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Asturian

The Asturian language in
education in Spain



* numerically small language communities

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From 1999 onwards Alie van der Schaaf has been responsible for the publication of the Mercator regional dossier series.

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Foreword

background

For several years now, Mercator-Education has made efforts to achieve one of its principal goals: to gather, store and distribute information on minority language education in European regions. Regional or minority languages are languages which differ from the official language of the state where they are spoken and which are traditionally used within a given territory by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the population.

To date, Mercator-Education has been successful in establishing a computerised data bank containing bibliographic data, information about people and organisations involved with minority language issues. It has published data collected during four inventory studies on pre-school education, primary education, learning materials and teacher training. In addition there is a need for documents which give a brief outline of the most essential features of the educational system of regions with an autochthonous lesser-used language. With the establishment of regional dossiers we intend to meet this need.

aim

Regional dossiers aim at providing concise descriptive information and basic educational statistics about minority language education in a specific region of the European Union. This kind of information, such as features of the educational system, recent educational policies, division of responsibilities, main actors, legal arrangements, support structures and also quantitative information on the number of schools, teachers, pupils and financial investments, can serve several purposes.

target group

Policy makers, researchers, teachers, students and journalists may use the information provided to assess developments in European minority language schooling. They can also use a regional dossier as a first orientation towards further research or as a source of ideas for improving educational provision in their own region.

link with EURYDICE In order to link these regional descriptions with those of national educational systems, it was decided to follow the format used by EURYDICE, the European education information network in the European Union. EURYDICE provides information on the administration and structure of education in member states of the European Union. The information provided in the regional dossiers is focussed on language use at the various levels of education.

contents The remainder of this dossier consists firstly of an introduction to the region being studied, followed by six sections which each deal with a specific level of the educational system. These brief descriptions contain factual information presented in a readily accessible way. Sections eight to ten cover research, prospects and summary statistics. For detailed information and political discussions about language use at the various levels of education, the reader is referred to other sources with a list of publications.

1

Introduction

language

In the Principality of Asturias, an autonomous community located in the north-east of Spain, *bable*, *asturianu* or *llingua asturiana* are the names given to a Romanic language that owes its origins to Latin and which constitutes the autonomous community's own language. Nevertheless, the denominations "*astur-leonés*" or "*leonés*" are also used, particularly in philological studies, since Asturian had been the language of a large part of the former Kingdom of Asturias which, after successive conquests, became the Kingdom of León.

García Arias (1992) points out that some documents appear from as early as the 10th century containing the clear linguistic features of Asturian. However, it is from the 13th century onwards that it becomes possible to speak of a wealth of documentation in Asturian: writing by notaries, contracts, wills and the like. The importance of the Asturian language in the Middle Ages is revealed, for example, in the

Fuero de Avilés (considered to be the first document written in Romanic) and the *Fuero de Oviedo* or, in the Asturian version of the *Fuero Juzgo* as well. All of these (13th century) documents were legal in nature and acted as the laws for towns and cities or for the population at large. However, it is of note that by the second half of the 16th century documents were clearly coming to be written in the Castilian language, backed deliberately by the Trastámara Dynasty making the civil and ecclesiastical service of the Principality of Castilian origin. As a result, the Asturian language disappeared from written texts but continued to survive orally by being handed down from generation to generation.

Modern Asturian literature began in the 17th century with the clergyman Antón González Reguera and continued up until the 18th century when it produced, according to Ruiz de la Peña (1981), a literature that could stand up to the best written in Asturias in the same period in the Castilian language. In the 19th century, the erudite and intellectual Jovellanos was conscious of the historical and cultural value of what he termed “our language” and expressed the urgency for the compilation of a dictionary and a grammar and for the creation of a Language Academy. It took more than a century for the efforts of Asturian politicians to turn this into reality since it was not until 1980 that the then Regional Council of Asturias (the transitory government body of Asturias) officially created the Academy of the Asturian Language.

Nowadays the Asturian language is a living reality within the territory of Asturias, while small communities speaking Asturian can also be found in areas that do not belong administratively to the Principality: for example, to the north and west of León, to the west of Zamora and including the land around Miranda (a nucleus belonging to the north of Portugal which recently declared “*Mirandés*” to be an official language, in other words, a dialect of its own linked to the linguistic domain of “astur-leonés”).

