

Studies relating to the sociolinguistic situation of the Galician language (1990-2002)

by Anxo M. Lorenzo Suárez

Abstract

In this article we look at a selection of the most relevant studies on the sociolinguistic situation of the Galician language [the language of Galicia, northwest Spain] carried out and / or published between 1990 and 2003, and sponsored by Galician public institutions: the Xunta de Galicia, the local administrations, universities, and other institutions, such as the Consello da Cultura Galega. We will focus on studies in seven different areas: general studies, language policy, administration, non-university education, university education, the media, and other ambits or domains (companies, advertising and the church).

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1. Introduction

The object of this article is to present the most relevant studies, reports and research on the sociolinguistic fortunes of the Galician language (*Galego*) carried out –and/or published– in the period between 1990 and 2003. We will focus exclusively on sociolinguistic materials sponsored by or published by such Galician public institutions as the Xunta de Galicia, local administrations, the universities, and the Consello da Cultura Galega.

We will divide this essay into seven sections: general studies, language policy, administration, non-university education, university education, the media, and other domains (companies, advertising and the church).

2. General studies

Up until the present, the most relevant general study to have come out relating to the overall state of the Galician language, on the macro-social level, is the *Mapa Sociolingüístico de Galicia* (MSG). We will not linger over its characteristics or its contents since these have already been evaluated and commented. Noves SL, Hivern 2002 (<http://www.gencat.cat/llengua/noves>)

Nor will we look at the general research which included the sociolinguistic situation of Galician as one more object or case study within a wider or more general framework (for instance, the *Euromosaic* study –cf. Nelde, Williams & Strubell (1996)– or the work carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas –cf. CIS (1994) and (1999).

In 1992, the Instituto Galego de Estatística (the Galician Institute of Statistics) published the results of the linguistic questions on knowledge and use of the Galician language which had been included in the 1991 census on population and housing (cf. Instituto Galego de Estatística, 1992). The data was presented in four volumes –one for each province of Galicia– and in these,

information was gathered on knowledge and use of the Galician language by age, education in progress, past education, activity, occupation, etc. Included, too, were tables featuring cross-tabulation of knowledge and use of Galician. All this information is available by province and local administration.

Although the scores given are raw –percentages are not given– and are presented without any type of description or interpretation, such overall figures would seem to coincide very well with the results and trends shown by the *Mapa Sociolingüístico de Galicia*.

The usefulness of this work is quite clear: here we have relevant sociolinguistic information for each local authority, cross-tabulated with the main independent variables. There are, however, certain aspects which admittedly limit its usefulness: there are only a few sociolinguistic indicators included in the original questionnaire, percentages are not given, few independent variables are considered, and no interpretation is provided of the partial and overall figures.

As regards its diffusion and exploitation, we need to recognise that there was little of either and only in certain very specific cases did it serve as a source of information for subsequent tasks, for example on language planning. It would seem that the near overlap in time between the publication of this study and the beginning of the publication of the MSG volumes meant that the results of the IGE-1992 were not sufficiently regarded.

3. Language Policy

In the field of language policy in Galicia we have the report *El proceso de normalización del idioma gallego* (1980-2000) (the process of standardisation of the Galician language, 1980-2000), promoted and coordinated by the Sección de Lingua del Consello da Cultura Galega¹. The aims and objectives of this report are threefold: a) obtain more in-depth information on public use of the Galician language; b) present an evaluation of the impact of linguistic initiatives by the regional autonomous administration; and c) put forward recommendations for the improvement of language policy in Galicia. The study will be published initially in four volumes, and we shall be commenting on the first two –one which has already come out, and the other which is in press. The two remaining volumes, planned to come out in 2003, are: public administrations, and the planning stage of the corpus.

The first volume (cf. Cidadanía-Rede de Aplicacións Sociais, 2003) concentrates on analysis of language policy in Galicia since 1980. Its main aim is to focus on compilation and analysis of the standardisation process, of initiatives by the Galician parliament and speeches and ideologies relating to language politics, as well as a detailed review of the budgets allocated to the Galician language during that period.

