

# Bilingualism and Minority Languages in Europe



# Bilingualism and Minority Languages in Europe:

*Current Trends  
and Developments*

Edited by

Fraser Lauchlan

and Maria del Carmen Parafita Couto

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Bilingualism and Minority Languages in Europe:  
Current Trends and Developments

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## CHAPTER ONE

# BILINGUALISM AND MINORITY LANGUAGES: THE CURRENT CONTEXT IN EUROPE

FRASER LAUCLAN  
AND M CARMEN PARAFITA COUTO

### **Europe: the current context**

It is interesting times regarding the value and status of minority languages in Europe. On the one hand, in recent years, we have seen a revitalisation of many minority languages across Europe, whereby some governments are trying hard to combat their diminishing popularity by introducing legislation to promote and protect these languages. On the other hand, there is evidence that less and less people are being raised to speak these minority languages, and the very existence of many languages is in increasing danger (Romaine, 2007).

Scotland could be considered a case in point. While legislation was introduced in 2005 to promote the Gaelic Language (the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, which gave effect to the principle that the Gaelic and English languages should be accorded equal respect), at the same time, the numbers of Gaelic speakers in Scotland have continued to decline, albeit at a slower rate than before (Office for National Statistics, 2016).

This is not only a problem in Europe. There are predictions that of the approximately 5000 languages that are currently spoken in the world, no more than 500 will survive by the end of the present century (Crystal, 2002). It is unsurprising that most of those that are in danger of disappearing are minority languages in the sense intended in the present volume. By minority languages for the present volume, we mean languages that are spoken by a minority of people in a region or country in Europe, usually in competition with the more dominant, established, and internationally-recognised language of the State. Thus, in the following

chapters there are a number of research studies presented that have focused on the following contexts: the speaking of Galician in Spain, Irish in Ireland, Scottish Gaelic in Scotland, Sardinian in Italy, Welsh in Wales, Frisian in the Netherlands, Catalan in Spain, Basque in Spain, Papiamentu in the Netherlands, and finally the speaking of Spanish in the UK. Thus, by minority languages we mean both indigenous languages to the community and also immigrant languages (e.g. Papiamentu in the Netherlands and Spanish in the UK). While we cannot pretend that this is an exhaustive list of the minority languages spoken in Europe, it does nevertheless represent a significant contribution in the discussion of the place of minority languages in Europe at the current time.

While it could be argued that the advantages of being raised bilingual are being increasingly recognised across the world (see for example, Bhatia & Ritchie, 2005; Bialystok, Criak & Luk, 2012; Garcia, 2008; Escudero, Mulak, Fu & Singh, 2016; Lauchlan, Parisi & Fadda, 2013)<sup>1</sup>, at the same time, there is not the same level of 'uptake' regarding some minority languages in Europe as one might expect. In Chapter Two of this volume, which opens section A "Attitudes, identity and perceptions towards minority languages", Anik Nandi and Ashvin Devasundaram discuss their research investigating the current status of Galician in Galicia, in northern Spain. They interviewed and undertook focus groups with parents who were positively predisposed to the Galician language. It is interesting to note the difficulties that one faces when there is an unequal power relationship between a majority language of the State (in this case, Castilian) and a minority language (in this case, Galician). For example, the parents in the study highlighted the State's failure to provide adequate resources to support the assimilation of Galician amongst children and the next generation. The difficulties that children face when speaking Galician at school are outlined, for example, in a group of friends it might be the case that only one of the group doesn't speak Galician, but in this case the language of the group would revert to Castilian rather than Galician. The role of parents in promoting minority languages in the home domain is discussed in Nandi and Devasundaram's chapter. It is the parents in the Galician community who are attempting to revitalise the language through bottom-up policies, such as the formation of social groups, language immersion schools, extra-curricular activities, and even the use of more modern technology such as social media outlets (e.g. WhatsApp).

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<sup>1</sup> In writing the above statement the authors exert caution and acknowledge the recent evidence (de Bruin, Treccani & Della Sala, 2015) that has highlighted the possibility of publication bias in studies that have demonstrated an advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals in executive-control tasks.