As far as linguistic variants are concerned, the old classifications set out by Menéndez Pidal continue to be

employed: these being between central, western and eastern Asturian. By and large, dialectical differences are phonetic in character, the syntax being preserved within parameters of significant conformity (Cano González, 1987).

Bearing legal questions in mind, the Statute of Autonomy of Asturias, signed as an organic law by King Juan Carlos in December 1981, set out in Article 4 that: “*Bable* [as the Asturian language is also termed] will enjoy protection. Its use, its diffusion via communications media and its teaching will be promoted, respecting, in all instances, local variations and the voluntary nature of learning the language”. This resulted in the Government of the Principality of Asturias initiating a somewhat modest linguistic policy. Thus, in 1985, the Bureau for Linguistic Policy was created with as its objective the preparation of campaigns of action to promote the use of Asturian and its standardisation. Despite its activities falling far short of social demands, unequivocally favouring bilingualism and the joint official status of Spanish-Asturian (Llera Ramo, 1994), what can be said with certainty is that government policy and, above all, the work of the Academy of the Asturian Language had the effect of Asturian regaining self-respect and use. For example, while this linguistic policy had an effect on education, it also had an effect on the development of modern literature and, without complications, on the presence of the language in the media (radio, television and the press), the appearance of publishers and record companies who published and wrote in Asturian, the incorporation of the Asturian language within the context of new technologies, its institutional use, etc.

With reference to the establishment of linguistic standards, the Academy of the Asturian Language, borrowing from secular literary tradition, published in 1981 the “*Normes Ortográfiques y Entamos Normativos*” [*Standard Spelling and Normative Principles*] and updated them later in 1993 through the release of the “*Normes Ortográfiques y Conxugación de Verbos*” [*Standard Spelling and Conjugation of Verbs*]. With linguistic unity having been consolidated at the written level, the Academy pursued its standardisation

work further and, in 1998, brought out a fundamental work entitled: “*La Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana*” [Grammar of the Asturian Language]. Finally, in 2000, it published the “*Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana*” [Dictionary of the Asturian Language], a work containing more than 50,000 lexical entries in the Asturian language.

Before ending this section, it needs to be emphasised that the renewal of the linguistic dignity and recuperation of Asturian is a process that, little by little, continues to achieve greater institutional recognition. Quoted below as proof of this is the motion of 10 October 1997, adopted by the Asturian parliament, *Xunta Xeneral del Principáu d’Asturies*:

“Asturian or Bable, being the native language of our community, occupies an essential place in the cultural heritage of Asturias. Its nature as a distinctive means of human communication makes it a fundamental structure in social life, an element of collective identity and a factor in understanding and coexistence, being at the same time a symbol and testimony of our history, in the way in which it collects, preserves and transmits the collective experience of our people from generation to generation”.

population

The inhabitants of the Principality of Asturias number about 1,100,000 people. Given that this is within a territory covering 10,565 km², the population density is 104 inhabitants per square kilometre. According to the most recent studies, a third of the population of Asturias habitually speaks Asturian, in other words, some 360,000 people. No reliable data exist for the number of speakers in León and Zamora (Castile-León) and in Miranda (Portugal).

Socio-linguistic studies to interpret the aforementioned situation have been elaborated in Asturias, particularly since 1977, and were at their most rigorous when, in 1991, Llera Ramo, professor at the University of the Basque Country, presented, at the request of the Asturian Government, what

was entitled the "*Estudio sociolingüístico para Asturias*" [*Socio-linguistic study of Asturias*]. This investigation took a sample of 1,300 people and was divided into three parts: a) a socio-linguistic questionnaire (the interviewees' opinions on distinct topics of a personal or general nature in relation to the Asturian language, b) a linguistic questionnaire (to reveal the knowledge and use of Asturian on the part of the interviewees independent of their self-assessment), c) a complementary ethnographic study (magnetic recordings of directed and/or spontaneous conversations, interviews, etc. with social sectors influential on public opinion). The statistical data can be summarised as follows (Llera Ramo, 1994):