The methodology employed here is usual documentary approach, applying qualitative techniques. Specifically, an application of the Delphi technique was carried out with a group of key witnesses.

The second volume (cf. Bouzada, Fernández Paz & Lorenzo, 2003) takes infant and primary education as its universe². The aims and objectives of the work were as follows: a) to obtain a rigorous diagnosis on the current state of Galician in the schools and in education transmission; b) obtain a diagnosis and analysis of the most relevant sociolinguistic trends which contextualised linguistic practice in the schools during the period 1980-2000; y c) analyse the ideologies and opinions of the sectors making up the school community vis-à-vis language standardisation process.

On the methodological level the research was organised in two parts. In the first place there was a macro social investigation, using quantitative indicators, based on a significant sample of schools, stratified by type of scholastic centre (private/public) and by province (a total of 201 schools in the four provinces of Galicia). To this end three questionnaires were designed: one for the head teachers and holders posts of responsibility in the schools (with 41 questions); another specifically for the language standardisation team in each school (with 53 questions); and an observational

¹ The Consello da Cultura Galega (<http://www.consellodacultura.org>) is a consultative and advisory organisation for the Galician public authorities, while being completely independent from them. Different sectors of the Galician cultural institutions are represented. One of the functions of the CCG is to produce reports and proposals on the defence and protection of Galician language and culture.

² Secondary education is not included since the Xunta de Galicia had already carried out a study on this (cf. DXPL, 1998). Universities are similarly left out given that the universities of Santiago de Compostela (cf. Rodríguez Neira, 1998) and Vigo (cf. Lorenzo et al., 1997) carried out exhaustive studies on use there.

evaluation sheet (with 48 items). Additionally, case studies were carried out, based on qualitative indicators, based on a scheme classifying the schools according to their greater or lesser degree of galicianisation and type of area (urban/non urban) and type of scholastic centre (public/private).

The first volume was published in March 2003 and the second is due to come out in April 2003. Thus, full the impact of these publications still remains to be seen. But at all events, what we have here is the first systematic evaluation of the contemporary process of standardisation of the Galician language, and so the social repercussions of the findings are likely to be considerable.

4. Administration

Studies and reports on the present status of the Galician language in the different public administrations (local government institutions) in Galicia are relatively few in number. We shall start by commenting on several reports published by the Consello da Cultura Galega and go on to take a look at the studies carried out by the local government administrations.

In an investigation into the future of the Galician language published by the Consello da Cultura Galega Bouzada & Lorenzo (1997) devote a section to looking at the management of the Galician language from and within the Galician regional government institutions. The general aim of this investigation was to present an assessment, based on empirical findings on the sociolinguistic situation in Galicia, of the limits to and the potential of the Galician normalisation process in the local contexts and the world of work (the part dealing with the workplace will be commented upon below in section 8).

Flexible and varied research methodology was used in this investigation. A representative sample of the social actors involved was selected and a wide-ranging and diversified interview script was devised, with open and closed questions, relating to the state of the language and trends in the promotion and evolution of patterns of language use.

With respect to the contents, the first stage of the research involved looking at the state of the question of normalisation in the local government area from different angles and different levels: the autonomous regional administration, the civil society and local entities, devoting considerable space to a description of the current situation and the debate on the management of normalisation in local entities (evaluation of the current situation and future prospects for normalisation techniques and municipal and local language services).

Secondly, there was a section devoted to the airing of opinions, attitudes and experiences relating to the extension of the Galician language to local (public) ambits in Galicia derived from the interpretations and arguments of the different entities involved (public administrations, politicians, social actors, opinion leaders, linguistic normalisation technicians, etc.), with the aim of obtaining an x-ray picture of the limitations and challenges which all who are working for the promotion of the language in local and community contexts find themselves faced with.

Thirdly, there was analysis of a particular case study: the experience of the process of normalisation at the local government offices of the town of Moaña (Pontevedra province). Lastly, in the final section of the report, there was an explanatory scheme mapping the strong points and weak points of the normalisation process at local and community levels.

