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Galician-Portuguese and the Politics of Language in Contemporary Galicia

Dayán-Fernández, Alejandro & O'Rourke, Bernadette

1. Introduction

This chapter examines current debates around the politics of language in contemporary Galicia. Drawing on critical sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, linguistic anthropology, and language policy, it focuses specifically on tensions around the creation, legitimisation (Bourdieu 1986, 1991), and contestation of the institutionalised standard variety for Galician, questioning governmental language policies through the lens of standardisation activism. Galicia's political and linguistic status has taken different shapes throughout history. From a self-governing kingdom in the low Middle-Ages in which its native *Galego-Português* ('Galician-Portuguese') was renowned as a literary language (Salgado & Monteagudo 1993: 200), Galicia came to be dominated by an imposing Castilian ruling class by the end of the 15th century (O'Rourke 2011: 42). As a result, the dialectal varieties on the north (Galicia) and south (Portugal) of the *Miño/Minho* river began to evolve disjointedly. Whilst Galician gradually lost prestige and became a subaltern language (Spivak 1998), Portuguese developed in an independent kingdom. Since the 1980s, Galician has been institutionally standardised as a separate language, however a minority movement advocates, to a greater or lesser extent, for the convergence of Galician with Portuguese based on historical, philological and political grounds. As May (2012: 5) points out, languages are 'created' out of the politics of state-making, not – as we often assume – the other way around" (Billig 1995). Therefore, the 'reintegration' of a Portuguese orthography for Galician carries considerable symbolic weight, for it delineates a precise linguistic and political distinction with the opposing dominant language, Spanish (Herrero Valeiro 2002). As Woolard and Schieffelin (1994: 65) postulate: "in countries where identity and nationhood are under negotiation, every aspect of language, including its phonological description and forms of graphic representation can be contested". In the Galician case, similar to other European stateless nations, the "language became a central prop in the legitimization of a Galician national identity" (O'Rourke 2011: 65).

Visitors to the Autonomous Community¹ of Galicia², in the north western corner of the Iberian Peninsula, may be struck by the re-writing and ‘correcting’ of road signs which make up the linguistic landscapes of its towns and cities. Such ‘corrections’ capture the orthographic and linguistic debates around standardisation that have can often be found in street graffiti (Ramallo & Rodriguez Barcia 2015) and signage ‘correction’ activism.

Galicia is made up of four ‘provinces’ whose official names have been standardised as: *Lugo*, *A Coruña*, *Ourense* and *Pontevedra*. While these place names adhere to the official Galician standard, they are orthographically contested by activists who call for closer alignment between Galician and Portuguese spelling. This chapter will look at how the politics of language operates by focusing on continuing orthographic conflicts and their connection to language revitalization efforts in the Galician context. Following Grenoble & Whaley (2006: 13), we make a distinction between ‘language revitalization’ and ‘language maintenance’. Whereas the former aims at augmenting the number of speakers and expanding the spheres in which the language is utilised, the latter’s goal is to maintain “current levels and domains of use” (Ibid.). In this respect, Grenoble & Whaley (2006: 13) claim that “revitalization almost always requires changing community attitudes about a language, while maintenance seeks to protect against the imposition of outside attitudes”.

One of the areas where Galician orthography frictions are displayed is the official ‘toponymy’. As a manifestation of ‘autochthonous language’ (Gausset et al. 2011) in the public sphere, Galician toponymy encapsulates some of the tensions around the politics behind the standardisation of Galician, the differing stances around language revitalisation, and the conflicting understandings of nationhood, identity and political advocacy.

1 Although, there are currently 17 Autonomous Communities in the Spanish State, only Galicia, the Basque Country and Catalonia are recognised as (historical) ‘nationalities’ in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Article 1 of Galicia’s Statute of Autonomy (1981) refers to it as *nacionalidade histórica* [historical nationality].

2 Also known as *Galiza* - The differing terms to designate the country itself are semantically complex. Although both Galicia and Galiza refer to the same territorial space, they connote, by implicature, two different realities: Galicia “symbolises an accepted subjugation to the Spanish State as it is the Hispanised term. On the contrary, ‘Galiza’ indexes resistance, conveying the idea of the oppressed nation standing up against its oppressor” (Dayán-Fernández 2014: 44).



Figure 1 - Picture taken during a fieldwork trip to Santiago de Compostela, April 2019

As an introductory example of these dissensions, the signage above illustrates how the iconic Spanish “ñ” /eɲe/ in ‘Coruña’ was manually altered to the Portuguese “nh” /ɲ/ by a group of activists. This particular political praxis was an initiative first taken by a ‘social centre’³ *Associação Cultural A Gentalha do Pichel*⁴ (Santiago de Compostela) called “Sinaliza!”⁵ [Signpost!]. This signposting platform provided a ‘virtual space’ for the ‘*activismo normalizador*’ [‘normalisation’ activism], focused on orthography, vindicating Galician’s historical writing and what they understand as the ‘traditional’ names of towns and cities (*Sinaliza* 2010).