1. Your first language is:

- Asturian: 35.9%
- Castilian: 31.8%
- Both: 5.8%
- A mixture: 23.7%
- Other: 2.5%
- Don't know: 3.0%

2. You find it easier to speak:

- In Castilian: 46.7%
- In Asturian: 30.3%
- In both: 15.8%
- It depends: 6.2%
- Don't know: 1.0%

3. Which language do you use at home?

- More Asturian: 41.6%
- More Castilian: 36.4%
- No distinction: 20.8%
- Don't know: 1.2%

With reference to the conclusions of the linguistic questionnaire, the overall results showed that the vitality and knowledge of Asturian is very much in evidence (at around 36% of the total population of Asturias). Other partial results point to the fact that (Llera Ramo, 1994):

1. The indigenous language was better preserved in rural areas than in urban areas.
2. According to education levels, the maximum levels of knowledge and use of Asturian were shown, paradoxically, to be among the least educated and those educated at the highest level (PhD/master's degree holders).
3. Those with the best knowledge of Asturian were people whose parents were native to Asturias, followed by Asturians with the combination of an Asturian mother and a father from elsewhere.
4. With the various social classes in mind, the greatest level of knowledge of Asturian was ordered as follows: lower-middle class, working class and middle class.

The above data (integrating linguistic and socio-linguistic results) allow us to confirm that:

- a) The proposals from those social sectors that champion linguistic recuperation and standardisation in Asturias have met with a favourable reception and are responsible for the majority consensus in favour of making Asturian the official language.
- b) The population feels Asturian to be a language and to have a status similar to the other languages of the [Iberian] peninsular.
- c) The fact that nearly a third of Asturians speak their language with greater ease than Castilian makes it easier

to engage in the recuperation process of Asturian without problems deriving from its vitality.

- d) Breaking the linguistic stigma seems to have been achieved given that it is no longer felt that “to speak Asturian is to speak badly”.
- e) The phenomenon of bilingualism is on the increase seeing as the Asturian language is clearly present in social and public spheres (not restricted to the everyday and the family).
- f) Almost 90% of Asturians showed themselves favourable to the idea of the indigenous language being taught in schools. This fact is particularly important since the social response would be very positive in view of the language’s inevitable spread in teaching below university level.

legal status

Article 4 of the Statute of Autonomy of Asturias cites that the teaching of Asturian has to be promoted, as well as its use and its diffusion in the communications media. To develop the legal framework, the Asturian parliament passed the *Use of Asturian Act* in 1998. Among other things, its provisions establish that:

1. Asturian is the traditional language of Asturias.
2. All citizens have the right to employ Asturian in speech or in writing.
3. The use of Asturian (oral or written) on the part of citizens of the Principality of Asturias will have full legal validity.
4. The official nomenclature of the Autonomous Community’s place names will be in Asturian.

In view of the above, it can be said that the Asturian language has a legal status that allows its standardisation and social recuperation to be expanded upon. In fact, it has enjoyed “quasi-official” legal regulation ever since recog-

dition was given to its right of use and the validity of its use by institutions dependent on the Autonomous Government.

*educational
legislation*

The Use of Asturian Act (1998) also guarantees the *teaching* of Asturian and the promotion of its *use within the educational system*. Other provisions in the act establish that:

1. The Principality of Asturias guarantees the voluntary teaching of Asturian at all levels and grades in the educational system.
2. Although it is a voluntary subject, the teaching of Asturian will be a full part of the curriculum (i.e. it will be taught within the teaching timetable and, to all intents and purposes, will form a part of a student's school record).
3. It is the Principality's responsibility to enact the Curriculum Decrees for the Teaching of the Asturian Language.
4. The Principality will establish the procedures for the authorisation of textbooks.
5. The University of Oviedo, via its departments, will carry out the initial training and qualification of Asturian-language teaching staff at the various educational levels.

educational system

The Autonomous Community of the Principality of Asturias is fully competent in educational matters: in other words, it manages the entire educational system. The educational levels that it comprises are, as we shall see, the same as in the rest of the Spanish State.

