Catalonia (n=172): positive (pro-independence), negative (anti-independence) or neutral.
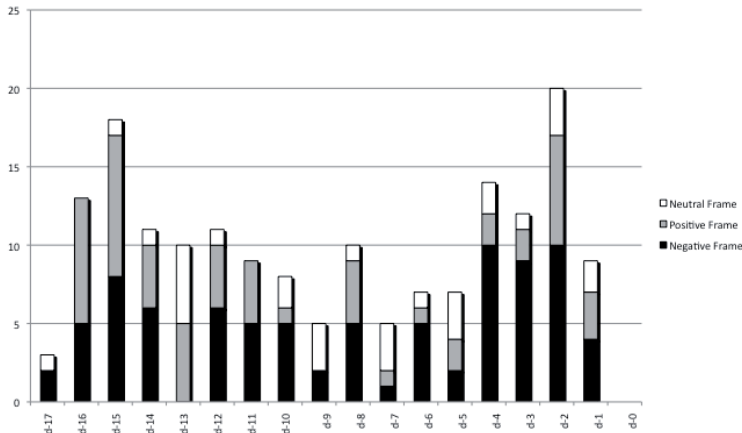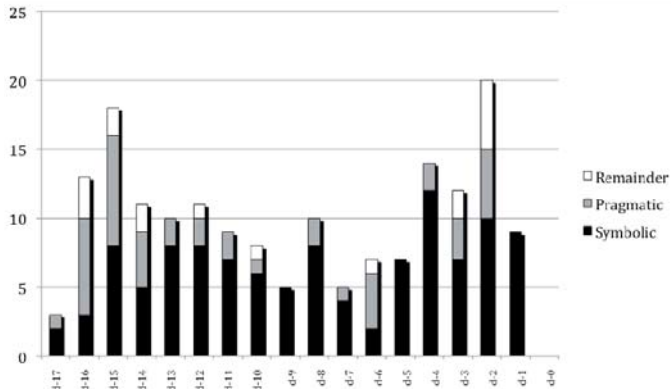

Figure 4. Frame dimensions for news in Catalonia (n=172): pragmatic, symbolic and remainder.

5.1. Breakup and divorce: Scotland

It must be remembered that the opinions expressed in the newspapers are not necessarily those of the publishers and that most of the reports and news on the topic are gathered from politicians' statements, direct and indirect reporting and the opinions of analysts, public personalities, etc. *The Herald/Sunday Herald* offered the most balanced news, analyses and reports, with positive (18), negative (32) and neutral (28) perspectives on the independence issue. *The Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph* articles generally had a negative resonance (32) and few positive (4) or neutral (2) perspectives; *The Guardian/Observer* articles were also quite negative (10), with few positive (2) or neutral (3) items.

More qualitative content analysis shows that the English-owned press mostly offered negative frames of independence, contrasting with a more temperate position adopted by the Glasgow-based newspaper. This correlates with the editorials published by the newspapers during the period. Ten editorials were included in the Scottish sample, as they referred to the issues of self-governance, the referendum and the electoral process: *The Daily Telegraph* criticised the pro-independence position and asked for a conservative-unionist vote; *The Guardian* published a lukewarm editorial that did not directly support any party but criticised Labour's campaign; and *The Herald* was friendly to a change, which could be interpreted as sympathy for the SNP (the only party with possibilities to replace Labour), while not defending a pro-independence movement[8].

In the Scottish case, pragmatic and symbolic approaches to the question were quite balanced during the entire campaign period. The predominant symbolic frame was rather negative, basically insisting on the breakup metaphor. The discourse on splitting away from the union was fed intensively by Labour party representatives, with a negative campaign that was criticised by adversaries and even leaders of the party itself. The language used to point to and even magnify the consequences of breakup is worthy of comment. Twenty-five news stories contained direct references to rupture –not all sourced from Labour politicians– that focused on the breakup metaphor or used similar expressions such as "seismic shift", "wreck the union", "disrupt the UK", "splitting up Britain", "dismemberment of the United Kingdom", "smash the Union" and "destruction of the UK".