Adopting the iconic Spanish <ñ> in contraposition to the <nh> (among other graphemes, e.g.: <ll>/<lh>; <ç>; <ss>), used in the Portuguese standard and the historical medieval Galician-Portuguese texts, is one of the most defining ideological features in Galicia’s politics of language today (Álvarez-Cáccamo & Herrero-Valeiro 1996; Herrero-Valeiro 2002). While supporters of the official standard Galician claim that the “ñ” is an adequate formula for the current spoken variety documented in historical Galician writing since the 19th century, its detractors understand it as a clear leaning towards a Spanish nationalist ideology which views Galician as a dialect of Spanish to be preserved as a folkloric language and deprived of any political implications; as Herrero-Valeiro (2002: 294) suggests: “the reintegratonists interpret the institutional support for the differentialist⁶ vision as an attempt by Spanish nationalism to control Galician linguistic planning in order to avoid an excessive

³ Alternative spaces for Galician language and activism linked to cultural, social, and political associations (O’Rourke 2019)

⁴ <http://gentalha.org/>

⁵ <http://sinalizagz.blogspot.com/>

⁶ The same as what we call “autonomism”.

political problematisation of the linguistic issue that might politically and socially endanger the State and its national language, Spanish”. This latter conception is succinctly expressed in one of the most celebrated quotes within the movement that advocates for the reintegration of Galician with Portuguese (‘reintegrationism’): “Galician is neither Galician-Portuguese nor Galician-Castilian, there is no other alternative” [“*o galego ou é galego-português ou galego-castelhana, non há outra alternativa*”]. This assertion belongs to Ricardo Carvalho Calero, reintegrationism’s contemporary ‘father’.



Figure 2 - Banner at the “social centre”, A Gentalla do Pichel – Fieldwork Trip – April 2019

By looking at two recent events in which the reintegrationist movement has come into the public sphere with an unconventional narrative to influence both the institutional and public discourses’ status quo, we will argue that although this is a minority trend in language revitalisation, reintegrationism’s grassroots activism (further explained below) is a driving force in altering language perceptions and attitudes and that their increasing influence in social practice and policy deserves more attention. The chapter will begin with the politics of standardisation in Galicia and the implications of standardisation for minoritised languages; followed by the interplay between politics, policy and language ideologies in the Galician context; to finally address reintegrationist activism influencing policy and public discourse.

2. The Politics of Standardisation in Galicia: A Battle of Elites

2.1 The Galician case: contextualisation

Galician is spoken in the Autonomous Community of Galicia. While it is not considered an ‘endangered language’ (Grenoble & Whaley 2006), it represents a politically, socially and numerically minoritized language within the Spanish State. After being relegated to informal

societal domains for centuries, the economic and political turmoil across the Iberian Peninsula throughout the 20th century prompted many Galician speakers to switch to Spanish in an effort to adapt to the new urban contexts in which they found themselves (O'Rourke & Ramallo 2015). Although not explicitly forbidden during the forty years of the Franco's dictatorship, Galician speakers were a source of ridicule, and Spanish was the only language supported by the regime.

During Spain's transition to democracy in the 1980s, an ideological debate emerged around which dialectical forms should be used in establishing a new orthographic norm for the Galician language. The process of standardisation for the native language variety spoken in Galicia has been a true glottopolitical battle of elites (Herrero-Valeiro 2002: 293). Though this animosity could be traced in time much further back, it becomes evident as a two-party conflict during the 1980s where this symbolic battlefield divides between: on the one hand, the 'autonomists' who understood Galician as an independent language whose standard should be fully distinct from both Spanish and Portuguese; and on the other hand, the 'reintegrationists' considering Galician a variety of Portuguese whose standard should be 'reintegrated', to various degrees, within the Lusophone world (Salgado & Monteagudo 1993: 201). The Galician Government would eventually adopt the 'autonomist' norm as the only standard permitted at the institutional level in Galicia as well as the only legitimised written form of the language.

2.2 Standardisation and Minoritised Languages

The move away from rigid and fixed understandings of language (Blommaert 2010) and the multilingual turn (May 2014) in contemporary sociolinguistics pose new challenges to the theorisation of standardisation processes, particularly in the context of minoritized languages and the consequences these have for people's citizenship in the public domain. Some scholars have argued that the standardisation of a minoritized language may be counterproductive (Gal 2006) by generating new boundaries and elevating the social status of certain citizenship within a community of speakers, allegedly, diminishing linguistic diversity (Milroy and Milroy 1999). Arguably, this claim is contentious, considering that such narratives tend to be articulated in terms of the hegemonic language and assumptions about the process of standardisation for minoritized languages replicating the tenets of majority language standardisation processes.

Urla et al. (2018: 43) refer to this as the “reproduction thesis” which is used to critique minoritized language advocacy for it reproduces “the values of dominant language ideology, and, inadvertently, the inequalities and hierarchies these values entail”. However, as Urla et al. postulate, ‘political praxis’ is crucial in order to understand the social effects of standardisation and, in the Basque case, they demonstrate how grassroots social movements’ involvement in negotiating the standardisation process on the ground has softened the ‘standard language authority’ triggered in other language revitalisation contexts (2018: 25).

On the other hand, however, minoritized language speakers may face a dual struggle as a result of standardisation in relation to both the dominant language against which the status of the subaltern language is measured and also the new standard variety of the minoritized language itself (Gal 2006). According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 154-156), though standardisation may have irrefutable benefits for minoritized languages, it can also lead to language loss. In lieu of reaffirming a sense of linguistic pride in speakers, standardisation can also “stigmatise” them (Cooper 1989). Furthermore, standardisation policies that are highly influenced by hegemonic language frameworks may also fall into the trap of ‘purification’ discourses that attempt to ‘decontaminate the language’ from external influences enabling ‘purist’ and ‘conservative’ policies (Dorian 1994), which may be suitable for the interests of the urban elites but disenfranchising for the speakers outside of these circles (Coulmas 1989: 11).