The LOGSE (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo Español [The Spanish Educational System General Regulation Act]) stipulates that "*Education with respect to Spain's linguistic and cultural plurality*" is among the fundamental aims of education.

With regard to higher education at the university level, the University of Oviedo, administratively dependent on the Principality of Asturias, is governed by the recently enacted

University Regulations Act (LOU), as are all other Spanish universities. This act guarantees the autonomy of the institution as well as academic and research freedom.

state and private sectors

Educational establishments can be distinguished as follows: a) those in state ownership, b) those privately owned but supported by state funds and c) those completely privately owned and run. In percentage terms, state educational establishments predominate (approximately 60%), followed by private educational establishments subsidised with state funds (around 30%) and followed, finally, by private institutions in the strict sense of the word (above 10%).

The teaching of the Asturian language is linked, almost exclusively, to state education and, within this, at the Primary Education level (6-12 years old). Asturian has a token presence in private educational establishments, although within the educational planning envisaged by the Ministry of Education of the Principality of Asturias its extension has been planned for the whole educational network depending on the state budget. This is only logical when we take into account that the majority of private educational establishments (essentially religious in nature) are 100% subsidised with state funds. Consequently, the students studying in these establishments should have the same rights as those in the state sector.

types of bilingual education

Although the Use of Asturian Act establishes the possibility of using Asturian as a medium of instruction, educational establishments, generally speaking, only offer the teaching of the Asturian language, reserving its use as a tool of communication for complementary academic activities: school press, theatre, festivals and recitals, cultural daytrips, etc. In any event, there are isolated experiments of linguistic immersion in Asturian that demonstrate the high educational value of this practice (Bermúdez de la Vega, 1995). They increase motivation (for both students and teachers) and help children identify with the language of the school.

administration

In Spain, the Ministry of Education regulates the basic structure of the Educational System. The ministry determines the stages of education and common grades for all the autonomous communities by means of an organic law approved in the Spanish parliament. However, management and educational administration is in the hands of the autonomous governments. Consequently, in the Principality of Asturias, matters relating to all levels of education depend wholly on the Ministry of Education and Culture, or, more specifically, on the Vice-Ministry of Education, which has various administrative departments to ensure that the educational system runs properly. Thus, for example, everything relating to the teaching organised for the Asturian language is found within the Administrative Department of Academic Regulation (rules, curricular materials, recognition of qualifications, etc.).

With regard to local administration (in the municipal sphere), the Town/City Councils (municipal government bodies) establish agreements with the Administrative Department for the Culture of the Principality to give Asturian Language Courses for Adults. These, while completely effective from the point of view of basic literacy, lack other educational programs regulated by the academic body.

The use of the Asturian language by the Asturian government is confined to the action of the Ministry of Education and Culture: promotional reading campaigns, advertisements, announcements of cultural competitions, the publication of resolutions in the Principality of Asturias Official Bulletin (BOPA), etc. The use of the Asturian language in parliamentary life is occasional and restricted to particular political groups.

Finally, it should be pointed out that a steadily growing number of Asturian councils (local administration) are making Asturian the official language within the context of their territory and areas of responsibility, which is generating the practice of bilingualism in the administrative and social life of the municipal councils (documentation, official advertisements, road signs, etc.).

<i>inspection</i>	<p>The inspection and monitoring of the official teaching of the Asturian language and the educational system depends, as in all areas of the curriculum, on the Technical Educational Inspectorate of the Vice-Ministry of Education. However, this dependence is recently given that Asturias has enjoyed full authority in education only since 2000.</p> <p>The inspectors should have a perfect knowledge of the provisions in the Use of Asturian Act of 1998.</p>
<i>support structure</i>	<p>The Academy of the Asturian Language is the ultimate linguistic body in the Principality of Asturias and it determines the official spelling standards to be applied in written documents and in teaching. Simultaneously, it is the author of the Grammar of the Asturian Language and the Standard Dictionary (DALLA). Its contribution to the educational sphere is complemented by what are known as the Advanced Linguistic and Cultural Courses (single-subject treatises recognised by the Ministry of Education), the aim of which is permanent training and retraining of Asturian-language teaching staff. The collection entitled <i>Estaya Pedagógica</i> is meant for this purpose. The collection contains educational books that attempt to convey to teachers the latest educational trends in language teaching. For its part, the Principality's government relies on the Department of Academic Regulation to organise everything relevant to the regular teaching of the Asturian language.</p> <p>The <i>Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana</i> is a politically independent organisation that works to raise social awareness and to help other institutions (particularly, municipal councils) organise short courses, conferences, musical events, etc. Its ultimate objective is to achieve recognition of the official status of the Asturian people's historic language.</p>