The importance of attending formal education in a minority language, in terms of ensuring its survival over the generations, cannot be over-emphasised. In Scotland, the introduction of legislation to support the formation of Gaelic-medium education in schools in 1985 has played a major role in the maintenance of the language. The number of schools offering Gaelic-medium education has steadily increased and there are now over 150 pre-school, primary and secondary establishments across Scotland that offer Gaelic-medium education (O'Hanlon, Paterson & MacLeod, 2012). In Chapter Three, Sarah MacQuarrie and Fiona Lyon discuss their research that has investigated the level of engagement from teachers who work in Gaelic-medium schools, and how such a high level of support and engagement has positively impacted on the quality of the various research projects undertaken. The lack of resources available in the minority language is again raised as an issue in this chapter, in particular regarding the identification of literacy difficulties. However, progress is being made, for example, the recent development of a phonological awareness test in Gaelic by Lyon is discussed, but the need for further progress is highlighted. The role of staff training is discussed as being crucial in supporting this process.

In Chapter Four, Charles Wilson and Margaret Deuchar outline their investigation into the potential extralinguistic factors that may influence Welsh speakers' pronunciation: in terms of whether speakers decide to use the Standard British pronunciation against the Welsh English variant. Based on previous research they decided to explore the following nine factors: national identity, attitudes to Welsh, attitudes to English, style, gender, home language, region of upbringing, social class, and age. They gathered information on these factors through means of interviews with 41 participants. They found the following extralinguistic factors to be significant: style, home language, gender, and region of upbringing. Specifically, informal, Welsh-speaking home, male, and northern (Welsh) upbringing favoured the production of the traditional Welsh English variant.

Exploring predictions about language survival from a physical and mathematical perspective may be considered unusual, however Luís Seoane and Jorge Mira make a convincing case for its value in Chapter Five. They review the most recent research that has attempted to offer mathematical models that can capture the dynamics of dying languages. The work done in this area has expanded exponentially in the last 10 years, and there have been modifications of these models to include a bilingual component. Seoane and Mira discuss the particular case of Galician-Spanish as a minority language-dominant language context, in order to

demonstrate how these mathematical models can offer interesting insights and practical implications. Recent advances in this line of research have offered up the following important factors that can be considered when assessing the fate of minority languages. For example, it is through weak interactions between competing cultures that these different minority cultures can survive, although weak interactions can often mean isolation. The geographic distribution of speakers matters: a dense stronghold of speakers of a minority language can reverse an adverse situation where the language is in danger of extinction. Languages can survive if human mobility is reduced by physical barriers. These and other factors are described in Seoane and Mira's chapter.

Identity, and its relationship to attitudes towards minority languages, is explored in Chapter Six by Fraser Lauchlan, Marinella Parisi and Roberta Fadda. In a cross-cultural study, they investigated the attitudes and perceptions of 236 bilingual and monolingual parents and children in Scotland and Italy towards the respective minority languages of Scottish Gaelic and Sardinian. They found that generally they were positive attitudes towards both minority languages, both amongst the bilingual group (those who speak Gaelic/English or Sardinian/Italian) and the monolingual group (those who speak English only or Italian only). Perhaps unsurprisingly, attitudes were even more positive amongst the bilingual group. An interesting result was the differences found between the two contexts: attitudes were significantly more positive amongst the Scottish sample compared to the Sardinian sample, with even more pronounced differences between the parents who do not speak the minority languages. In Scotland, monolingual parents displayed positive attitudes towards the teaching and learning of Scottish Gaelic, whereas Sardinian parents were not as positive about Sardinian.

The research did not find any connection between identity and attitudes, although more Scottish participants did identify themselves with being Scottish compared to those in Sardinia who identified themselves as Sardinian. The implications of the results are discussed by Lauchlan, Parisi and Fadda, in which they highlight that, despite the generally positive attitudes discovered by their study, it does not necessarily mean that there is wider practice and dissemination of the minority languages under examination. There are other factors that will influence the possible growth and development of these languages, some of which have already been cited above in the context of Chapter Two, namely the unequal power relationship that exists between the minority language and the language of the State, and the lack of suitable resources and opportunities to promote the language.

