

The Nyordosphere: A Digital Neologism and the Continuities of Linguistic Uniformity in Spain

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Abstract

This article introduces and analyzes the neologism *Nyordosphere*, a term that emerged in digital spaces to describe a discursive ecosystem characterized by hostility towards linguistic and cultural diversity in Spain. Beyond its satirical origin, the *Nyordosphere* becomes an analytical tool to understand the continuity between Francoist repression and current practices that seek to normalize the idea of a single “common language.” By combining a historical perspective with recent case studies—such as the judicial imposition of 25% Spanish-language classes in Catalan schools, the pressures of groups like *Hazte Oír* in Andorra, or the resistance of part of Latin American immigration to linguistic integration—this article shows how the *Nyordosphere* articulates a victimist discourse while maintaining a hegemonic position in media, bureaucracy, and state institutions. The study integrates academic theories, journalistic sources, and analyses of digital communities to highlight how humor and ridicule expose the fragility of the uniformity narrative, while also underlining the importance of cultural and linguistic resistance in Spain and beyond.

Keywords

Nyordosphere, digital neologism, language policy, Francoism, cultural diversity, digital communities, hegemony, Catalonia,

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the digital sphere has become a privileged arena for the construction of political and identity discourses (Castells, 2009; Papacharissi, 2015). Within this context, neologisms play a crucial role, since they condense imaginaries, practices, and conflicts into a single word (Shifman, 2014; Lakoff, 2004). This article presents and analyzes the term *Nyordosphere*, born from the popular and satirical use of *nyordo* to describe those social sectors that show hostility towards linguistic and cultural diversity in Spain.

Beyond its humorous origin, the *Nyordosphere* becomes an analytical category to describe a **discursive ecosystem** characterized by the repetition of insults, the paternalistic use of expressions such as “¡Infórmese!” (“Get informed!”), appeals to a supposed “tradition,” and, above all, the rejection of difference. This digital community often relies on mass reporting and victimist rhetoric to silence dissent, while reproducing a homogenizing narrative rooted in a long historical trajectory.

The continuity with the past is evident: from Francoist slogans such as “*Habla en cristiano*” (“Speak in Christian”) or “*Habla la lengua del Imperio*” (“Speak the language of the Empire”), to the Galinsoga case of 1959—when the director of *La Vanguardia Española* exclaimed “*Todos los catalanes son una mierda*” (“All Catalans are shit”) after attending a Catalan-language mass (Caso Galinsoga, 1959)—the will to erase linguistic diversity has been a constant (Payne, 2011; Woolard, 2016). In the digital era, this attitude reappears in the *Nyordosphere*, which combines media and institutional hegemony with a rhetoric of vulnerability.

The aim of this article is to analyze the concept of *Nyordosphere* in three dimensions: (1) as a neologism born in satire but consolidated as a critical tool; (2) as an expression of an ideological project of uniformity inherited from Francoism and adapted to the 21st century; and (3) as a digital community that articulates discourses of hate, victimism, and resistance to difference. To achieve this, the study integrates academic sources on language policy (Woolard, 2016; Mar-Molinero, 2000), research on digital communities and memes (Shifman, 2014; Nagle, 2017), and real examples taken from current political and media events.

2. Origin and evolution of the term “nyordo”

The term *nyordo* has a colloquial and popular origin in contemporary Catalan, and it is used to describe people with closed, uniform, and hostile attitudes towards cultural or linguistic diversity. Its semantic load refers not only to perceived ignorance, but also to an **active will to deny difference**, often accompanied by arrogance. In digital spaces, the word has been progressively incorporated into discussions on language and politics, becoming an easily recognizable label for those hostile to Catalan, Galician, or Basque.