2

Pre-school education

<i>target group/structure</i>	<p>Pre-school education is organised according to two school stages or periods: Infancy Education from 0-3 years old and</p>
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Infancy Education from 3-6 years old. It is a voluntary stage in education. In the majority of establishments, it starts at the age of 3 to such an extent that practically all children of that age attend schools. Recently the Government of the Principality of Asturias has begun to draw up plans on infancy education for children below 3 years of age in a format that mixes both educational and social content. These plans will become effective from the start of the 2002-2003 academic year. Although the contribution made by these institutions and/or bodies in relation to the Asturian language is slight at this level of education, the majority of teaching unions in Asturias demand the inclusion of Asturian within their syllabuses and the option to use it as an instrument, particularly where the home language of pupils is Asturian.

language use

At this level of education, language does not constitute a specific area of teaching but, instead, is integrated within a wider sphere, the Field of Communication and Representation, given that communication is not solely rooted in verbal language but also in gestures, art, music, etc. Formally speaking, the language of instruction is Spanish, however, for educational reasons, the teachers in many rural parts of Asturias utilise Asturian as their first means of contact with pupils seeing this is the language used at home. Similarly, children's songs (traditional or contemporary), tales, stories, legends, etc. use the medium of the Asturian language.

The systematic teaching of Asturian is limited if we take into account that this affects only 1,370 pupils in state institutions (just over 10% of the total).

teaching materials

Everything related to the development of pupils physically and in terms of their motor functions is produced by specialist private companies. The materials employed for the educational development of pupils are created by the teachers themselves or by private publishers. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Academy of the Asturian

Language collaborate in the occasional publication of materials intended for the linguistic teaching of Asturian.

statistics

The sources incorporated in this report refer to the situation in the academic year 2001-2002 and come from the Statistical Department of the Vice-Ministry of Education (Planning Department, Educational Institutions and Infrastructure). This can be summarised as follows:

PUPILS IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION	
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS IN STATE EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS	13,448
<i>Number of pupils taught Asturian in state educational establishments</i>	1,370
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS IN PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS	6,244
<i>Number of pupils taught Asturian in private educational establishments</i>	0
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS	19,692

Table 1. Pupils in Preschool Education (Source: Statistical Department of the Vice-Ministry of Education)

3

Primary education

*target
group/structure*

In Asturias, as in the rest of Spain, Primary Education constitutes a mandatory level of education that lasts from 6 to 12 years of age.

Primary Education comprises three academic stages, each of which takes two academic years. The Teaching Areas are as follows: a) Knowledge of the Natural, Social and Cultural Environment, b) Artistic Education, c) Physical Education, d) Castilian Language and Literature, e) Community Language and Literature, f) Foreign Language.

language use

Asturian in Primary Education is a subject but, excepting specific situations and/or situations that form part of pilot experiments, it is not the language of instruction. In any event, and as indicated previously, the teaching of the Asturian language is a full part of the curriculum, despite it being voluntary, and is integrated within the pupil's school record. As a general rule, there are two lessons a week for the Asturian language, each lasting an hour.

Furthermore, it can be confirmed that the establishments involved with teaching Asturian are distributed throughout the territory of the Principality, although they are more concentrated in the central industrial areas (the larger municipalities of Uviéu, Xixón and Avilés and the coal-mining areas of the Rivers Nalón and Caudal). Within rural areas, the southwest region of Cangas del Narcea contains the majority of the population of Asturian-speaking students. In both these areas (central as well as the periphery), there are examples of educational establishments that provide the teaching of Asturian at a high-quality level and this is linked to an improved knowledge of the social and cultural environment.