Section B, "The benefits of being bilingual in minority language areas", opens with Chapter Seven where Nia Young, Mirain Rhys, Ivan Kennedy and Enlli Thomas outline three recent research studies they have undertaken in Wales and Ireland that have explored the cognitive, linguistic and emotional benefits of being bilingual in these minority language areas. They explored the relationship between the language used in the home and in school amongst children attending Welsh and Irish medium education. They demonstrate clearly that bilinguals in Ireland and Wales (whose L1 is English) perform just as well as their monolingual English counterparts on several measures of English reading and vocabulary. However, there were differences found in those bilingual children who were L1 Welsh, whereby they performed at a lower level than their L1 English and monolingual counterparts. They argue that much work needs to be done to support bilinguals' development of English vocabulary and reading for those children who speak Welsh at home and attend a Welsh-medium school.

Young and colleagues also report on the cognitive benefits explored in their research. Results were mixed: generally there was not a consistent pattern found, although two bilingual groups did outperform the monolingual groups on Executive Function tasks, thus demonstrating an advantage in favour of the older (11-12 years old) bilingual children. These bilingual children included the L1 English bilinguals attending English-medium education in Ireland (and learning Irish as L2), and the balanced bilinguals in Wales (children who attended Welsh-medium education and had one Welsh-speaking parent and one English-speaking parent at home). The authors outline the implications of this result in Chapter Six.

Finally, Young and her colleagues explored the possible emotional benefits of bilingualism by investigating the relationship between their self-esteem and their measured and self-ratings of language ability. Again, their results did not reveal a consistent pattern, and age seemed to play a role. Younger bilingual children were shown to have lower self-esteem than monolingual children, however, in the older age group, the opposite was true. The bilingual children reported higher ratings of self-esteem than the monolinguals. An interesting result was that the bilinguals, in general, demonstrated that they used more solution-focused coping strategies than monolinguals when faced with certain difficulties. The authors suggest that, even if there is the possibility that there might be issues of self-esteem that affect bilinguals at a younger age, the difference appears to be levelled-out by the time they are around 11-12 years old. These issues do need further investigation, as the authors point out, since there are several

factors that need to be considered in this complex relationship between bilingualism, general self-esteem and self-perceptions of ability in literacy (in both of their spoken languages). It is an area that is under-researched and Young and her colleagues should be applauded for attempting to unravel some of the issues involved.

In Chapter Eight, Evelyn Bosma, Elma Blom and Arjen Versloot report on their research that explores the possibility of cognitive benefits in bilingual children who speak Frisian and Dutch. The importance of language balance is highlighted: the children involved in the study were selected according to their language abilities in both languages, thus creating two groups: a Dutch-dominant group (who were more proficient in Dutch than in Frisian) and a balanced bilingual group, i.e. those children who had a 'relative similarity' in proficiency across the two languages. The two groups were matched on their ability in Dutch, as assessed by various standardised Dutch-language tests. The authors used four Executive Function tasks to explore the possibility of differences in the two groups. Two tasks measured skills in attention (selective attention and executive attention), and two measured working memory (verbal working memory and visuospatial working memory). Similar to Young and colleagues' research, the results were mixed. While there was some evidence of an advantage in favour of bilinguals on the selective attention and the verbal working memory tasks, the effects were small to medium. There were no differences found in the other two tasks. The authors discuss the implications of their results, and highlight the importance of establishing language balance in order to potentially profit from any possible advantages in being bilingual.

In Section C, "Grammatical aspects amongst bilinguals and multilinguals in minority language areas", a number of various issues are explored. The five different research studies reported in this volume have explored the interaction of the grammatical systems of different minority-majority languages across Europe. Firstly, in Chapter Nine, Maria del Carmen Parafita Couto, Rocío Pérez-Tattam and Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes report on their investigation of nominal constructions in Dutch-Papiamento-Spanish trilinguals who live in the Netherlands. The three languages differ with regard to gender and noun-adjective order in the nominal domain. The authors used two tasks in order to explore any evidence of cross-linguistic priming in the nominal domain, and to what extent the three languages are affected. One was a receptive task (a grammaticality judgment task) and the other was a productive task (a context-based collocation task). Results showed that the trilinguals seemed to experience more difficulties identifying gender violations on the adjective than on the determiner, both

in Spanish and Dutch. However, in terms of identifying gender violations on the determiner, the trilinguals were more accurate in Spanish than in Dutch. Findings also indicated that the trilinguals apply the relevant adjective placement rules to Dutch and Papiamentu, but interestingly, they over-generalize post-nominal adjective position in Spanish, regardless of the pragmatic conditions. These results, as well as the possibilities for future research in these areas, are outlined in detail in Chapter Nine.