From this dispersed and individual use, the neologism *Nyordosphere* was born. Its strength lies in the shift from an individual insult to a **collective category** that describes a coherent discursive ecosystem. To speak of the *Nyordosphere* is to recognize a set of users, practices, and narratives that, while appearing spontaneous, share the same logic: articulating a victimist and, at the same time, homogenizing narrative. The term therefore serves to analyze the phenomenon as a **digital community**, not merely as a sum of isolated voices.

This evolution recalls other neologisms that have become consolidated in digital sociopolitical slang. Concepts such as *fachosfera* to describe the ultraconservative media environment, *cuñadismo* to name the attitude of speaking with authority without knowledge, or *magufos* to label defenders of pseudosciences, are examples of how popular language becomes both a critical and academic tool (Lakoff, 2004; Crystal, 2001). In this sense, the *Nyordosphere* is no exception: it condenses, in a single word, the everyday experience of interacting with discourses hostile to linguistic diversity, granting them visibility and enabling analysis as a cultural and political phenomenon.

3. Rituals and discursive resources of the Nyordosphere

The *Nyordosphere* is not defined only by its ideas, but also by the **communicative rituals** that characterize it and give it coherence as a digital community. Among the most recurrent, the following stand out:

1. **Insults and ad hominem attacks**

When arguments fail, insults emerge as the first line of defense. Expressions such as “*paleto*” (“redneck”), “*adoctrinado*” (“indoctrinated”), or “*separatista*” (“separatist”) serve as reductionist categories aimed at discrediting the interlocutor rather than engaging with their reasoning. This strategy, documented in studies of online debate, falls within the pattern of affective polarization (Papacharissi, 2015).

2. **The paternalistic resource: “¡Infórmese!”**

This expression, repeated to the point of exhaustion, acts as a mechanism of symbolic authority. The imperative provides no new content, but seeks to place the speaker in a position of moral and intellectual superiority. It represents a form of *verbal hygiene* (Cameron, 1995), intended to impose a discursive norm rather than encourage genuine debate.

3. **Emojis as a gesture of defeat**

When arguments run out, emojis such as 🙄 appear, conveying disdain or boredom. Far from reinforcing their position, these visual responses reveal a loss of argumentative energy and symbolize the end of a rhetorical path.

4. **The invocation of “tradition”**

In the absence of rational justification, the *Nyordosphere* often invokes “tradition” as a framework of authority. The past is used as an immutable reference to legitimize homogenizing practices, ignoring the fact that tradition is a dynamic and often imposed construct (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

5. The translation button as a symbol of fragility

One of the most revealing elements is the reaction to automatic translation tools on digital platforms. Their very existence dismantles the recurring argument that co-official languages “exclude” or “discriminate,” since with a single click content can be accessed in Spanish. The *Nyordosphere* rejects this resource because it exposes that its struggle is not linguistic, but ideological.

These rituals show that the *Nyordosphere* is not merely a collection of scattered voices, but a **community held together by repetitive discursive practices**. Its functioning follows communication patterns aimed at silencing, homogenizing, and ridiculing difference, rather than fostering dialogue.

4. Historical continuities: from Francoism to the Nyordosphere

The *Nyordosphere* did not appear out of nowhere; it is the **digital continuation of a homogenizing tradition** deeply rooted in the history of the Spanish state. From the imposition of Castilian as the only official language after the *Decret de Nova Planta* in the 18th century to the Francoist dictatorship, language policies repeatedly sought to eliminate or subordinate the other native languages of the Iberian Peninsula.

During Francoism (1939–1975), linguistic repression became systematic and highly visible: the use of Catalan, Basque, and Galician was banned in education, administration, and public media. Public space was filled with slogans such as “*Habla en cristiano*” (“Speak in Christian”) or “*Habla la lengua del Imperio*” (“Speak the language of the Empire”), which associated Castilian with religion and national unity (Payne, 2011; Tusell, 1999). Posters reading “*Si eres patriota, habla español*” (“If you are a patriot, speak Spanish”) reinforced the idea that loyalty to the state required abandoning one’s own language.