The number of pupils studying Asturian in Primary Education is 14,238, practically all of whom are within the state educational sector. The percentage of voluntary attendance in Asturian language classes (where the conditions of the educational establishment make it possible to choose the subject) amounts to nearly 65%. The 35% that do not choose this option receive classes on Asturian culture as an alternative.

teaching materials

The teaching materials in general (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, audiovisuals, etc.) are produced by private publishers throughout Asturias and Spain. With respect to the teaching of the Asturian language, the publication of material “covering all academic needs” is carried out by private Asturian companies specialised in the publication of books in Asturian. In parallel with this, the Academy of the Asturian Language edits collections of children’s and junior literature.

statistics

The sources incorporated in this report refer to the situation in the academic year 2001-2002 and come from the Statistical Department of the Vice-Ministry of Education (Planning Department, Educational Institutions and Infrastructure). This can be summarised as follows:

PUPILS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION	
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS IN STATE EDUCATION	30,325
<i>Number of pupils taught Asturian in state educational establishments</i>	14,238
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS IN PRIVATE EDUCATION	14,591
<i>Number of pupils taught Asturian in private educational establishments</i>	-----
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS	44,916

Table 2. Pupils in Primary Education (Source: Statistical Department of the Vice-Ministry of Education)

4 Secondary education

*target
group/structure*

Secondary Education constitutes a second mandatory level of education that lasts from 12 to 16 years old.

Secondary Education is composed of two academic stages each taking up two academic years. The Teaching Areas are as follows: a) Natural Sciences, b) Social Sciences, Geography and History, c) Physical Education, d) Plastic Arts and Visual Education, e) Castilian Language and Literature, f) Community Language and Literature, g) Foreign Language, h) Mathematics, i) Music, j) Technology.

language use

Asturian is an optional subject of study in Secondary Education but has been insufficiently introduced due to particular administrative problems that the Government of the Principality of Asturias has been trying to solve since it was given full authority in Education. The teaching of the Asturian language is a full part of the curriculum.

teaching materials

General curriculum materials (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, audiovisuals, etc.) are produced by private publishers throughout Asturias and Spain. With respect to the teaching of the Asturian language, published material is severely lacking and does not cover the students' minimum requirements.

statistics

The number of students studying Asturian in Secondary Education is 1,080. Of these, 936 attend state educational establishments with the other 144 at private institutions. The

percentage of students given the option to follow this course of study is very low. The sources incorporated in this study refer to the situation in the academic year 2001- 2002 and come from the Statistical Department of the Vice-Ministry of Education (Planning Department, Educational Establishments and Infrastructure). This can be summarised as follows:

STUDENTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION	
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN STATE EDUCATION	27,018
<i>Number of students studying Asturian in state educational establishments</i>	936
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN PRIVATE EDUCATION	13,978
<i>Number of students studying Asturian in private educational establishments</i>	144
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	40,996

Table 3. Students in Secondary Education (Source: Statistical Department of the Vice-Ministry of Education)

5 Vocational education

<i>target group/structure</i>	<p>Vocational Education constitutes a non-obligatory level of education that lasts from 16 to 18 years old.</p> <p>Vocational Education is structured along to 2 lines: 1. The “Bachillerato” [Secondary Education Qualification], which takes two academic years and grants access to university education; 2. Professional Training Qualification, which also takes two academic years and grants access to the technical and labour-related environment. Separate specialities exist in both cases.</p>
<i>language use</i>	<p>At present, Asturian is not a subject of study in Vocational Education. Nonetheless, the Government of the Principality of Asturias has just produced the Curriculum of the Asturian Language for this level of education so that it can be established as a subject in the academic year 2002-2003.</p>
<i>teaching materials</i>	<p>The curriculum materials (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, audiovisuals, etc.) are produced by private publishers throughout Asturias and Spain.</p>

6 Higher education

<i>structure</i>	<p>The University of Oviedo (founded in 1604) is the only university in the Principality of Asturias. At this establishment, students take courses of study to obtain the qualifications of University Graduate (3 years) and University Master’s</p>
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Degree (5 or more years). University master's graduates obtain the title Doctor after a minimum of 4 years' further study and after performing original and relevant scientific research.

language use

The current charter of the University of Oviedo expressly indicates in Article 6 that: "The University of Oviedo, due to its historical, social and economic links with the Principality of Asturias, will devote particular attention to the cultural aspects and collective interests of Asturias. The Asturian Language will be treated appropriately in accordance with legislation. Nobody will be discriminated against for using it". In other words, Asturian can be used at the university in line with the Use of Asturian Act. However, practice shows that this is a minority activity and is preferred for subjects related to the philological study of Asturian (linguistic, socio-linguistic, educational, etc.).