From the early days of the campaign, the Labour party implemented an us-or-chaos strategy, forcing a direct relationship between the SNP vote and independence. As the elections coincided with the 300th anniversary of the union, many newspapers entered the debate on the state of the union and the vitality of British identity. Here we find some negative perspectives attached to the divorce metaphor. Both journalists and politicians picked up this metaphor and described independence as divorce. One editorial even used this metaphor in the title and concluded with: "Like most Scots, *The Herald* remains to be convinced that constitutional divorce is the answer. However,

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[8] *The Daily Telegraph,* Editorial, 3 May 2007, 'The Tories, and the Union, deserve your vote'; *The Guardian*, 2 May 2007, 'Fear and loathing'; *The Herald*, 3 May 2007 'So much at stake, so many fronts'; and *The Herald*, 1 May 2007 'A troubled marriage'.

even the best marriages benefit from periodic renegotiation"[9]. The Conservatives explored other paths: to defend the union and to optimistically appear as the Unionist party. From the start of the campaign Annabel Goldie avoided direct attacks on the independence plans of the SNP and tried a positive approach instead, focusing on the benefits of the union and other bread-and-butter issues. Despite this, David Cameron's visit to Scotland also focused on the nationalist dispute. As reported, Cameron transmitted clear messages to potential Conservative voters: "I believe we would be a more cultured and civilised nation if we stayed together"; "the Union between England and Scotland is as relevant today as it has ever been"; and, "Be in no doubt that we are a party that supports the Union and we will behave accordingly and don't do anything to threaten the Union" (sic)[10].

The negative symbolic frame was strong but whether or not this was a consciously planned electoral strategy is uncertain. One illustrative example was the lack of coordination among Labour leaders during the campaign. On 30 April, Gordon Brown's warning to Scottish voters about "dangerous and disastrous" plans for independence was reproduced by all the newspapers on 1 May. Gordon Brown also framed a hypothetical Labour-led parliament that would not create "constitutional chaos". On 1 May, Tony Blair –in a strongly symbolic speech referring to the 300 years of union– called for the continuity of countries working together, gave a genealogical discourse on his Irish, English and Scottish ancestors and condemned "pantomime politics" and "narrow nationalism" that would be "disastrous in its consequences and reactionary in its soul"; the same day Jack McConnell, in an exercise of self-criticism, admitted that Labour's campaign had been "negative"[11].

Following on from this analysis of discursive positions, the symbolic negative frame was picked up two days before the election (1 March 2007), with a battery of statements strongly against the idea of independence. This was the moment of the campaign when Labour unveiled endorsements by actors, sportspeople and other key figures. Some public figures were against independence, for example, the broadcaster Muriel Gray. Even though no pragmatic reasons were given to oppose self-governance, her negativism was evident in her lexical choices:

> This is a planetary alignment of <u>disasters</u> waiting to happen. People say they want a change without realising what it will mean. All these <u>dark secret forces</u> hope for independence so that they can have unelected, <u>undemocratic power</u>. What a future Scotland that's going to be. Hello, <u>banana republic</u>! (*The Herald,* 'Labour unveils star endorsements', 1 May 2007, p. 7) (our underlining).

Negative pragmatic frames were less relevant but also important. The framing here was about the cost of independence for Scottish families. Again, the Labour party was the most active in this discourse. From the early days of the campaign, this frame

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[9] *The Herald,* 'A troubled marriage', 1 May 2007, p. 14.
[10] *The Daily Telegraph,* 'Cameron goes on offensive in support of one nation', 20 April 2007, p. 14.
[11] *The Daily Telegraph,* 'Your next Prime Minister will be a Scot, says Blair', 2 May 2007, p. 10; *The Herald,* 'McConnell admits negative campaign', May 2nd 2007, p. 7.

stressed the idea that separation would have very negative effects on the Scottish economy. One of Labour's campaigning strategies was to back an advert published by a group of business people supporting the union. Labour also championed this perspective by focusing on two issues: the direct cost of independence for Scottish families (calculated as 5,000 GBP per year per family) and the clash between education and independence plans. This clash was undoubtedly a rather forced frame in the sense that there is no direct relationship between investment in education and an independence referendum (a priori, the two choices are not mutually exclusive). This discourse, based on the premise of "education, not separation" was constant during the entire campaign.

