Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională
ISSN: 2066-7329 | e-ISSN: 2067-9270
Covered in: Web of Sciences (WOS); EBSCO; ERIH+; Google Scholar; Index Copernicus; Ideas RePeC; Econpapers; Socionet; CEEOL; Ulrich ProQuest; Cabell, Journalseek; Scipio; Philpapers; SHERPA/RoMEO repositories; KVK; WorldCat; CrossRef; CrossCheck

2018, Volume 10, Issue 4, pages: 241-248 | doi: https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/85

The Castilian and Asturian Languages in Schools

Cristina BLEORȚU[1], Alina-Viorela PRELIPCEAN[2]

[1] Ph.D. Assistant professor, University of Zurich, cbleortu@hotmail.com / cristina.bleortu@uzh.ch

[2] Ph.D. Assistant Lecturer, "Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania, alinavarvaroi@yahoo.com/ alina.prelipcean@litere.usv.ro

Abstract: This paper presents the situation of both the Asturian and Spanish languages in schools and the consequences that derive from it. Thus, our study describes the diglossia situation from Asturias, where Asturian is a language for informal contexts, while the Castilian is the dominant language, which is associated with formal situations. Moreover, the Asturian language was not accepted in education until 1984, when it was introduced as an optional subject, a fact that contributed in a very significant way to the diglossia situation. Our research looks especially at the work of Riaño and San Fabián Maroto (1996) and highlights the importance of education in shaping the linguistic attitudes in Asturias. This way, we want to demonstrate that a greater presence of Asturian language in schools is necessary in order to change the situation of diglossia from Asturias.

Keywords: *Asturian language; Spanish language; language acquisition; diglossia; Asturian education.*

How to cite: Bleortu, C., & Prelipcean, A.-V. (2018). The Castilian and Asturian Languages in Schools. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala, 10*(4), 241-248. https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/85

1. Introduction

One of the areas in which the Sociolinguistic research from Asturias has become greatly successful concerns the Sociology of Language (Llera Ramo, 1990), (Llera Ramo, n.d.), (SADEI, 1979, 1984, 1987, 1993). In this paper we will focus on the situation of the Asturian language in schools which is subject to different conditions as compared with those regarding the Castilian language, a situation which leads to diglossia in Asturias. In the view of it, the present study will present various aspects regarding (i) the Asturian language teaching, and (ii) the sociolinguistic situation in Asturias (Kabatek 2006). To accomplish this task, we will look at the following issues. Firstly, we will describe the political and legislative bases underlying the teaching of the Asturian language in schools. This situation will be presented in parallel with that of the Castilian language. Secondly, we will analyze the situation of diglossia, where Castilian is language A, used in education, administration, and Asturian is language B, i.e. utilized in informal contexts (with friends, family, etc.). Last, taking into account Riaño and San Fabián Maroto's (1996) paper, we will try to suggest some ways that could lead to the solution of the present situation.

2. The political and legislative bases underlying the teaching of the Asturian language

The Constitution from 1978 states in the *Preamble* the following issues:

> *La Nación española, deseando establecer la justicia, la libertad y la seguridad y promover el bien de cuantos la integran, en uso de su soberanía, proclama su voluntad de [...] proteger a todos los españoles y pueblos de España en el ejercicio de los derechos humanos, sus culturas y tradiciones, lenguas e instituciones.*

This idea, regarding the protection of all languages spoken in Spain, is far better expressed in the Article 3 of the same Constitution:

> *El castellano es la lengua española oficial del Estado. Todos los españoles tienen el deber de conocerla y el derecho a usarla. Las demás lenguas españolas serán también oficiales en las respectivas Comunidades Autónomas de acuerdo con sus Estatutos. La riqueza de las distintas modalidades lingüísticas de España es un patrimonio cultural que será objeto de especial respeto y protección.*

As a result, after 1978, the autonomous Spanish bilingual communities acted according to this Article; thus, Catalan, Basque, and

Galician became co-official languages with Castilian in those communities. On the other hand, although spoken in Asturias, the Asturian language has not become official although Article 4 in the *Statute of Autonomy of the Principality of Asturias* ['Estatuto de Autonomía para Asturias'] (Parliament of Austria, 1981) states:

> *El bable gozará de protección. Se promoverá su uso, su difusión en los medios de comunicación y su enseñanza, respectando, en todo caso, las variantes locales y voluntariedad en su aprendizaje.*

As we could see in the previous quotation, the teaching of the Asturian language is promoted, a fact which in 1994 led to the establishment of a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport ['Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte'] and the Autonomous Community of the Principality of Asturias. This agreement established the number of Asturian language classes that could be taught in primary education and the *optional* status for the Asturian language in secondary schools:

- ***Primary education:***

> *La Lengua y Cultura Asturiana en el ámbito de la Educación Primaria se impartirá en todos los cursos de la misma desde primero a sexto y se desarrollará con un horario máximo de 2 / 3 horas semanales en cada uno de los cursos a lo largo de toda la etapa educativa.*
>
> *Los centros que desean impartir estas enseñanzas habrán de plantear una solicitud razonada de la Dirección de los mismos, acompañando acuerdo del Consejo Escolar.*
>
> *Las enseñanzas de Lengua y Cultura Asturiana habrán de programarse y evaluarse con los mismos criterios, incluidos los de promoción, que el resto de enseñanzas del currículum y se registrarán en el expediente académico y en el Libro de Escolaridad del Alumno.*

Thus, as far as primary education is concerned, schools can include Asturian in their curricula, and students can have 2/3 hours per week. However, in order to be included in the school curriculum, it is first necessary to be approved in the school Council.