But what is ‘standardisation’? On the one hand, it can be seen as a process whereby the language variety of a speech community is formally institutionalised as the “supradialectal norm”, considered thus the ‘best’ amongst all others (Ferguson 1996). From a historical point of view, however, Costa et al. (2018) understand this process as an intersecting triad of: (1) the ‘outcome of modernity’ putting emphasis on the idea of a ‘decontextualized’ and ‘neutral’ language, “a voice from nowhere” (Gal & Woolard 1995); (2) the nation-state building and the conception of neutrality frames for the public sphere with the centralisation of the political system; e.g.: in the French context, “the politics of language sought to eradicate other languages in France [...] and to not only equate polity and nation [...] but also to include language in the equation” (Costa et al. 2018: 6); (3) the worldwide spreading of this standardisation ideology via colonisation processes which required teaching yardsticks for European languages (Ibid.).

The history of standardisation itself and the emergence of ‘structural linguistics’ in the 20th century have helped perpetuate this now widespread idea of ‘standards’ as correct varieties and language as an object of study independent from its sociological aspects. As a result,

majority languages have been afforded no questioning of their standardisation evolution and the authority they enjoy today (Costa et al. 2018: 7). On the other hand, minoritized language standardisation is subject to high scrutiny both from scholarship and the general public since their ‘social status’ keeps being challenged as “while speakers of national languages experience relative stability in the status of their communication practices, shifting and contested status is a defining feature of minoritized speech communities” (Idem.: 9). Though the Galician language has undergone a recent standardisation process which responded to some of the patterns described above, the official language policy and the ideological tenets that support it are still being contested by reintegrationist grassroots activism. In what follows, we will provide a historical and policy account of how the Galician language standardisation has come to be seen as a “battle of elites”.

2.3 A historical overview of the standardisation process in Galicia

Towards the beginning of the 1970s a series of canonical papers from the two main official language institutions in Galicia were considered⁷ in order to elaborate a set of standardising orthographic and morphological norms for the Galician language, including those on a clear Portuguese-orientated tendency – as shown in the prologue of the Foundations for the Unification of the Norms for the Galician Language (*Bases prá unificación das normas lingüísticas do galego*) (Herrero-Valeiro 2011: 113). Eventually, an ideological shift in their textual discourse took place whereby the final rendition of discussions dismissed any pro-reintegrationist approach the former had and paved the way for the exclusive legitimised standard norms published in 1982 (Idem: 114).

In the 1977 text, the etymological use of *g* and *j* (e.g.: *filologia* [philology]; *hoje* [today]) was deemed to be “desirable”, a premise which went in contraposition to the *x* formula eventually adopted (e.g.: *filoloxía* [philology]; *hoxe* [today]). Similarly, the 1977 paper claimed the suffix *-ble* (e.g.: admirable) – as opposed to *-bel* (e.g.: admirábel) or *-vel* (e.g.: admirável) – to be a *castelanismo* [Spanish term], however the suffix *-ble* ended up being a legitimate Galician form in the 1980 text (the suffix *-bel* would be accepted later on as another legitimate form in the upgrading of the official norm in 2003).

Ultimately, a decree (173/1982) was issued to sanction the official standard norm for the Galician language with the intention of putting an institutional end to what some authors have called a “symbolic fight”. In 1982, the *Normas Ortográficas e Morfolóxicas do Idioma*

⁷ The RAG ‘*Real Academia Galega*’ [Galician Royal Academy]; and the ILG, ‘*Instituto Galego da Lingua*’ [Galician Institute of the Language] attached to the University of Santiago de Compostela.

Galego were elaborated by a commission made up of members from both the Galician Royal Academy (RAG) and the Galician Language Institute (ILG). The RAG would eventually favour the autonomist norms without the approval of the pro-reintegrationist affiliates. At the time, the RAG did not have the legal framework to dictate and/or sanction authoritative norms about the Galician language, an argument the reintegrationists used to question the validity of the decision, yet after the promulgation of the *Lei de Normalización Lingüística* [Law on Linguistic Normalisation] (3/1983, 15th June), the Galician Government bestowed “full authority” upon the RAG to monopolise the decision-making process of the standard Galician language policy (O’Rourke 2018a: 86). This would delegitimise any other pro-reintegrationist tendency for the time being and would be likely to block any future attempts to move away from the foundational principles of the institution (Herrero-Valeiro 2011: 116).

3. The interplay between the politics of language, policy and language ideologies for Galician

As we have seen, the politics of state-making ultimately determine the language policies that dictate what is ‘legitimate’ or not in the graphic representation of ‘official’ language categories. While no universal definition has been agreed, “the term language policy emerged from the focus on national language planning. At times, the terms policy and planning seemed to be used interchangeably” (Toffelson & Pérez-Milans 2018: 2). Language policy can be understood as the materialisation into policy of the “set of positions, principles and decisions” of a society in relation to its “verbal repertoire and communicative potential” (Bugarski 1992 cited in Schiffman 1996: 3) or more concisely “decision-making about language” (Schiffman 2006: 112); on the other hand, language ideology is the “mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994: 55).

Thus, we comprehend language policy as the way in which language is handled in society and as a phenomenon that can be manifested in an overt or covert manner (Schiffman 1996; Shohamy 2006). The former tends to be “explicitly stated and is often formalized by legal or constitutional means”, whereas the latter entails “no explicit mention of language in any legal document or in administrative code” (O’Rourke 2011: 58).