Finally, on the positive side, as was to be expected, the SNP was the only political party offering positive messages on the topic, along with some analysts mainly writing for *The Herald/Sunday Herald.* Among the concepts used were "improvement for Scots", "it's democratic", "control of our revenue", "huge gains for Scots", "Scotland believes in herself", "time for Scotland to move forward" and "trusting in the people". On the other hand, there was little specificity about what the independence project entailed. The SNP strategy seemed to be *laissez faire*; they preferred to wait and see their opponents get entangled in the issue while the SNP focused on taxes, education and health. When asked to comment on the question, Salmond tried to positively frame it as a democratic process:

> Salmon is, by his own admission, trying to avoid gloating. 'It's been a conscious choice, this election, to change my style of argument [...] But this time, I've tried to back off from just making points, wining points. I've tried to be positive, all the time, see the good that can come out of simply letting Scots have their say, trusting Scots. Asking them, not telling them, to take the chance of seeing the SNP, now, in action' *(The Observer,* 'Unlikely hero of the new Scottish rebellion', 29 April 2007).

The SNP discourse position reached a peak at the end of the campaign, when Alex Salmond proclaimed that "the referendum framework was Donald Dewar's legacy" *(The Herald,* 'Salmond challenges Brown to work with SNP administration', 2 May 2007, p. 7). At this point, the nationalist arguments sublimated the appropriation of all the political efforts of self-governance (especially by the successive Labour governments). Indeed, as an interesting approach to valence politics from Johns et al. points out, not only the negative campaign from Labour Party were pernicious for them, the argument is that "SNP won the election in 2007 by persuading enough voters that it was a credible party of government and that it offered a more positive and Scottish-oriented agenda than Labour" (2008: 229)

A particular treatment, which would be unthinkable in the Catalan context, was the analysis offered by some opinion makers regarding the appropriateness of Scottish independence as a positive process for the English. Some newspapers in the UK reported on polls of English support for Scottish independence[12] and during the campaign a number of articles dealt with this perspective in both a positive and negative way.

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[12] For example, see *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Britain wants UK break-up, polls show', 26 November 2006. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1535193/Britain-wants-UK-break-up-poll-shows.html [last access 29 September 2012].

5.2. Trivialisation of independence: Catalonia

One of the main results for the press in Catalonia was the lack of direct debate on independence although there were moments of certain intensity. Thus, the term *independència* (independence) only appeared in 44 (25.6%) items of the 172 analysed. This fact could be explained by the fatigue generated by the debate around the identity of Catalonia and its relations with Spain when the Catalan Statute of Autonomy was modified during the legislature. In the Catalan elections, reporting on the independence issue and related semantic concepts peaked at the beginning and the end of the campaign. The increase in the early days of the campaign (d-16 to d-13) coincided with a call from the ERC for a referendum on self-determination. Curiously, the second peak (d-4 to d-2) was related to an evaluation of the campaign by several analysts who arrived at the conclusion that the identity issue was not relevant to the election campaign. In this sense it is significant that none of the editorials published by the newspapers analysed during the campaign focused on independence. Only *El Mundo* ran an editorial on the relationship between Spain and Catalonia[13]. As with the Scottish elections, the negative frame was much more present than the positive frame and the highest number of negative articles were published in the four days before election day (in the Scottish elections, negativity was high in the entire week before election day). The newspaper that paid most attention to the topic was *El Mundo* (49 items), followed by *La Vanguardia* (46), *Avui* (40) and *El País* (37). Thus, the quantitative treatment of the issue by the dailies was broadly similar.