- ***Secondary education:***

> *La Lengua Asturiana, en el ámbito de la Educación Secundaria, podrá impartirse en todos los cursos de la misma con el carácter de materia optativa, con*

las mismas condiciones y requisitos que rigen actualmente para la inclusión de materias optativas en el currículum.

La programación y evaluación de la enseñanza de la Lengua Asturiana en la Educación Secundaria se hará de acuerdo con los requisitos legales establecidos para las materias optativas.

It can be noticed that the Asturian language plays a more important paper in primary education than in the secondary one, where it is an optional school subject. Riaño and San Fabián Maroto (1996: 15) present in a study the positive implementation of this language in primary education; this report contains data from 1984 until 1995. We will present below the data taken from this work:

Table 1. Asturian language in primary education between 1984-1995

Academic year	Schools	Students
84-85	6	1351
87-88	92	6550
91-92	169	16.557
94-95	202	18.427

At present, the Asturian language appears as a subject in the school curriculum, but it is still an optional course for students. In the last study presented by the Asturian Government, over 22,000 pupils study the Asturian language, which represents 55% of the primary education population, while in secondary schools only 1 out of 5 students chooses to study Asturian as an optional course.

This situation, however, is not enough to avoid diglossia in Asturias, which often leads to linguistic interferences or code switching, when Asturian speakers express themselves in Castilian or the other way around (Andrés Diaz, 2002; Bleorţu, n.d.a; Bleorţu & Prelipcean, 2018). If the Siguán's (1986) study is taken into account, in order to reach a situation of balanced bilingualism, it is necessary for the Asturian language to gain certain prestige in schools and in the family; at present, there are 200,000 (Andrés Diaz, 2018) people who speak Asturian, which is a little less than a quarter of the total population of The Principality of Asturias. As long as Castilian is the official language used in documents, education, formal situations, etc., what is being achieved with the 22,000 students and the other 200,000 (Bleorţu, (n.d.b) declared Asturian speakers is just a very small step ahead.

3. The avoidance of diglossia

As stated in the introduction, diglossia is highly present in Asturias, a situation that often leads to the appearance of a feeling of "shame" and "inferiority" among Asturian speakers. For this reason, this language is often used only in family or friends' exchanges. In this situation, of course, the Castilian language is the one that is used not only in administration, the media, but also in teaching Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry etc. in schools.

If we proceed from the same study mentioned above (Riaño & San Fabián Maroto, 1996), in order to implement a balanced bilingualism policy in Asturias in education (Caldevilla Vega, García Menéndez, & Velazquez, 1986), it is necessary to respect some factors such as those listed below:

- School syllabuses must provide a minimum of 4-6 years of bilingual education for each student;
- The learning of these two languages must be a separate process;
- The Asturian must be the teaching language in at least 50% of the classes in schools;
- The purpose of the Asturian language learning is not only to educate students in this language, but also to change speakers' attitudes regarding Asturian and arouse their interest in this language;
- To make such a program successful, it is important that the learnt language to be useful, both in terms of communication and from a cultural perspective.

In order to meet these conditions, it is necessary for the Asturian language to become official, a battle which has greatly increased in recent months, after Asturian was heard for the first time together with Castilian and English in Campoamor Theater, on November 27, 2017 (CECPA, 2018). Since then, there have been issued articles debating the official status of the Asturian almost daily; on the walls of the Faculty of Letters in the University of Oviedo (including in the faculty's elevators) there appeared various posters referring to Asturian as of an official language; the Asturian Language Academy has signed a new agreement with the University of Oviedo, and *Iniciativa pol Asturianu* ['The Initiative for the Asturian'] (http://www.iniciativapolasturianu.org/) organized a workshop on this subject.

And finally, in the view of it, we should take into consideration Llera Ramo's words:

> *El bilingüismo es claramente el futuro lingüístico deseado e imaginado por la gran mayoría de los asturianos, planteándolo con gran pragmatismo y moderación. [...] Urge un gran consenso regional, a nivel institucional y de élites y líderes de opinión sobre la normalización lingüística que refuerce la ya importante identidad de los asturianos.* (Ramo, 1994: 177-178)

Acknowledgment

The article has been presented at The XIXth Congress of the AMSE-AMCE-WEAR, 4 – 7 June 2018, Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania.