Regardless of its explicitness, there will always be ‘implicit’ language policies for the absence of ‘overt’ language policies becomes an implicit one by itself (Schiffman 1996: 148). In relation to the Galician case, it can be stated that: (1) an overt language policy legitimises exclusively the use of the official Galician standard, and, (2) a covert language policy impedes

the use of any other written form of the Galician language in institutional spheres and relegates other standardisation approaches to invisibility, discriminating, as a result, citizens who use unofficial standards (e.g.: reintegrated Galician).

These implicit or covert language policies are in line with societal conventions about what a language should be and what has traditionally been agreed as the preferred ways of talking or writing (Schiffman 1996: 148). Those notions are closely linked to what Schiffman (2006) calls “linguistic culture” which he defines as the “totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures, and all other cultural “baggage” that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture” (Idem.: 112). These, thus, mirror the “ideological views and orientations of a society, government, institutions or individuals” (O’Rourke 2011: 59). Therefore, some scholars (Spolsky 2004; Blommaert 2006) cannot conceive ‘language policy’ and ‘language ideologies’ as anything else but intertwined processes whereby language policies tend to be founded on the language ideologies of policy makers. From a Critical Language Policy perspective, mainstream assumptions about language become the fabric in the making of language policy institutions, perpetuating privilege and legitimacy for some and excluding others (Tollefson 2006: 47-48, drawing on Fairclough 1989). This critical stance on language policy comprehends ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ language policies as contributors to “ongoing hegemony and the reproduction of systems of linguistic inequality” (O’Rourke 2011: 60).

In this respect, the complexity of Galician (socio)/linguistics’ technical discourse with regards to the understanding of what ‘Galician language’ is or is not does not end with the account provided earlier. In what follows, we will briefly explain the different layers of language ideologies and language policy stances. These are often conflictive in that they intersect and move across and within the autonomism and reintegrationism movements themselves, and not only between them.

3.1 Autonomism

Autonomism defends the idea that Galician is an independent language from Portuguese and some of its most orthodox supporters have claimed that Galician and Portuguese were already different languages at their inception (Lorenzo 1981). The idea that, today, Galician and Portuguese are two separate languages is largely supported by philologists at the University of Santiago de Compostela and the University of Vigo as well as academics from the European tradition of Romance linguistics (see among others: Lorenzo 1981; Feldman

1974; Rojo 1981; Bochmann 1986; Esser 1986, Monteagudo 1990; Fernández Rei 1988; Santamarina 1995). As already pointed out in the previous sections, this linguistic ideology is also that which is represented by the Galician Government, *Xunta de Galicia*, which implements its language policy via the General Directorate of Language Policy; as well as the Galician Language Institute (ILG); the Galician Royal Academy (RAG); the Galician Culture Council (*Consello da Cultura Galega*); and the Ramón Piñeiro's Centre for Research in Humanities (*Centro de Investigación en Humanidades Ramón Piñeiro*), amongst others (Herrero-Valeiro 2011: 123).

3.2 Reintegrationism

The reintegrationist ideology defends the idea that there are no scientific grounds on which to talk about a separate Galician language from Portuguese. For them, they constitute the same language. In parallel to the 'autonomist' perspective, there is also a technical and authoritative discourse, coming similarly from different branches of Romance Linguistics (see among others: Coseriu 1989; Salvador 1987; Rodrigues Lapa 1979; Avezedo Filho 1985).

This approach has been taken to various degrees: (1) by adopting a historic and/or etymologic version of Galician-Portuguese, as codified by the *Associação Galega da Língua*⁸ norm (AGAL – e.g.: naçom [nation]); (2) by directly adopting the Portuguese standard (e.g.: nação [nation]), this view is represented by the *Academia Galega da Língua Portuguesa*⁹ [Galician Academy of the Portuguese Language] (henceforth AGLP - created in 2008). The debates therein have revolved around whether to preserve idiosyncratic traces of the spoken varieties of Galician considered as legitimately 'indigenous' and deserving of preservation as a sign of Galician identity by introducing them into the reintegrationist norm or whether to take an 'utilitarian' perspective on the basis of language commodification (Heller 2010) and fully unify with the Portuguese standard as far as writing is concerned (Herrero-Valeiro 2011: 127-128).

The utilitarian argument in favour of fully adopting the Portuguese standard as the written form of the Galician speech varieties, thus joining the Lusophone world, is largely based on the assumption that "Portuguese is classified as a major world language and thus increases the potential of Galician to become elevated to that status" (O'Rourke 2018a: 87). Furthermore, the official standard faces opposition for "it does not recognise the true origins

⁸ <https://a.gal/>

⁹ <https://www.academiagalega.org/>

of the language” and that “it is too influenced by Spanish”. Monteagudo & Alonso Pintos (2010: 178) criticise the way the “Lusophony” as a social construct has been based on an understanding of the Portuguese language as ‘monolithic and unidimensional’, subject to the reasonings of ‘imperial languages’, a project this, they say, neither viable nor desirable, for being excessively anachronistic. They advocate, instead, for a comprehension of a Lusophony for Galicia that departs from “cooperative dialogue and proactive collaboration with Galicia in the creation of a multidimensional and dynamic space, constituted by Lusophone countries, in which participants respect and acknowledge one another’s respective and plural identities, from whom a series of collective efforts are put forward with the objective of developing the potentialities of mutual support and reciprocal benefit¹⁰” (Ibid.).