A paradigmatic episode was the **Galinsoga case (1959)**, when the director of *La Vanguardia Española*, Luis Martínez de Galinsoga, left a Catalan-language mass exclaiming: “*Todos los catalanes son una mierda*” (“All Catalans are shit”). This incident triggered a massive citizen boycott of the newspaper and is considered a key moment of resistance against institutional contempt (Caso Galinsoga, 1959).

These attitudes did not disappear with the democratic transition. Even with the legal recognition of co-official languages, an ideology persisted that associated Castilian with “normality” and other languages with “exception.” Woolard (2016) describes this phenomenon as the tension between singular ideologies of authority—seeking a single, common language—and plural ideologies that recognize diversity as a social value.

The *Nyordosphere* digitizes and updates this logic: insults towards users who write in Catalan or Basque, accusations of being “rude” for not using Castilian, and the constant demand for a *lengua común* (“common language”) in digital debates are contemporary echoes of Francoist practices. The difference is that today this attitude is amplified by social media, where it finds new forms of cohesion and propagation.

5. Current manifestations of the Nyordosphere

The historical continuity of the homogenizing logic is reflected today in multiple fields, where the *Nyordosphere* acts as the digital loudspeaker of a persistent ideological project. The following cases exemplify this contemporary projection:

5.1. Education: the 25% Spanish ruling in Catalonia

Although Castilian is hegemonic in Catalonia's social, political, and media spheres, Spanish courts have imposed that at least 25% of classes in schools must be taught in Spanish. The Council of Europe described this decision as a "major source of concern," pointing out that it contradicts Spain's commitments to protect regional languages (Catalan News, 2022). Large demonstrations in Barcelona, gathering tens of thousands of people, made clear the strong social rejection of this imposition (AP News, 2021).

5.2. Political and symbolic action: Hazte Oír in Andorra

The ultraconservative group *Hazte Oír*, known for its campaigns against diversity, has attempted to extend its pressure to the Andorran context. In a recent action, they displayed large banners against the Spanish Prime Minister in Andorran territory, but their initiative was quickly neutralized by local authorities (Infobae, 2025). This episode illustrates the attempt to export the homogenizing discourse beyond the borders of Spain, even into a sovereign country that recognizes Catalan as its only official language.

5.3. Contemporary linguistic colonialism

Another striking phenomenon is the resistance of part of Latin American immigration to learning Catalan. Despite coming from countries with a history marked by linguistic colonialism, some groups adopt a haughty attitude and refuse to integrate linguistically, behaving almost as "colonizers" in a territory where Catalan is already a minoritized language. Woolard (2016) interprets this as a reproduction of linguistic hierarchies that place Castilian as the language of authority and social mobility.

5.4. Andorra as a counterexample

Andorra offers a paradigmatic case of resistance. Its 1993 Constitution established Catalan as the only official language, and the new 2024 law requires knowledge of Catalan for the renewal of residence permits (Andorra Solutions, 2024). The *Nyordosphere* reacted with indignation, accusing the Pyrenean state of "discrimination" against Castilian, when in fact Andorra was defending its linguistic sovereignty.

6. The Nyordosphere as an ideological project

The *Nyordosphere* is not just a scattered collection of digital voices; it is the expression of a broader **ideological project** that seeks to maintain cultural and linguistic hegemony under the appearance of normality and neutrality. Its functioning can be understood in three main dimensions:

6.1. Paradoxical victimism

One of its most distinctive traits is the **victimist discourse**. Although Castilian enjoys a clearly hegemonic position in media, bureaucracy, and state institutions (Woolard, 2016; Mar-Molinero, 2000), the *Nyordosphere* presents itself as an “oppressed” group in the face of Catalan, Basque, or Galician. This inversion of the narrative serves to legitimize policies of imposition and to disguise domination strategies as resistance.