La Vanguardia was the daily offering the most balanced treatment in terms of the valence frame, with 16 positive, 17 negative and 13 neutral items. *El Mundo* articles offered a more unbalanced picture with 37 negative, 9 positive and 3 neutral articles; in contrast, *El País* had a fairly balanced 17 negative, 12 positive and 8 neutral articles. The only newspaper with a positive balance in its content was *Avui*, with 14 negative, 19 positive and 7 neutral articles. As in the Scottish elections, most of the items referring to the topic were related to statements by politicians rather than editorials or opinion articles and this tendency was accentuated when only the semantic field "independence" was selected. We draw two conclusions from this fact: first, it explains the presence of negative items in *Avui*, which reported statements by the PP (Popular Party, a right-wing unionist party) politicians, and positive items in *El Mundo*, which referred to statements from ERC politicians; secondly, in Catalonia there is clear duality between the opinions of newspapers (as expressed in the editorial) and the statements of politicians. This duality was most evident in *El País,* which gathered statements from the ERC and the CiU that were positively considered but criticised by the journalists. This duality was clear, for example, in an interview with Josep-Lluís Carod Rovira, the ERC leader and a supporter of independence; the journalist questioned him as follows:

> Is ERC a party of government or an organisation that is prisoner of an extreme breakaway programme –the independence of Catalonia– which makes it [ERC] an undesirable

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[13] During the electoral period *Avui* dedicated 7 editorials to the campaign, *El Mundo,* 13, *El País,* 2 and *La Vanguardia*, 2. (Aira, Sáez and Xicoy 2009).

if not impossible partner? [...] You are presenting yourselves as a party of government but continuously agitating elements which distort the political scenery. Now you are doing so with self-determination; that, as the right wing says, is like fuelling a fire. Why are you doing this?[14]

To sum up, only *Avui* articles backed independence and the other newspapers prioritised directly opposing frames. Despite this, the Catalonia-based dailies (*Avui* and *La Vanguardia)* had more articles with a positive frame, whereas the Spanish dailies *(El País* and *El Mundo)* offered less positive visions. Another difference between the Catalan and Spanish newspapers was that the analysts in the latter criticised, not so much the independence project itself (which was awarded little space in the texts), but the parties and politicians defending independence and even Catalonia. The daily in which this tendency was strongest was *El Mundo* which made ironic statements such as: "The Catalan nation needs more anxiolytics, not more reporters"[15].

In the Catalan elections, the symbolic dimension largely predominated over the pragmatic dimension (111 versus 44 items). The pragmatic dimension was only more relevant in the early days of the campaign, when ERC referred to the Catalan parliament recovering its powers to organise referendums. It should be noted that many pragmatic references to the notion of independence for Catalonia were a strategy to garner votes. The rest of the news that was not classified as symbolic or pragmatic was based on the notion of independence as an instrument for trivialisation. A good example is this statement by a reporter for *La Vanguardia*:

> When the candidates return to the stage, they are received by people shouting *in-de-pen-cia*, following a musical rhythm. I sadly observe that this beautiful word has lost one syllable. In Catalan, *in-de-pen-dèn-ci-a* has six syllables and not five. Is this evidence of something?[16]

The main negative symbolic frame referred to PP slogans such as "Catalonia is Spain" and "constitutional Spain". The daily reflecting this viewpoint most clearly was *El Mundo,* which balanced its reproduction of statements from the PP and Ciutadans (a liberal pro-unionist party). This newspaper's reports and opinions also included more aggressive messages, e.g., using the metaphor *España se rompe* (Spain

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[14] Original text: "¿Es ERC un partido de gobierno o una fuerza prisionera de un programa máximo rupturista, la independencia de Cataluña, que lo convierte en un socio indeseable, si no imposible?", "Se presentan como partido de gobierno, pero continuamente están agitando elementos que distorsionan el escenario político. Ahora mismo lo están haciendo con la autodeterminación, que tal como está la derecha es como dar gasolina a un incendio, ¿por qué hacen esto?".