It has been established that subject relatives (SRs) are generally “easier” to process and to produce than object relatives (ORs) in many (mostly VO) languages. However, in an OV language like Basque, previous research has concluded that ORs are easier for adults and children than SRs for processing and comprehension, though with the exception of production, where the SR advantage still holds. This conflicting result is explored in Chapter Ten by Maria José Ezeizabarrena and Amaia Munarriz. They present results from six separate studies that were designed to investigate SR and OR elicitation in Basque and/or Spanish in four groups of participants: (a) Monolinguals (tested in Spanish); (b) Simultaneous 2L1 bilinguals (raised from birth with Basque and Spanish simultaneously); (c) Successive L1 Spanish-L2 Basque bilinguals (raised with Spanish-speaking parents but exposed to Basque from age 4 onwards, or even later, but mainly through the educational system); and (d) Successive L1 Basque-L2 Spanish bilinguals (raised with Basque-speaking parents, who acquired the Spanish language through their exposure to it in the street and neighbourhood, or alternatively, through the educational system in Spanish). The data presented indicate that the advantage, if any, is an SR-advantage, although restricted to children’s production. Thus, this apparent SR-advantage in Basque is argued as being a developmental issue, rather than as a consequence of the inter-linguistic effect of the majority language (in this case, Spanish) on the minority language (Basque).

In Chapter Eleven, Timothy Gupton investigates word order alternation and optionality amongst Spanish-Catalan, Spanish-Galician, and Spanish-English bilinguals, focusing on the majority language (Spanish) of these minority language speakers. The research focused on the bilinguals’ performance on two different tasks: an Appropriateness Judgment Task (AJT) and a Word Order Preference Task (WPT) that were designed to examine competencies and preferences related to word order and focus type with transitive predicates. Results indicated that those who acquired Spanish as a second language appear to have acquired word order variation with transitive predicates in a native-like manner similar to native Spanish speakers, but only in comparison to the Spanish L1-English

L2 group. Compared to the other native Spanish speaker groups, results are rather more varied. Gupton discusses these results and argues that particular language pairings affect Spanish competencies in different ways. For example, the preferences of Spanish-Catalan bilingual speakers for subject narrow-focus replies differ when compared to the English L1-Spanish L2 group and the Spanish-Galician bilinguals. Gupton states the case that Spanish-Catalan speakers are not producing such differences as a result of cross-linguistic interference. The research offers some fascinating insights into the language learning of these diverse bilingual groups who speak the minority languages of Catalan and Galician.

The innovative adoption of a neuro-scientific approach, through the measurement of event-related brain potentials (ERPs), to investigate code-switching is described in Chapter Twelve by Maria del Carmen Parafita Couto, Bastien Boutonnet, Noriko Hoshino, Peredur Davies, Margaret Deuchar and Guillaume Thierry. They tested the acceptability of code-switched nominal constructions in Welsh and English based on contrasting predictions of two linguistic theoretical models of code-switching, namely the matrix language framework (MLF) and the minimalist program (MP) model. The MLF predicts acceptability for a Welsh adjective inserted before a noun in a sentence with an English morphosyntactic frame, and also a violation for English adjectives inserted in the same position in a sentence with a Welsh morphosyntactic frame. The minimalist model instead predicts the exact opposite. The results showed that it was the MLF that appeared to provide a better account of the linguistic mechanism involved, however, there was some ambiguity revealed in the control contrasts, where no differences were found in the two control conditions. Further research is required. However, the authors argue that their research represents evidence that the analysis of adjective placement in Welsh-English bilingual speech may align with online measures of the comprehension of such constructions. The research in this area is still in its infancy but represents an innovative and exciting area of bilingual investigation for the future.