The Scientific Memoranda of the University show the increased presence of courses and scientific work that employ Asturian. In the courses based in the Department of Philology and Educational Sciences, there are distinct subjects relating to the Asturian language that show an acceptance and demand among students.

teacher training

With reference to the qualification of Asturian-language teaching staff for the basic levels, the University of Oviedo structures these studies through two postgraduate university qualifications: the Degree of University Expert in Asturian Philology (that qualifies Primary Education teaching staff and is aimed at University Graduates in Teacher Training) and the Degree of University Specialist in Asturian Philology (that qualifies Secondary and Vocational Education teaching staff and is aimed at people with university master's degrees in Philology).

The qualification aimed at Primary Education teaching staff (Degree of University Expert in Asturian Philology) consists of 42 credits (420 hours) and involves the following subjects: Asturian Language-I; Asturian Language- II;

History of Asturian Literature; Teaching the Asturian Language-I; Teaching the Asturian Language-II and History of the Asturian Language.

These studies can be completed in one or two years depending on the student's preference and availability.

Similarly, the qualification aimed at Secondary Education teaching staff (University Specialist in Asturian Philology) consists of 56 credits (560 hours) and involves the following subjects: Asturian Language-I; History of the Asturian Language-I; Asturian Language-II; History of the Asturian Language-II; Asturian and Other Related Dialects Asturian Socio-linguistics; Mediaeval Asturian Texts; Asturian Linguistic Texts (modern and contemporary) and Asturian Literature.

As in the previous case, these studies can be completed within one or two years.

In addition to these qualifications, students, whatever their discipline in their Teacher-Training Degrees and Philology Master's Degrees, can take "optional subjects" related to the Asturian Language. Furthermore, any university student can complement his or her specialised curriculum with a minimum of "free composition" subjects that include subjects taught in Asturian and those that have a cultural, linguistic and socio-linguistic frame of reference relating to the Principality.

statistics

As mentioned, the subjects in the qualifications cited above have linguistic, literary, socio-linguistic and teaching content. Both courses have a limited number of places: 60 students per annum in each case. In other words, in the 2001-2002 academic year, some 120 university graduates were taking these courses in order to complete their training in Asturian Philology.

7

Adult education

In the educational system of the Principality of Asturias, adult education is carried out in two ways: a) in a regulated and official fashion through the Permanent Adult Education Centres (CEPA), dependent on the Ministry of Education and Culture, and b) in another, more informal way, reliant on the local administration (town/city councils). The teaching of the Asturian Language is provided for in both cases, although there are no reliable statistics.

In the first instance, courses are given in adult education centres that rely on the Ministry of Education of the Principality of Asturias, while in the second instance they are carried out in the so-called “popular universities” (i.e. cultural information centres) or “culture houses” (study centres and libraries) reliant on town/city councils.

8

Educational research

Asturias is witnessing the consolidation of distinct lines of research relating to the presence of Asturian in education. Therefore, we should set out by quoting the study undertaken by the S.O.E.V. (Educational and Vocational Orientation Department) of the then delegation of the M.E.C. (State Ministry for Education and Science) in Asturias (1989) entitled *"Investigación sobre la escolarización de la Llingua Asturiana: su incidencia en el currículum escolar"* [Research into the teaching of the Asturian Language: its impact in the educational curriculum]. This involves “ex-post-facto” research that attempts to compare the opinions of students, parents and teachers with respect to results from the teaching of the Asturian language. The general conclusion of the study cited revealed that:

"The incorporation of the Asturian language within the curriculum does not have a negative influence on the teaching-learning process. On the contrary, it has a positive influence on the evaluation of other indicative aspects of a people's socio-cultural identity".