The following table exemplifies some of the iconic differences of the Galician orthographic strands between the autonomist vision represented by the RAG-ILG norm, and the reintegrationists AGAL and AGLP.

	ILG-RAG	AGAL	AGLP
Linguistic Ideology	Galician – independent regional or national language	Galician – (co)dialect of Galician-Portuguese	Portuguese standard – only desirable written form
Graphemes	Alleo [Alien] Mañá [Tomorrow] Praza [Square] Xente [People] Xaneiro [January] Unha [One, f.]	Alheio Manhá Praça Gente Janeiro Umha	Alheio Manhã Praça Gente Janeiro Uma
Dash	pódese facer [it can be done]	pode-se fazer	pode-se fazer
Suffixes	Nación [nation] amable, amábel [kind]	Naçom amável	Nação amável

Source: Adapted from <http://culturagalega.gal/especiais/reforma/cadro.htm>

3.3 Reintegrationist Activism

In terms of activism on the ground since the 1990s, a conglomerate of *centros sociais* [sociocultural centres], which represent iconic activist spaces in the Galician context, primarily located in urban or semi-urban spaces, traditionally related to the Galician sovereignty movement, have supported and represented reintegrationism as a social movement, and have

¹⁰ [My translation] “diálogo cooperativo e de colaboración proactiva de Galicia na construción dun espazo dinámico e multidimensional, constituído polos países de expresión cultural portuguesa, en que os axentes participantes se respecten e recoñezan nas súas respectivas e plurais identidades, a partir das cales se propoñan realizar unha serie de esforzos comúns coa finalidade de desenvolver as potencialidades de mutuo reforzo e recíproco arrequentamento”.

ultimately encapsulated what Fishman (1991) references to as “breathing spaces” for the language in urban spaces (O’Rourke 2019) and for the socialisation of these intersecting ideologies (Herrero-Valeiro 2011: 128-129).

While the reintegrationist movement has customarily been spread across the country mainly through these ‘sociocultural centres’, it has, since 2011, taken a new societal dimension with the creation of a self-funded network of grassroots revitalization schools. The project, entitled, *Semente*, meaning ‘seed’ in Galician, was initiated by a group of urban-based Galician ‘new speakers’ (O’Rourke et al. 2015) from the social centre mentioned in the introduction (*Gentalha do Pichel*). Their purpose is to provide immersion schooling in Galician-Portuguese for children in pre and school age. The grassroots revitalization dynamics of the *Semente* movement are currently being explored through a research project funded by the Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage¹¹ (Sustaining Minoritized Languages in Europe – SMiLE 2018-2019).

3.4 Negative effects of both standardisation and lack of agreement in the Galician context

While these reintegrationist ideologies co-existed in relative harmony for some time, in recent years, AGAL had increasing pressure from some of its core members to agree on a language policy convergent with the use of standard Portuguese as opposed to the historical/etymological AGAL norm outlined earlier. This led to an internal debate and final voting assembly in which the organisation decided to gradually incorporate the Portuguese standard as the predominant norm. A split was triggered as a result, with some members leaving the organisation and the creation of a break-away group called “*Associação de Estudos Galegos*¹²” [Galician Studies Association], which maintains the original AGAL standard (e.g.: *naçom* as opposed to *nação*). The arguments from the members who split with the group were based on preserving national identity and political boundaries with Portugal as well as dismissing the utilitarian arguments in favour of a unified norm which the Portuguese have already well positioned in the world (Herrero-Valeiro 2011: 128).

Some authors such as Hoffmann (1996) and Lorenzo Suárez (2008) have warned about the potential negative effects of ‘disagreements’ about the standard in terms of: (1) gaining adherents to the Galician language cause; (2) speakers being disenfranchised in relation to the

¹¹ Blog post for the Galician Case as part of the project SMiLE (Sustaining Minoritized Languages in Europe): <https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/grassroots-activism-galician-language>

¹² <https://aeg.gal/>

official version fostered as the standard norm; and (3) demobilization of pro-Galician factions along with the wider community of speakers. In the Galician context, this disagreement has also translated into the discursive ‘othering’ of both ideological strands regarding their understanding of how the Galician language should be standardised.

Herrero-Valeiro (2011: 122) shows that, discursively, pejorative terms on both sides of the Galician sociolinguistic debate are used to designate both language policy approaches, e.g.: ‘isolationism’ used by the ‘reintegrationists’ in relation to their counter-part, and ‘lusism’ used by the ‘autonomists’ in the same manner. Both nomenclatures do not reflect but a section of the wider ideological spectrum of both movements and present a pragmatic negative connotation. In this respect, Malvar Fernández (2007: 155) undertakes a discourse analysis of these ‘othering strategies’ used by the ‘autonomist’ and the ‘reintegrationist’ foundational texts. According to his account, the reintegrationists talk about the “officialist” other to imply the links between their institutionally legitimised norm and the political and decision-making power they hold, which translates into the capability of producing ‘officialist knowledge’ which legitimises its own position of power, unilaterally. On the other hand, the reintegrationists, referring to themselves as the non-officialist current, produce ‘opinion’ that is fully detached from power, outside of the system. The way they index “we” is identified with a complexity of different voices, diverse, and more democratic, therefore more legitimate, in their view, as the voice of the “povo” (the Galician people).