In our final chapter, Chapter Thirteen, Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes and Acrisio Pires describe their research that explores language change and language acquisition of a minority language from the perspective of generative linguistics. In particular, they highlight the interaction between the linguistic features underlying Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Spanish. Their participants were bilingual English-Spanish speakers from different backgrounds across the UK, and they were interested in how this distinct bilingual group develop their internal grammatical system distinctively from monolingual speakers. The results are interpreted as

representing a type of new language development that involves language change, rather than due to incomplete language acquisition or attrition. In other words, the group of bilingual speakers that were under study in Guijarro-Fuentes and Pires' research demonstrated the acquisition of new grammars that are distinct from the grammars of previous generations. The authors conclude that this is the result of an ongoing natural process of language change.

In the pages that follow, the full details of the research summarised above are provided in the corresponding twelve chapters. This volume represents a large body of research that is current and cutting-edge in the field of bilingualism and minority languages in Europe. The motivation underlying the preparation of this volume was that previously many of these minority languages have been in danger of becoming obsolete, mainly because of negative attitudes towards the speaking of these languages, and in particular the potential negative impact that learning may have had on the person's development in the dominant language of the State. In recent times, there has almost been a complete reversal of this position whereby the benefits of being raised bilingual are beginning to be understood (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2005; Bialystok, Criak & Luk, 2012; Garcia, 2008; Escudero, Mulak, Fu & Singh, 2016; Lauchlan, Parisi & Fadda, 2013). This fact, alongside the resurgence of national and regional identity across many areas of Europe has resulted in there being more interest, and more positivity about minority languages in recent times. However, is this enough to ensure that many of these minority languages will survive for another 100 years, given the small numbers that speak them? Only time will tell. As Thomas and Roberts (2011: 106) state:

"The ultimate use of a minority language is mediated by the characteristics of the individual, the nature of the linguistic interchange and opportunities at school, and the availability of the language in the wider society"

These issues may be different across the different countries and regions of Europe, and it is difficult to speculate which languages will survive and which will fall by the wayside. It has been argued that it will be no great loss if Europe were to lose many of its minority languages, since the continent only accounts for about 3% of the world's languages (Romaine, 2007). Such a view may be considered harsh, though it represents the cold reality of the context in Europe. While it may be true that some minority languages in Europe may be close to extinction, it seems, for the moment at least, that research into various aspects of these languages is very much alive and well. Such research, as outlined in this volume, explores diverse issues such as the cognitive and linguistic benefits of speaking these

languages, attitudes and perceptions towards them, and exploring the finer grammatical aspects of the languages. It remains to be seen whether such research will play a key role in the continued survival of these minority languages in Europe in the years to come.

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**SECTION A:**

**ATTITUDES, IDENTITY AND PERCEPTIONS  
TOWARDS MINORITY LANGUAGES**

CHAPTER TWO

CONTESTING THE CONVENTIONALISING  
OF CASTILIAN:  
THE ROLE OF GALICIAN PARENTS  
AS COUNTER-ELITES<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**

*Recent LPP research reveals how policy-makers endorse the interests of dominant social groups, marginalise minority languages and perpetuate systems of socio-lingual inequality. This paper examines the Castilian-dominated Galician linguistic landscape, perceiving the rise of grassroots level actors or agents. These include teachers, parents, family members, language activists and other speakers of minority Galician who play a significant role in interpreting and implementing language policy on the ground. This study locates these individuals as ‘counter-elites’ (Higley 2010; Beard and Phakphian 2012), generally comprised of the educated Galician demographic, who if disillusioned with policy decisions of ruling state elites may develop alternative discourses of resistance to hegemonic ideologies. This analysis centres on Galician parents as counter-elite intermediaries, who implement individual language policy in diverse arenas and collective mobilisations including co-operative funded Galician medium schools. Drawing from in-depth fieldwork interviews, this paper demonstrates that in Galicia’s shrinking Galician speaker pool, counter-elite parents can play an important role in the language revitalisation process. The endeavour is to ascertain whether Galician*

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on an unpublished paper entitled ‘Contesting the Conventionalising of Castilian: Galician Newspeaker Parents as Counter-Elites’, which was presented at the *Fifth Cambridge Conference on Endangered Languages*, July 31, 2015, the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

*counter-elite parents can restore intergenerational transmission and if their microcosmic interrogation of the dominant Castilian discourse could lead to bottom-up language policies.*

## 1. Introduction

Until recently, Language Policy and Planning (henceforth LPP) research has largely centred on state-run language policy formulation and planning programmes. The role of the actors for whom LPP is purportedly designed is often understudied or overlooked. The interpretation and implementation of LPP by the subjects of its discourse including parents, students, teachers and other members of civil society has received diminished attention from researchers (Casales-Johnson, 2013; Ricento, 2015). Gaps between policy rhetoric and policy implementation by ruling elites often leave many language policies ineffectual. Therefore, the aforementioned actors, if disillusioned with top-down language policies originating from the state, may resist from the bottom-up and create their own language agenda (McCarty, 2011; Tollefson, 2013).