Continuing specifically with the local level, while no exhaustive sociolinguistic description was offered of local government offices in Galicia (see, however, in section 2. General studies, the reference to information provided by the Instituto Galego de Estatística, 1992), a number of studies were carried out which we should comment upon. Of especial importance here are those which looked at the city of Santiago de Compostela and the city of Vigo.

In the case of the city of Santiago de Compostela (Coruña province), the research on the fortunes of the Galician language there (cf. Cidadanía–Rede de Aplicacións Sociais, 2001) was designed with a view to identifying the most relevant factors influencing the social uses of Galician, with a practical objective: establish the aims and strategic approaches of a plan of action for normalisation at the city of Santiago local government offices. Thus, this study sets out to document the sociolinguistic state of affairs in order to implement language planning suited to this initial language situation.

The work was given a two-part structure. Firstly, use was made of the specific MSG data for the city Santiago (sample of 1,153 questionnaires). Complementing this, different maps were devised based on the different relevant sociolinguistic variables, making it possible to observe and make comparisons regarding the most relevant sociolinguistic features of the urban and suburban fabric of the city.

Secondly, with a view to undertaking a participant type of study, a qualitative analysis was designed in which social actors and agents were involved; together with the members of the research team, a qualitative evaluation by sectors was built up using the DAFO technique complemented by in-depth interviews of qualified representatives of different sectors and social settings at municipal level (politicians, media, the world of work, education, and so forth).

The result of this research was a report giving the sociolinguistic profile of the municipality, a general as well as a specific DAFO analysis for seven social domains (firms, relations at the workplace, non-university education, university education, information technology, the media and the church), an evaluation of the work of Santiago's municipal language service, and a set of recommendations made by the team writing the report on the specific design of the municipal plan for linguistic normalisation, which was finally approved by the Santiago de Compostela city council in 2002.

In the case of the city of Vigo (Pontevedra province), in 1997 and again in 2002 two research projects were carried out on the sociolinguistic situation of Galician in the city (cf. Vagabonded et al., 1998; 2003, in press). Both studies were based on a quantitative investigation by means of a questionnaire which was administered to a stratified sample of the population of Vigo. The 1997 questionnaire contained 35 questions on the usual aspects: first language, linguistic competence, habitual language, frequency of use of Galician and patterns of language use, as well as attitudes and opinions. The 2002 questionnaire consisted of 37 questions, and in it, in addition to the items already included in the 1997 study, there were questions focusing on evaluation of the activities of the municipal language service.

The results of the two studies, in terms of the main sociolinguistic indicators, are very similar, so that it would seem that the period of five years that had elapsed between the two studies was not enough to consolidate sociolinguistic changes in Vigo society that could be detected by macro-sociolinguistic inquiry. We should lastly mention another piece of work that the Consello da Cultura Galega commissioned via the Arquivo de Planificación e Normalización Lingüística (Archive of Language Planning and Normalisation); the carrying out of an external quality control evaluation of the language normalisation services, concentrating on county-level linguistic service (cf. Fente, 2000) and a service concentrating on language use in companies (cf. Lorenzo, 2000). The results of the evaluation were presented in 1999 in the seminars on language normalisation organised annually by the Consello da Cultura Galega.

In the evaluation of the county-level linguistic service, a series of conclusions were presented relating to the organisational design of the service, the activities and results, and the degree of user satisfaction. This process of external evaluation, a total innovation in the context of normalisation management in Galicia, seems not to have significantly changed the organisation and development of the activities of the language services and the work of the technicians engaged in language normalisation.

5. Non-university education

The non-university sector of education was the object of several pieces of research, concentrating in the main on the obtaining of data and information on the presence of Galician in the school community and, more specifically, on the achievement of objectives relative to education specified in the *Ley de Normalización Lingüística* (Language Normalisation Act) passed in 1993. The most relevant of these are shown below, in chronological order.