As demonstrated by Álvarez-Cáccamo (1990), the ‘autonomists’ do not tend to use any labels when referring to themselves as a linguistic current legitimising a specific language policy, their label is the absence of it, an ideology of anonymity, using Woolard’s (2016) terminology, which “allows institutionally or demographically dominant languages to consolidate their position into one of hegemony” (Woolard 2016: 26). Though Galician is not a hegemonic language in relation to Spanish, the absence of the reintegrationist perspective in the public sphere represents the hegemonic position of ‘autonomism’ within the Galician institutional and political spectrum. Thus, situating these dynamics into a wider context, the Galician autonomist institutional framework and the dynamics in relation to the reintegrationist movement replicate some of the ideological schemata that Spanish language hegemony exercises in the wider society: “in the context of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, Castilian remains the first and only official language of the Spanish State [...] the use of Galician is restricted to the region where it is spoken as a community language. Castilian [...] can be used anywhere within” (Vernet 2007, cited in O’Rourke 2011: 66), furthermore, “Spanish is

presented [...] as a tool in service to a post-nation [...] that reduces Catalan, Galician and Basque to atavistic and reactionary particularism” (del Valle 2005: 411). This is what Woolard (2016) referred to as the naturalizing of “Spanish as a vehicle of aperspectival objectivity with a privileged purchase on the kinds of truths essential to modernity and democracy” (Idem.: 54, Moreno Cabrera 2008). This, Woolard (2016: 64) postulates, leads to a framework of ‘Spanish sociolinguistic naturalism’ which is used as a critical stance to delegitimise language advocacy in peripheral communities such as Galicia as well as the “possessive investment in Spanish monolingualism” (Urla 2012: 224). In the Galician ‘battle of elites’ we have just discussed, this framework of linguistic authority and legitimacy is embodied by the autonomists perspective as the only visible institutional form of the language and the only legally allowed.

3.5 Questioning the language policy undertaken

After more than thirty years of an autonomist language policy framework aimed at fostering the use of Galician, speaking the language in urban spaces continues to be highly marked, particularly amongst the youth (*A mesa pola normalización Lingüística*¹³, 2015). On the other hand, according to a recent study conducted by the sociolinguistics branch of the Galician Royal Academy, younger generations of Galicians are heading towards “an accelerated process of monolingualisation in Castillian at a faster pace than forecasted by previous demolinguistic studies¹⁴” (Monteagudo et al. 2018: 23). Moreover, the most recent study by another ‘autonomist’ institution about linguistic attitudes and practices amongst young Galicians is not optimistic about the future of the language, and although Galician youth are aware of the fragility of the language, they do little to revert the situation. The majority of those queried said that Spanish was the language they would use with their children and this was the case even amongst Galician speakers (Consello da Cultura Galega 2017: 112-114).

During the initial debates on standardisation in Galicia, arguments in favour of legitimising the current official norm were based on its ‘faithfulness’ to spoken Galician (see Ramallo & Doval 2015). Linguistic ‘reintegration’ was critiqued on the grounds that a Portuguese-looking norm was considered too alienating for the average speaker. Alignment with the Portuguese norm was considered ‘foreign’ and it was argued that speakers would have trouble acquiring competence in it. As Woolard & Schieffelin (1994: 65) note for the case of ‘creoles’: “Those favoring a phonemic approach argue that a more objective mode of

¹³ Grassroots Galician language association that promotes and fosters the use of the language and monitors the legal implementation of the Galician Language Act of 1982.

¹⁴ [My translation]: “un proceso acelerado de monolingüización en castelán, a un ritmo que non prevían os resultados de estudos demolingüísticos previos”.

representing the sounds allows wider access to literacy and helps establish the language as respectable in its own right”. This, it was suggested, would prevent a loss of speakers and increasing language disaffection in the Galician case. Hence, the rationale behind opting for a standard that would move away from the historical linguistic links between Galician and Portuguese was thus its ‘faithfulness’ to the spoken variety.

These beliefs have become embedded in the functioning of Galician public institutions and have produced decisions that affect citizen’s linguistic rights. These political decisions “qualify or disqualify speech varieties from certain institutional uses and their speakers from access to domains of privilege” (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994: 63), such as is the case of those who write in the existing non-official standard varieties. Consequently, the unidimensional legitimisation of the ‘autonomist’ norm leaves out of the equation active users of the language who have come to perceive this as an unjust situation that may trigger “negative attitudes towards the language, particularly if planning measures are seen to raise the status of certain groups within society and not others or [...] provide linguistic capital to some but not to others” (O’Rourke 2011: 62).

More than three decades of language policy based on the autonomist premises have not led to any clear identification with the official standard, deemed to be the most faithful to the spoken varieties, neither amongst traditional or new speakers (O’Rourke 2018b). Consequently, certain sectors from the Galician revitalization movement call for a review of such standardisation language policies. In their view, a societal debate on how to reframe a model that has clearly failed to live up to its expectations is required. The following picture was taken during a fieldwork trip to observe the Galician national celebrations in July 2018. It captures the narratives between failed language policies, politics, and national identity: “The break in the intergenerational transmission of Galician summarises what 40 years of autonomist regime¹⁵ has served for: the national dismantlement and social impoverishment of the Galician nation¹⁶”.

¹⁵ It refers to the political status of Galicia as an ‘autonomous community’ in Spain, also known as ‘autonomist regime’ [*régime autonómico* in official Galician].