This chapter conceives and locates these resisting individuals and groups as ‘counter-elites’, a concept that will be elucidated further. In this regard, this analysis focuses on the enduring dominance of Castilian as the actively conventionalised language in Galicia. It delves into current efforts by Galician counter-elites to challenge the majoritarian narrative of Castilian. The formulation of an autonomous language agenda in the face of disillusionment with supervening state policy is frequently enacted at the micro-level, particularly within the family. The home-use of a language can facilitate its intergenerational transmission whilst simultaneously spilling over and interacting with the outer social and public spheres (Schwartz and Verschik, 2013).

This chapter concentrates on the interaction between macro-level language policy and parental agency in relation to Galician parents from the urban domain. Through their own linguistic behaviour, these parents play a prominent role in the revitalisation and maintenance of Galician outside the home and school space, particularly in the context of framing family language policies (henceforth FLP). FLP, as Fogle (2013: 83) defines, “refers to explicit and overt decisions parents make about language use and language learning as well as implicit processes that legitimize certain language and literacy practices over others in the home”. Ultimately, we will demonstrate how these Galician parents are part of a multitude of urban counter-elites taking the discourse of minority Galician

beyond the home space and engaging in contesting the conventionalising of Castilian.

Language policy whether macro or micro, as Spolsky (2009: 1) notes, “is all about choices” and one of the major objectives of a language policy is “to account for the choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns” (ibid.). Therefore, the family as a micro social unit can be considered as a ‘community of practice’ (Lanza, 2007) with its own norms for language use. Since parents are the *in situ* language managers in the home domain, language management at the family level refers to the choices and attempts that parents make to maintain a language or languages (Schwartz, 2010; Curdt-Christiansen 2009, 2014). We will examine how parents perform their role as counter-elites contesting Castilian’s linguistic dominance by dissolving boundaries between interior and exterior spatial and discursive contexts such as home and outside, family and community, local and national.

In this study, we will focus on parents who have gone through the Galician education system since 1980, and experienced the aftermath of the post-Franco political regime’s (1939 – 1975) language policies. These parents are the embodiment of language revitalisation strategies in Galicia since the 1980s, following Spain’s transition to democracy and the inclusion of Galician in domains of use from which it was previously absent, such as education, public administration and mass media. Traditional speakers of Galician have largely been represented as an aging rural based population with little or no formal training in the language (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013, 2015). However, it is important to adopt a more flexible, inclusive paradigm that takes into account a middle-class and urban-based demographic that speaks both traditional and standardised varieties of Galician.

In this regard, the target research samples of this study are Galician parents from urban/semi-urban backgrounds between the age group of 35-50 years, from various occupations. The upper age-range of the sample ensures the inclusion of parents who have experienced the education system’s transition from the Franco regime to Galician autonomy. Data is drawn from fieldwork in three different urban/semi-urban areas of Galicia including Santiago de Compostela, Bertamiráns and Vigo. This chapter is derived from a larger body of doctoral research, which draws from eighteen in-depth semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions with individual parents and couples. This chapter uses data from two individual interviews and the two abovementioned focus groups conducted in Santiago de Compostela and Vigo. Thematic analysis has been used for data interpretation. This study commences with a brief

overview of the Galician sociolinguistic milieu, top-down language policy, its immediate impact on the urban realm and the role of counter-elites, culminating with a thematic analysis of the collected data.