[15] *El Mundo,* 21 October 2006, p. 14, "No llegaba el sonido de respuesta" [No sound of a response was coming]. (Original text: "La nación catalana ya no necesita cronistas sino ansiolíticos").

[16] *La Vanguardia,* 30 October 2006, p. 14, "Sin masilla en el Palau". (Original text: "Cuando los candidatos vuelven a subir les reciben con gritos de in-de-pen-den-cia, al ritmo de la música. Observo con pesar que esta bella palabra ha perdido una sílaba. En catalán, in-de-pendèn-ci-a tenía seis sílabas y no cinco. ¿Será un indicio de algo?")

is breaking up), also used by the Spanish right during the debate on reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy to warn of the dangers of going down the decentralisation path.

This discourse was minimally present in other publications. In *Avui*, where the positive symbolic dimension was predominant, we found the Spain is breaking up narrative in only three items, all of them referring to statements from PP members. Something similar happened with *La Vanguardia*, whose articles balanced negative, positive and neutral positions. In this daily, the presence of negative symbolic items was higher but almost all of these items reproduced statements from the PP and the PSC (whose leader is President of the Catalan coalition government). Another negative symbolic concept of the independence debate was to be found in this daily, namely, arguments underlining the fact that the debate did not address the real problems of the people (bread-and-butter issues). This frame was also shared with *El País.*

The daily that most reflected the symbolic positive dimension was *Avui*. The most typical positive frame was that independence "would lead to the end of the subordination of Catalonia to Spain", as this subordination was seen to be negative and offensive towards Catalonia. In the case of *La Vanguardia* and *El País*, this dimension was less usual. The duality of *El País* (as pointed out above) was evident. Although it assigned this argument to the CiU, journalists and analysts framed it within a "discourse of victimisation", with Catalonia and the Catalans as "victims" in the Spanish state.

The daily that most developed the symbolic neutral perspective was *La Vanguardia*. Within this position the frames most used were "Catalonia is a nation" and "plural Spain"—in spite of the fact that, in *strictu sensu*, neither of the two slogans refers to independence but recognises an intermediate status. It is worth noting that this position was supported mostly by daily columnists and, to a lesser extent, by PSC and CiU politicians.

The principal results of the pragmatic negative dimension concern the instrumentalisation of independence, in the sense that this concept is merely a political strategy to obtain votes. Moreover, this frame is related to the metaphor of *peix al cove* (fish in the bag), a Catalan linguistic expression that defines a form of politics consisting of never-ending negotiations with Spain to achieve minor milestones. In the case of the pragmatic positive dimension, the newspapers' strategies focused on the demands for more areas of policies to be managed by the autonomous government and the metaphor of Catalonia as a country "in construction". This metaphor is usually assigned to the ERC by *El País* and *El Mundo* and is more developed by *Avui*.

6. Conclusion

As can be observed, Scottish and Catalan newspapers handled the issue of independence quite differently. In Scotland, the very topical independence debate was intensified during the election campaign; in Catalonia, independence as a topic was largely trivialised. In both cases, a negative symbolic frame was predominant, although the Scottish press touched on the pragmatic dimension in a more balanced way. In both cases also, there was some correlation between newspaper ownership and the handling of the independence issue. Thus, more positive handling was evident to a higher

degree in the Scottish- and Catalan-owned newspapers *(The Herald/Sunday Herald, Avui* and *La Vanguardia),* whereas more negative and symbolic approaches were evident in the English- and Spanish-owned publications (*The Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph, The Guardian/Observer, El País* and *El Mundo)*. However, there were also differences in the ideological positions of the state-based newspapers and we could distinguish between, on the one hand, publications that were more aligned with conservative and unionist positions *(The Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph* and *El Mundo)* and, on the other hand, less conservative but still fairly unionist publications *(The Guardian/The Observer* and *El País)* that were more ambivalent and even ambiguous regarding their position.