¹⁶ [My translation]

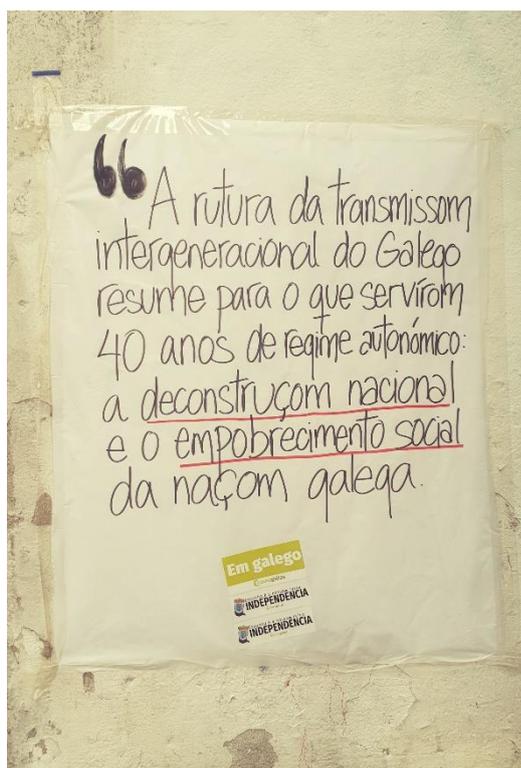


Figure 3 - Picture taken during a fieldwork trip to observe the Galician national celebrations in July 2018. Pamphlet by the sovereignty movement

4. Standardisation Policy Activism at Play: Pro-Portuguese Law and Linguistic ‘Apartheid’ claims in Galicia

The different ideological positionings of social actors within the revitalisation movement and their relation to standardisation policy in Galicia continue to generate a discursive battlefield in which the politics of language are foregrounded. In recent years, the ‘reintegrationist’ movement has made considerable efforts to expand their online presence through social media as well as on the streets, through symbolic protests, performances, and overtly reclaiming institutional recognition alongside the official legitimised norm established by the Galician Government. The ‘reintegrationist’ movement, agglutinating several organisations, and most visibly organised around AGAL has long questioned whether the normative approach taken in the 1980s has had the desired results in the light of the ongoing decline in the number of Galician speakers. This movement has no governmental voice and has since its inception developed outside of the institutional sphere through grassroots initiatives. Citizens who use this ‘unofficial’ norm face legal discrimination, as evidenced by the fact that cultural production is only considered Galician if written in the official legitimised variety. Individuals engaging in ‘reintegrated’ Galician cultural production find themselves ‘outcasts’

with no possibility of participating in institutional networks and/or being recognised as authors in the Galician language.

In what follows, we will look at two recent initiatives that disrupt the traditional narratives around language revitalization in Galicia and their contribution to the questioning of standardisation policies and practices therein. Firstly, we will look at a grassroots initiative which pushed for legislation to ensure the Galician Government fosters linguistic and cultural relations with Portuguese-speaking countries, and secondly, a public manifesto calling to put an end to what activists called a linguistic ‘Apartheid’ in which users of reintegrated Galician feel discriminated on the basis of their orthographic choices. These two examples epitomise the contextual components of Galician sociolinguistic scenarios in which language is used as an element of protest on the basis of ‘standardisation’ and ‘orthographic’ ideologies.

4.1 Galician and the Lusophone world – grassroots activism influencing policy

In 2014, a ‘popular legislative initiative’ promoted by the broader reintegrationist movement and signed by 17,000 people, the *ILP Paz Andrade*, was unanimously approved by the Galician Parliament. The law that came out of the initiative, *Lei Paz Andrade*, set out in its first four articles (DOG, 1/2014) that the Galician authorities will: (1) “promote the knowledge of the Portuguese language and the Lusophone cultures in order to deepen the historical links uniting Galicia to Portuguese-speaking countries and communities as well as embracing the strategic nature that the economic and social relations of the Euroregion Galicia-North of Portugal entail for Galicia¹⁷” (Idem.: 15609); (2) integrate the teaching of the Portuguese Language, gradually, as part of the foreign languages framework within the educational system of Galicia; (3) fostering relations at all levels with Portuguese-speaking countries as an ‘strategic objective of the Galician Government, particularly promoting the knowledge of the Portuguese language by public servants, participation in Lusophone forums, and hosting events with the presence of Portuguese-speaking guests; (4) aim to implement the European Directive 2007/65/CE in order to facilitate the reception of television and radio broadcasting between Galicia and the Republic of Portugal with which Galicia “shares linguistic heritage¹⁸” (Ibid.), moreover, it claimed that the publicly funded Galician TV (TVG) would endeavour to collaborate in its cultural production with Portuguese-speaking televisions.

¹⁷ [My translation]: “promoverán o coñecemento da lingua portuguesa e das culturas lusófonas para afondar nos vencellos históricos que unen Galicia cos países e comunidades de lingua portuguesa e polo carácter estratéxico que para Galicia teñen as relacións económicas e sociais no marco da Eurorrexión Galicia-Norte de Portugal.”

¹⁸ [My translation]: “comparte patrimonio lingüístico”.