At the beginning of the nineties, the Xunta de Galicia published a piece of work on the situation of Galician in elementary and primary education (cf. Rubal, 1991). This work, resulting from research carried out by a team from the Instituto de Ciencias da Educación (ICE) of the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, aimed at determining whether the central objective for non-university education fixed in the *Ley de Normalización Lingüística* was being achieved or not. This was the stipulation that the Galician education system should guarantee the acquisition, by the student population of Galicia, of a similar level of competence in both the official languages. The information was obtained by using the teaching staff and management of pre-schools and primary (EGB) schools as consultants for the research. Three types of questionnaires were sent out to the schools, and were to be answered anonymously. The intention was to obtain information on the competence and patterns of language use of school pupils, the competence and use patterns of the teaching staff -in addition to attitudes towards language normalisation- and the degree of use of Galician and Spanish as languages of instruction. To check the validity of the answers, these were compared with data obtained directly by the research team with a sample of 36 schools distributed across 12 counties, with the same proportions as applied in the main sample.

The conclusions to be drawn were very clear: the position Galician found itself in education at that moment was largely thanks to individual efforts; there needed to be more and better planning, and greater involvement on the part of the institutions, or there would be no significant improvement in the situation.

As regards diffusion and impact, the results were frankly worrying in terms of the (non-) fulfilment of the linguistic objectives set in the *Ley de Normalización Lingüística* for non-university education. Soon after this, in 1995, the Xunta de Galicia modified and updated linguistic practice in non-university education (in accord with Decree 247/1995). This modification was not unconnected with the quite alarming findings to be observed in research evidence such as this.

During the academic year 1997-98, the Dirección Xeral de Política Lingüística (Directorate General for Language Policy) carried out a statistical survey on the use of the Galician language in all non-university centres of education in Galicia, both in administration and in teaching. This was an exhaustive study which included all state schools and private schools in Galicia, obtaining information on almost all schools and on every classroom within them (cf. Dirección Xeral de Política Lingüística, 1998).

Unlike the previous research, this study did not select a representative sample but instead included all scholastic centres in non-university education in Galicia. Interestingly, it employed a different questionnaire for each of the cycles and stages: infant education, primary education (first cycle), primary education (second and third cycles), compulsory secondary education, BUP and COU, and professional training in further education. This division corresponded to that established in Decree 247/1995 which regulates the use of the languages in education, since a fundamental aim of the study was to find out to what extent this ruling was being put into practice or adhered to. Each questionnaire contained three types of forms: one, to be filled in by the management (school hierarchy); a second, for the person in charge of ENL; and a third, to be completed by the teacher who was tutor of each of the classes of the school. In the first two types of questionnaire there were questions on the school taken as a whole; in the third type, the questions referred to each of the classrooms in particular.

Diffusion of the results of this investigation was very limited indeed, and it did not even get to be published in book form. We can take it, therefore, that exploitation of this valuable information was left exclusively in the hands of the admin department of the Xunta.

In the case of the school situation in the Galician-speaking areas beyond the borders of Galicia (the so-called 'Outer Galicia'), in the provinces of Asturias, Leon, Zamora and Caceres— we have a study promoted and published by the Consello da Cultura Galega at the beginning of the noneties (cf. Rubal Rodríguez, X., D. Veiga Martínez & N. Arza, 1992). This study deals with the Galician of the school population and their teachers in areas where Galician is spoken, but where the language has insufficient official recognition.

Before closing this section on non-university level education, we should recall that in section 3 (Language policy) we made reference to the report of the Consello da Cultura Galega entitled *El proceso de normalización del idioma gallego (1980-2000)* devoted specifically to education. At the time of writing this is the most up-to-date and in-depth study of the situation of the Galician language and the process of linguistic normalisation in infant and primary school education in Galicia.