## 2. The Galician sociolinguistic milieu

Galician (also *Gallego* in Castilian or *Galego* in Galician) is a language variant of the western Ibero-Romance branch, spoken in Galicia, an autonomous region in the north-western part of the Iberian Peninsula. Galicia's present day population is around 2,800,000; the total number of speakers of Galician is approximately three million including the population who speak it as a second language (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística/Galician Institute of Statistics*, henceforth IGE 2014). According to the last demo-linguistic survey entitled *Enquisa de Condicións de Vida das Familias* (Questionnaire on the Conditions of the Livelihood of the Families) carried out in 2013 by IGE, around 98% of the total Galician population claim to understand Galician and around 90% claim that they can communicate in Galician at varying degrees. However, these statistics can be specious when analysed through the prism of recent trends.

Of the population, 41% reported to have Galician as their L1, which signals a reduction of 22% in the last ten years. By contrast, 31% of the total population claimed to have Castilian as their first language, which indicates an increase of 12% since 2003. Another 25% of the population stated that they were brought up speaking both languages. This bilingual demographic has witnessed an increase of 5% since 2003. In relation to daily language use, in 2013, 31% of the population reported using only Galician; a reduction of around 12% in the last ten years. Comparatively, 26% of the total population use only Castilian, the use of which has increased 6% since 2003. Another 42% use both languages on daily basis, signifying an increase of 5% during the last decade (37% in 2003). As the above data demonstrates, there is a constant increase in Castilian speaking monolinguals and the people who use both Castilian and Galician to varying degrees in contemporary Galician society. Concurrently, macro-level data also registers a continuous language loss amongst Galician speakers, whether monolingual or bilingual, underscoring a seemingly inexorable language shift towards the dominant language, Castilian.

The vulnerability of Galician is still largely attributable to an aging and rural-based population (*Observatorio da Cultura Galega*, 2011a, 2011b). It is worth mentioning here that 52% of the present day Galician monolinguals are more than sixty-five years old (IGE 2014). Until the first half of the 20th century, more than 90% of the Galician population lived in

rural areas, where Galician was the sole language of communication (Rei-Doval, 2007). Gradual emigration to urban areas since the mid-twentieth century has destabilised the rural demographic base of Galician. As Castilian was already the predominant language in the cities, the process of language shift towards Castilian in the urban milieu seemed a *fait accompli* (Ramallo, 2012).

Demo-sociolinguistic surveys carried out by IGE between 2003, 2008 and 2013 support the aforementioned claim of language shift from Galician to Castilian (Loredo-Gutiérrez, 2015). These surveys record a constant loss amongst active users of Galician (from 61% in 2003 to 51% in 2013) and a gradual increase in the number of Castilian speakers (from 38% in 2003 to 48% in 2013). This language shift is more prominent in the age group between five to fourteen years. There is a significant increase in children communicating exclusively or mostly in Castilian: 21% in the last ten years (from 53% in 2003 to 75% in 2013). On the other hand, children who speak only or mostly Galician decreased 15% (from 40% in 2003 to 25% in 2013). In this Castilian-dominated topography, the impact of recent language policies on the vitality of Galician, or lack thereof, bears scope for further investigation.

### 3. Top-down LPP in Galicia

In the Galician context, ‘prestige’ is afforded to the dominant language – Castilian (Monteagudo, 2012a; O’Rourke and Ramallo, 2015). Franco’s dictatorship made the use of Castilian obligatory as the only language for administration, education and media. This marked an era of repression and discrimination for the Galician language and the region’s culture (O’Rourke, 2011). During this period, the use of Galician was mostly restricted to the home domain and to informal conversations. After Franco’s death in 1975, democracy returned to Spain. The Spanish Constitution (1978) was written recognising Galicia as one of the autonomous communities of Spain, with Galician designated as the region’s ‘co-official’ language.

Later, in 1983, top-down language policy models were put in place in line with the Law of Linguistic Normalisation of Galician (*Lei de Normalización Lingüística*). Whilst critically analysing the state-driven LPP models designed for Galicia, Lorenzo-Suárez (2005) argues that these LPP models are built on erroneous conceptions about the linguistic vitality of Galician. These misconceptions contribute to an inaccurate analysis of the true numerical and territorial strength of Galicians. Additionally, ever since LPP was put into practice in Galicia, policy stakeholders of the

ruling centre-right wing Government of *Partido Popular de Galicia* (Popular Party of Galicia, henceforth PPdeG<sup>2</sup>), took very little interest in implementing their policy initiatives at the grassroots level. This is mainly because they were more interested in preserving the status quo and not upsetting the Castilian-speaking urban middle class in Galician society (Álvarez-Cáccamo, 2011; Monteagudo, 2012b).