6.2. Hegemony disguised as neutrality

The appeal to the idea of a *lengua común* (“common language”) is a central mechanism. It is presented as a neutral and practical solution, but in reality it implies the subordination of other languages and the consolidation of Castilian as the only legitimate language in public space. This strategy recalls other colonial processes, where the imposed language was framed as a vehicle of progress and civilization (Fishman, 1991).

6.3. Mass reporting and control of debate

In digital environments, the *Nyordosphere* relies on mass reporting to silence dissenting voices and restrict plurality on social media. This mechanism of control does not aim to foster dialogue, but to reduce the space for expression of difference. Marwick and Lewis (2017) have described similar strategies in online communities that use organized harassment to preserve discursive hegemonies.

Taken together, the *Nyordosphere* operates as an **ideological project of homogenization** that combines structural power with a victimist discourse, updating in the digital era the legacy of a uniformity ideology rooted in Francoism and the long history of linguistic impositions in the Spanish state.

7. Discussion

The analysis of the *Nyordosphere* makes it possible to reflect on the role of **digital neologisms** in shaping public debate. Just like *fachosfera*, *cuñadismo*, or *magufos*, the term goes beyond its humorous origin and becomes a critical tool, able to condense into a single word a complex set of discursive and political practices (Lakoff, 2004; Shifman, 2014).

7.1. The value of the neologism as a critical tool

Nyordosphere works as an **analytical category** because it not only ridicules, but also makes visible a structural pattern: the use of communicative strategies (insults, appeals to tradition, victimism) to sustain a homogenizing narrative. Its strength lies in exposing the contradiction between **real hegemony and perceived fragility**.

7.2. Humor and ridicule as resistance

Humor plays a fundamental role in dismantling discourses of hate and imposition. As Cameron (1995) and Papacharissi (2015) argue, emotions and affect are central in digital politics. Ridiculing the rituals of the *Nyordosphere*—such as its rejection of the translation button or the repetitive use of 🙄—is not just a joke: it is a form of **symbolic resistance** that exposes the emptiness of its arguments.

7.3. Implications for the debate on linguistic rights

The study of the phenomenon also has implications beyond digital analysis. It shows that the struggle for linguistic rights in Spain remains marked by a structural tension between **uniformity and diversity** (Woolard, 2016; Fishman, 1991). The *Nyordosphere* is not only noise on social media; it is the reflection of an ideology that, from Francoism to the present day, seeks to reduce the public space of minoritized languages under the pretext of unity.

In this sense, the neologism does not simply describe a digital community, but also provides a **conceptual tool** to understand the persistence of homogenizing projects and to give visibility to cultural and linguistic resistance.

8. Conclusions

The study of the *Nyordosphere* shows how a neologism born in satire can transcend humor and consolidate itself as a **critical and analytical tool**. The term makes it possible to describe a discursive ecosystem characterized by insults, victimism, and empty appeals to “tradition,” articulated on social media but rooted in the deep political and linguistic history of the Spanish state.

First, the *Nyordosphere* highlights the **historical continuity** between Francoist repression and current discourses that defend the idea of a *lengua común* (“common language”) while despising co-official languages. This thread reveals that the struggle for linguistic diversity is not a recent conflict, but an enduring ideology taking on new forms.

Second, the analysis of the phenomenon confirms that **paradoxical victimism** is one of its defining features: even while enjoying hegemonic positions in media, bureaucracy, and the state, actors in the *Nyordosphere* present themselves as oppressed. This rhetorical inversion serves to legitimize homogenizing policies under the guise of neutrality.

Finally, the case of the *Nyordosphere* underlines the importance of **language as a site of political struggle**. The act of naming this discursive ecosystem makes it visible and allows it to be dismantled. Humor and ridicule, far from being minor resources, prove to be effective strategies to expose the fragility of a narrative that tries to present itself as immutable.

In sum, the *Nyordosphere* exemplifies how digital neologisms can contribute to the **critical analysis of communities hostile to diversity** and, at the same time, become instruments for cultural and linguistic resistance.

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