6. University Education

Turning now to university education, two research projects were carried out by the universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo, respectively. In the Santiago de Compostela study, this resulted in the report *O idioma na Universidade de Santiago de Compostela* (languages at the University of Santiago de Compostela (cf. Rodríguez Neira, 1998). This was based on a questionnaire administered during academic year 1995-1996 to the three sections of the university population: students, lecturing staff and administrative and service staff. The information gathered in this study was subsequently used as an empirical basis for the design of a significant part of the USC's linguistic normalisation plan (cf. <http://www.usc.es/~snlus/pnl.htm>), which was eventually passed by the Senate of the University in October 2002.

In the second case, in 1995 an interdisciplinary team produced the sociolinguistic report of the University of Vigo (cf. Lorenzo Suárez et al., 1997). This, too, was to be based on a questionnaire given to the students, teaching staff, administrative and service staff in order to gauge the use of the Galician language. In the case of the students a stratified sample was used and in the case of the teachers and administrative/service staff a questionnaire was sent to individual people and was

answered by those who cared to do so. The contents of the survey were the usual ones in this type of quantitative survey. Special attention was accorded to the patterns of language use of the three sectors in the functions, tasks and activities within the university itself, to be able to gauge the extent to which Galician was used in the university as an institution.

The surveys indicated a population that was very *castilianised* (i.e. had become increasingly Spanish-orientated) with, however, an excellent interest in knowledge and use of Galician but with scant use of that language in such centrally important areas as research and teaching. In contrast, the administrative and service staff showed a greater tendency to use Galician in their ordinary everyday activities, especially in writing. Up to the time of writing, this sociolinguistic report and the information it contains has not been used for any applied end.

7. The media

The reports and studies on the use of the Galician language in the mass media are few and far between. Nonetheless, it is important to note the sociolinguistic information forthcoming from the series of reports on communication in Galicia, which are issued regularly by the Communications section of the Consello da Cultura Galega (cf. López García, 2000; 2002).

This same public institution was responsible for the publishing of a report on the working and professional profiles of employees working in the Galician media (cf. Túniz & López García, 1998). It includes a description of the patterns of use, linguistic skills and opinions of the professionals with respect to the Galician language.

8. Other areas: companies, advertising and church

In this section we include the most relevant research on language use in Galicia, in the areas of business and companies, advertising and the church.

In the world of business and companies we really don't have in-depth monographic studies, but we do have relevant data and information arising out of other studies: for example, Bouzada & Lorenzo (1997) and Ramallo & Rei-Doval (1997).

In the Bouzada & Lorenzo (1997) study, mentioned earlier (see section 4. Administration), a substantial part of the report is devoted to the situation of the Galician language in the workplace and in business. To do so they utilised flexible and varied research methodology. On the one hand, they selected a representative sample of all the important social actors involved in the socio-economic activity of Galicia, and they carried out personal interviews using an open questionnaire covering various topics. On the other hand, a questionnaire was used with 118 companies in Galicia in order to obtain direct evaluation on a limited but strategically significant number of sociolinguistic indicators.

The results of the study point up the factors that are behind patterns of language use (use of Galician) in these sectors, factors relating to the weakness of the status and social prestige of the language, at the same time as it registered the good predisposition of the social agents and employers in Galicia to gradually introduce Galician into their routine commercial activities.

Again, specifically in the commercial world, in another study published by the Consello da Cultura Galega, Ramallo & Rei-Doval (1996) looked at consumers and commerce, and analysed what the public reaction would be to an increase in the use of Galician in firms and in businesses (shops, etc) and, complementing this, the opinion was also sought of the employers and business people, who would actually have the task of bringing in increased use of Galician.

In the first part of this study, then, the attitudes of consumers to use of Galician in advertising and notices in shops as well as customer - sales person interaction. Quantitative methodology was used for this, and a questionnaire was designed that was administered to a sample stratified by age and place of residence (1209 interviewees).

In the second part the opinions were sought of both company management and people in trade and commerce: a stratified sample of 33 subjects was selected from this population and information was gathered by means of a semi-directed interview.

The conclusions drawn by the investigation are eloquent enough: there was considerable caution concerning the "galicianisation" of economic, commercial and corporate activities -caution based on the inertia of the past, on the additional costs that this would involve, and the supposed wariness of the customer or end user faced with 'linguistic change', but overall the attitudes

expressed by this population regarding increased use of Galician were clearly positive and favourable.