References

Andrés Díaz, R. de (2002). *Juicios sobre la lengua asturiana* [Judgments about the Asturian language]. Oviedo, Spain: Ámbitu.

Andrés Diaz, R. de (2018). El asturiano lo hablan unas doscientas mil personas [Asturian is spoken by some two hundred thousand people]. Retrieved from http://www.lne.es/aviles/2018/06/01/dandres-asturiano-hablan-doscientas mil/2295956.html

Bleorţu, C. (n.d.a). (in printing). The best speakers bake the best apple pies. Atitudini lingvistice în Pola de Siero (Spania) [The best speakers bake the best apple pies. Linguistic atitudes in Pola de Siero (Spain)], *Philologica Jassyensia*.

Bleorţu, C. (n.d.b). (in printing). *Aproximación al habla de La Pola Siero. Variación lingüística: descripción y percepción* [Approach to the speech of La Pola Siero. Linguistic variation: Description and perception]. PhD dissertation. Oviedo, Spain: University from Oviedo.

Bleorţu, C., & Prelipcean, A. V. (2018). The linguistic attitudes in the North of Spain. Paper presented in the 10th Lumen International Scientific Conference Retrhinking Social Action, Core Values in Practice, RSACVP, Suceava, Romania, 2018, April 26-29. Retrieved from http://conferinta.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/BT1_Working-papers_LUMEN-RSACVP2018ESDPAL2018_Conferences.pdf

Caldevilla Vega, I., García Menéndez, M., & Velazquez, R. (1986). Un estudiu sol billingüismu n'Asturies [A study on bilingualism in Asturia]. *Lletres Asturianes*, *21*, 156-159.

Conseyería d'Educación y Cultura del Principáu d'Asturies (CECPA). (2018). RESOLUCIÓN de 2 de xunu del 2017, de la Conseyería d'Educación y Cultura del Principáu d'Asturies, pola que s'establecen les instrucciones pal desenvolvimientu d'un Plan Pilotu Esperimental de Promoción del Usu del asturianu pal añu académicu 2017/2018 [RESOLUTION no. 2/2017 of

the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture of the Principality of Asturia, setting the instructions for the development of an experimental Pilot Plan for the Austrian academic year 2017/2018]. Retrieved from https://www.educastur.es/documents/10531/93895/2017-06_cen-ast_plan-pilotores_AST.pdf/106d7bea-d756-4450-82be-5ac83fa41a47

González Riaño, X. A., & San Fabián Maroto, J. L. (1996). *La escolarización de la lengua asturiana* [The schooling of the Asturian language]. Mieres, Spain: Editura del Norte.

Kabatek, J. (2006). Requisitos para ser lengua: el caso del asturiano y de otras modalidades lingüísticas de España [Requirements to be a language: The case of Asturian and other linguistic modalities of Spain]. In M. Castillo Lluch & J. Kabatek (Eds.), *Las lenguas de España. Política lingüística, sociología del lenguaje e ideología desde la Transición hasta la actualidad* (pp. 141-157). Madrid, Spain: Iberoamérica.

Llera Ramo, F. J. (n.d.). (in printing). *III Estudio sociolingüístico de Asturias, 2017* [III Sociolinguistic study of Asturias, 2017]. Oviedo, Spain: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana.

Llera Ramo, F. J. (1990). *Estudio sociológico sobre la situación del gallego-asturiano en el occidente de Asturias* [Sociological study on the Galician-Asturian situation in western Asturias]. Oviedo, Spain: Principado de Asturias.

Llera Ramo, F. J. (1994). *Los asturianos y la lengua asturiana: estudio sociolingüístico para Asturias 1991* [The Asturians and the Asturian language: A sociolinguistic study for Asturias 1991]. Oviedo, Spain: Consejería de Educación y Cultura del Principado de Asturias.

Parliament of Austria. (1981). Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de 30 de diciembre, de Estatuto de Autonomía para Asturias [Law no. 7/30th of December 1981 of the Statute of Autonomy of the Principality of Asturias]. Jefatura del Estado, 9, 1982, January 11. Retrieved from https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/1982/BOE-A-1982-634-consolidado.pdf

Siguan, M. (1986). *Educación y bilingüismo* [Educationa and bilingualism]. Madrid, Spain: UNESCO.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI). (1979). *Asturias. Primera encuesta regional* [Asturias. First regional survey]. Oviedo, Spain: Asturlibros.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI). (1984). *Asturias. Segunda encuesta regional* [Asturias. Second regional survey]. Oviedo, Spain: Servicio de Publicaciones del Principado de Asturias.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI). (1987). *Asturias. Tercera encuesta regional* [Asturias. Third regional survey]. Oviedo, Spain: Servicio de Publicaciones del Principado de Asturias.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI). (1993). *Encuesta sobre medios de comunicación social en Asturias* [Survey on social media in Asturias]. Oviedo, Spain: Principado de Asturias.