Almost all top-down language policy documents in the Galician political milieu purport to achieve what is sometimes referred to as a “balanced or harmonious bilingualism” (Regueira, 2006). In this idealised state of bilingual equilibrium, both Galician and Castilian would co-exist as official languages of the community without influencing or interfering with each other. However, after more than three decades of implementation of top-down LPP in Galicia, macro-level sociolinguistic accounts continue to register a significant language shift towards Castilian, especially amongst the younger generation (Observatorio da Cultura Galega, 2011a, 2011b; IGE 2014). In 2010, the incumbent Galician government introduced changes to the existing language education policy through a new decree entitled *O Decreto de Plurilingüismo* (The Decree of Plurilingualism, henceforth DDP). According to the government, this decree is primarily based on a survey carried out with Galician parents, based on what the parents want in pre-school as a medium of instruction for their children. Although this new policy claims to ensure the continuation of Galician in primary and secondary schools along with Castilian, it allows the medium of instruction to be that of the children’s home language.

There is a contrary, and indeed, a quixotic element to this policy. Since Castilian has been, and is, the most widely spoken language in urban/semi-urban areas, a majority of Galician children tend to be brought up speaking Castilian by Castilian-speaking parents. Therefore, with the application of the DDP, Castilian automatically becomes the medium of instruction in the urban pre-primary education curriculum. Ultimately, this present policy towards language in education further constricts the conduits of access to Galician among pre-school students in urban/semi-urban arenas. It is also important to note that ever since this top-down LPP was put into

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<sup>2</sup> Partido Popular de Galicia (PPdeG): *Partido Popular* (PP) is a conservative centre-right wing Spanish political party founded in 1989. *Partido Popular de Galicia* (PPdeG), on the other hand, is an affiliated branch of PP which has been in power in Galicia uninterruptedly between 1990-2005 and then again since March 2009-present. Present Galician Government which is ruled by PPdeG strongly maintains a centralist perspective which is evident from their pro-Castilian discourses.

practice, language shift in the urban contexts has proportionally gained momentum (Loredo-Gutiérrez, 2015). Children in the age group of five to fourteen years are directly affected by this language policy model. The macro data provided by the IGE (2014) reveals that the number of adolescents who never speak Galician have increased by 17% in the last five years. As soon as this data was made public, DDP came under the critical scanner.

Government stakeholders, such as the President of the *Xunta de Galicia* (Government of Galicia), Alberto Núñez Feijóo stated during a press release that the present top-down LPP is pro-Galician and by no means discriminatory towards the language. Whilst defending this language policy model, he further argued that it should be the family, and not the education system, which is responsible for intergenerational transmission of Galician. In his view, speaking Galician or Castilian is a question of individual choice. The Galician government's former Education Minister Jesús Vázquez Abad and Dario Villanueva, Director of *Real Academia Española* (Royal Academy of Spanish Language) echo the President's claim that "individual liberty of language selection in a bilingual society" is a justification, if not an exoneration of the incessant language shift to Castilian (Hermida, 2014; Álvarez, 2014; La Opinión, 2014).

There appears to be a marked disjuncture between Núñez Feijóo's endeavour to separate the ideological dimensions of political discourse and the 'individual' parental home space. It could be argued that the latter is always-already linked to ideology. In essence, the state is responsible for creating and implementing the LPP and injecting it into the public domain through various Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser, 1971) such as schools, religious institutions, mass media, and indeed, through the institution of the family itself. These apparatuses are often used to perpetuate top-down ideologies as a 'false consciousness' amongst civil society (Eagleton, 1991).

So, when there is a perennial transference of majoritarian influences, state policy and media messages from the public sphere into the home space, the school and home spaces become intertwined. In this regard, the statements by the President of the *Xunta de Galicia* appear all the more contradictory and specious, because he empowers Galician families with false agency, when in actuality they are always-already ideologically controlled. Therefore, his segregation of the interior home domain as a space of individual language choice, distinct from the exterior or broader dimensions of society (Foucault, 1994) is contestable. Ultimately, state-driven macro-level language policies are designed to address and regulate