The explanatory memorandum of the law touched upon several aspects that delineate precisely the politics of language that the Galician Government was encouraged to support by the reintegrationist ILP in the making of this law. Two elements stand out in challenging traditional narratives around the minoritisation of Galician: (1) utilitarian arguments that confer economic and social capital to Galicia as a result of these new relationships in a globalised world: “in the current globalised world, Galician institutions, committed to unleash Galicia’s potential, must valorise Galician as a language with international usefulness¹⁹”; (2) linguistic intelligibility between the ‘two languages’ as an economic and cultural asset for companies and institutions alike: “it is necessary to foster the teaching of Portuguese [...] so companies and institutions can capitalise on our linguistically advantageous situation [...] The intelligibility between Galicia’s ‘own language’ and Portuguese confers a competitive and valuable perquisite in many ways, especially in cultural and economic terms²⁰” (DOG 1/2014: 15608).

Despite the intentions laid out in the law, its aims and objectives are yet to be materialised and implemented via policy. On both governmental and European levels, the Galician Government has failed to fully adopt the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages regarding transnational regions (Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion²¹) whereby cultural exchanges must be encouraged on the grounds of shared linguistic and cultural heritage, such as in the case of Galicia and the North of Portugal and explicitly acknowledged in the aforementioned Law 1/2014. Indeed, the Galician Government has to date not enabled the broadcasting of Portuguese TV in Galicia, whereas the Portuguese Government approved the reception of Galician TV in Portugal.

4.2 Standardisation and citizenship: claims of linguistic ‘Apartheid’

The institutional legitimisation (Bourdieu 1991) of solely one written standard for the speaking repertoires of Galicia has led to the “consequent constitution of a literary arena situated within the cultural property production space (artistic market) in which the new standard [...] occupies the position of hegemonic language in the production of cultural property (literary production) as well as the interactional rituals generated by the artistic

¹⁹ [My translation]: “No actual mundo globalizado, as institucións galegas, comprometidas co aproveitamento das potencialidades de Galicia, deben valorizar o galego como unha lingua con utilidade internacional”

²⁰ [My translation]: É preciso fomentar o ensino e a aprendizaxe do portugués [...] que empresas e institucións aproveiten a nosa vantaxe Lingüística [...] A lingua propia de Galicia, polo feito de ser intercomprensible co portugués, outorga unha valiosa vantaxe competitiva á cidadanía galega en moitas vertentes, nomeadamente na cultural pero tamén na económica

²¹ In October 31, 1991, the Working Community Galicia-Norte Portugal was established under the aegis of the European Framework Convention on Cross Border Cooperation between Territorial Communities and Authorities of the European Council, 1980. This was the first step in the process of creating the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation - Galicia-Norte Portugal (GNP-EGTC). The Xunta de Galicia and the Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional da Região Norte de Portugal (CCDR-N) were the drivers of this process, using a combination of a series of factors to their establishment, especially the relationship between the two regions, their similarities, and the progressive community projection issued by the regional development policies.” (GNP-AECT 2010).

market” (Herrero-Valeiro 2002: 296). Thus, in 2016, a group of activists from the cultural circles of Galicia published a controversial manifesto calling for the end of the “linguistic Apartheid” that the reintegrationist movement and its users endure (*Sermos Galiza*, 2016; *O fim do Apartheid*, 2016). The manifesto was signed online by over a thousand people. The text asserted that reintegrationism had traditionally played its role on the margins of society but that it could not carry on as a clandestine movement any longer. It defended that reintegrationism is a legitimate part of Galician culture and that measures should be put in place to end what they perceive as a blatant discriminatory policy. The text was not only addressed to the Government’s language policy decision-makers, but also the main Galician publishing houses (e.g.: *Xerais* and *Galaxia*), grassroots initiatives that promote the language (e.g.: *Queremos Galego* and *A Mesa*), and any associations that claim to look after a “culture under threat”. This, they say, so “Rosa Parks can occupy an empty chair, that of shame.” (*O fim do Apartheid*, 2016). The manifesto also called on the autonomist movement to explicitly support the reintegrationist cause and “let them in”, “urgently”, for users of the unofficial norm are not able to “hop on to the Galician literature bus”, in reference to the celebrated episode of North-American activist Rosa Parks. They claim that Galician publishing houses dismiss any work written in the non-official norm, effectively excluding works which do not faithfully obey to the dictates of the Galician Royal Academy (*O fim do Apartheid*, 2016).

5. Concluding remarks

After more than 30 years of an official and legally binding language policy for the Galician language, orthographic representations continue to be contested by a fraction of the wider Galician revitalisation movement and grassroots activism. In the Galician context, frictions about standardisation policies stem from differing understandings of language, national identity and political advocacy. The standardisation of Galician has been a ‘true battle of elites’ in which the ‘autonomists’ keep holding institutional and governmental power in the development of Galician as an independent language and the ‘reintegrationists’ persevere in their attempts to question the strategies implemented thus far and advocate for greater linguistic and cultural alignment with the Portuguese-speaking world. While concerns have been voiced about the negative effects of standardisation disagreements amongst the Galician revitalization movement, tensions have not fully appeased and the politics of language continue to be foregrounded. The reintegrationist movement which pushes the Galician Parliament to approve a law requiring the Government to reach out to the Lusophone world and the public outpouring

of ‘linguistic Apartheid’ claims consist of contemporary social practices which exemplify that while still remaining a marginalised voice in Galician civil society, the ‘reintegrationist’ movement and its ideological infrastructure represent an emergent force. They call into question the foundations of the Galician language establishment, highlighting the repercussions that such foundations are indeed having on the vitality of the language and the shortcomings of current language policies and revitalization strategies, and offering an alternative to address and counteract the lingering low prestige of Galician.

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