There was a significant and meaningful difference regarding the intensity of the published debate. In the Scottish elections we noted an *in crescendo* trend; in Catalonia, however, debate intensity was largely dictated by the proposals of the pro-independence ERC party. Moreover, the Scottish debate was basically led or induced by a pro-union political party (Labour) which successfully or otherwise obtained a response from other forces. In the Catalan elections, the opposite occurred: the pro-independence ERC fuelled the discussion and a pro-union party (PP) responded. We did not detect this strategy in the SNP, which placed the issue to one side during the campaign to focus on explaining policy plans for other fields (the economy, education, etc.). The symbolic negative dimension frame of the debates was dominated by the "breakup" metaphor and by the assertion of the Britishness and the Spanishness of Scotland and Catalonia, respectively. Despite this, in the Scottish elections a significant pragmatic dimension was evident; the Labour party especially fuelled discourses on the economically and scientifically pernicious consequences of leaving the union. Such a relevant and, at the same time, sophisticated debate was absent from the Catalan elections, where anti-independence arguments were mainly circumscribed to superficial messages about breaking up Spain and where independence was trivialised as the peculiar expression or statement of pro-independence political leaders and followers.

In the Scottish press, and as admitted by the party itself, the Labour discourse reflected a strong negativism and a reactive position that was perhaps not appropriate from the point of view of electoral communication strategies, given that the SNP was not especially combative regarding the issue of independence. From the outset of the campaign, Labour fuelled a "discourse of fear" to convince the voters not to swing to the SNP; Salmond, meanwhile, focused on practical issues (education, health, finances, etc.). It is beyond the scope of this article to explore to what extent this discourse was the output of a strong or weak reframing role by journalists (Castelló and Montagut, 2010); however, from the media discourse it was evident that Labour failed to transmit political proposals regarding social policies. This blank space was occupied by SNP communication strategies. Meanwhile, Labour overly focused on independence in a negative way, unlike the SNP, which, when it responded, did so in a very pragmatic and positive manner. Regarding Catalonia, it is evident that the newspapers only responded, and in a literal way, to the statements of political parties on independence: not one of them had a voice of its own or adopted a stance. Unlike what

happened in Scotland, the Catalan newspapers merely aligned themselves with one or another political party without defending any ideological alternative position.

The campaign for the Catalan elections of 2010 was launched by an ERC proposal for a referendum in the near future and with intense debate on the future of Catalonia in view of the Spanish Constitutional Court's curtailment of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. The nationalist CiU coalition won the elections, with a proposal of a *pacte fiscal* (fiscal agreement), that is, the renegotiation of economic relations with Spain. Meanwhile, four members of a new pro-independence party (Solidaritat Catalana) entered the Catalan parliament. In 2012, president Mas called for new elections and the Parliament approved a document in which an absolute majority of MPs backed a referendum for the independence (84 votes for yes, 25 abstention and 21 votes for no). In Scotland, the SNP-led government postponed initial plans for a referendum to 2014 and the 2011 elections gave still more power to the nationalists that will arise the discursive battleground on independence during next years. This is not an issue to be exhausted in the near future; rather, a long-term political debate for the upcoming years, maybe decades, is likely in both countries.

Finally, and going beyond the national context here discussed, we have introduced the concepts of pragmatic and symbolic frames as categories of analysis. We hope that the consideration of the 'frame dimension' would be a useful way for future researches on the evaluation of media frame analysis. Especially in the field of national and cultural identity studies and communication, to considerate the nature of the reasoning being constructed in the media, by journalists and politicians, can be a fruitful tool to better decipher the symbolic or pragmatic dimensions of a proposed discourse. An interesting path to go on this type of research would be to keep the evaluation on the political discourses regarding the actual convocation of referendums for the independence in both national contexts; our impression is that far from being rooted in the symbolic discourse about nation, history or culture, the pro-independence arguments are more and more attached to pragmatic aspects of citizenship daily lives.

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