In the area of advertising more specifically, the Consello da Cultura Galega carried out a study on the introduction of the Galician language in this domain, and subsequently published their findings (cf. Ramallo & Rei-Doval, 1996). This was an investigation into the fortunes of the Galician language in commercial communication and advertising. The inquiry specifically sought to attain the following objectives a) look at awareness that Galician was adequate and fitted to carry out communicative functions; b) gauge attitudes concerning the use of Galician in advertising messages; c) look at links between the Galician language and the values habitually expressed in advertising (prestige, confidence, status, etc.); d) attitudes towards the use of Galician in labels and signs; and e) receptivity to the use of Galician on a personal level in face-to-face commercial relations.

Methodology: a questionnaire was designed containing 46 questions to be answered by a representative sample of the Galician population (1209 interviewees in a sample stratified according to type of habitat: rural, small town and urban).

The conclusions of the study basically indicate a good level of acceptance for Galician both in advertising in particular, and in the dynamics of commercial interchange in general. These data pose a direct challenge to the idea that Galician is an inappropriate or impractical medium for advertising and the commercial world. Furthermore, for a growing sector of the population, the use of Galician would encourage the consuming or acquisition of products. As the authors of the study point out (page 81), "we need to revise our vision of the use of Galician in the world of advertising and commerce; this is because the power of communication that this language currently commands gives it enormous commercial value, since it carries values like quality and trustworthiness with great effectiveness".

Finally, with regard to the domain of religion and the church, the Consello da Cultura Galega also carried out a study on receptivity to the use of Galician in the liturgy (cf. López Muñoz & García Cendán, 2000). The aim here was quite simply to seek out the opinions of the Galician population concerning the introduction of Galician as the normal medium for the liturgy. Notice that the main arguments used by the leaders of the Galician clergy to oppose the increased Galicianisation of the mass, were that the general public would reject this, and that there was no demand for religious services in Galician. The purpose of this work was to probe the opinions of individuals on these questions.

To test or reject this hypothesis, two samples were selected. In the first place there was a sample of the Galician population in general. 1,400 individuals were consulted by means of a questionnaire with questions relating to the language, religious beliefs and the liturgy in Galician. Secondly, a more selective study was carried out in ten parishes (sample size: 400 interviews), five parishes where the liturgy was in Galician and five where the liturgy was in Spanish. A closed questionnaire consisting of five questions was administered to this sample.

The conclusions drawn from this study are firstly that the general public disapproves of the attitude of the Galician church with respect to the Galician language. Indeed, what was found was that there existed very favourable attitudes towards increased use of the liturgy in Galician, while a considerable proportion of those questioned were actually indifferent to the language used, reinforcing the idea that a change of language here would be relatively easy to achieve.

9. Endnote

An evaluation of all the pieces of research review here leads us to conclude that the promotion and instigation of the research by the Galicians institutions could have been considerably more intense and more frequent than has been the case. As a result, we need more linguistic research of a general nature, carried out frequently and periodically, and we would also like to see more reports on specific sectors, again with more frequency and regularity. By the same token, the knowledge we have of the sociolinguistic dynamics of the Galician tongue are much less than optimum, especially given the capacity for research that we currently have available.

With respect to the general research, as opposed to research in specific sectors, what is missing is a systematic exploitation –as well as informed interpretation– of the sociolinguistic information contained in the *Censo de población y vivienda* (Census on population and housing) which is brought up to date every five years. We don't know the linguistic results of the 1996 census and we don't know what will happen with the results relating to 2001.

Lastly, in domains and sectors of crucial interest we lack specific up-to-date information: the workplace and corporate use, domains and activities relating to the new technologies and with the information society, among others.

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Anxo M. Lorenzo Suárez

Departamento de Filoloxía Galega e Latina
Universidade de Vigo (<http://www.uvigo.es/>)
alorenzo@uvigo.es
Tel: (+34) 986 812359