Since then, virtually all the studies relating to the teaching of Asturian have been conducted under the auspices of the University of Uviéu [Oviedo]. Consequently, another more qualitative report is the one made by González Riaño (1994) entitled "*La interferencia lingüística escolar: estudio etnográfico en un contexto asturiano*" [*Linguistic interference in education: an ethnographic study within an Asturian context*] in which a study was made of the verbal behaviour of a group of children (in an urban sphere) in the first stage of their Primary Education who *did not receive Asturian lessons*. The general conclusion expressed was that:

"The oral competence in Castilian of the pupils studied was muddled with Asturian expressions, particularly at the phonological, phonetic and syntactical levels (...) Lexical interference was exhibited, to a lesser extent, by pure forms of Asturian or by Asturian-Castilian hybridisation that referred to traditional aspects of Asturian culture".

From the perspective of its educational implications, the research cited concluded that the systematic teaching of Asturian is the most coherent way for engaging in an analysis concerning "interlingualism", "error analysis", etc. The mutual contamination arising between Asturian and Castilian could be overcome and, at the same time, it contributes towards maintaining Asturian as a language of communication at all levels.

The Bermúdez de la Vega study (1995) is of particular interest, the title of which leaves little room for doubt "*Posibilidades d'una enseñanza n'asturianu: delles esperiencias*" [*The possibilities of teaching in Asturian: some experiments*]. Obviously, this deals with research presented by the author as a point of departure for standardising not only the teaching of the Asturian language but also for teaching *in* that language. Effectively, this study presents various experiments in different schools, at different levels and with different subjects, showing that the Asturian

language can be a perfect means of communication at all stages of education in all disciplines and at all levels and “de la Vega emphasises - “[it is] often a tool of great emotional and motivational strength, as much for the teacher as for the students”.

Another important study is that by González Riaño and San Fabián Maroto (1996) entitled “*La escolarización de la lengua asturiana. Su incidencia en el rendimiento educativo*” [*The Asturian language in education. Its impact on educational performance*]. This project compares the performances of pupils in the sixth year of Primary Education “with” and “without” Asturian. The general conclusion advances that positive results derive from teaching the Asturian language, especially with reference to reading comprehension levels in Castilian and the levels of orthographic command in that language. Furthermore, the study shows that the presence of Asturian within education has a positive influence on learning matters related to the specific reality of Asturias, since improvements are seen in grades referring to Knowledge of the Social, Natural and Cultural Environment of our Community. In other words, the teaching of Asturian does not only make the acquisition of linguistic knowledge and skills possible but also acts as a means of more closely involving the Principality’s natural, social and cultural environment.

Research also related to instrumental learning is that presented by Huguet (2000) entitled “*Desequilibrio entre lenguas y rendimiento escolar. El lenguaje como mediador del éxito académico en contextos bilingües*” [*Imbalance between languages and educational performance. Language as the mediator for academic success in bilingual contexts*]. This is a broad study – in fact, it covers virtually all of the Secondary Education establishments in Asturias that teach the Asturian language – which attempts to confirm the impact of the teaching of Asturian on aspects such as the practical command of Castilian and mathematical performance. The conclusions of this research are important since, on the one hand, they corroborate the existing relationship between the teaching of the Asturian language

and competence in the Castilian language and, on the other hand, they reveal a tendency that is favourable to mathematical reasoning.

From another perspective, Dyzmann (2000) deals with fieldwork entitled *Averamientu al contactu de llingües (asturianu/castellán) nel Principáu d'Asturies* [Socio-linguistic attitudes of secondary students in Asturian] a study on the contact between languages that arises among the students at a Secondary Educational establishment in an Asturian area with an urban context. Leaving aside the conclusions that identify the degree and types of Asturian-Castilian interference detected, the study also has a bearing on other aspects and emphasises, for example, the positive expectations that the teaching of Asturian in schools generates among young students.

Let us refer, finally, to the research done by González Riaño and Huguet (2001), entitled "*Actitües sociollingüístiques del alumnáu de Secundaria n'Asturies*". This involves a study related to the evaluation that Asturian secondary-school students make of the Asturian and Castilian languages. The conclusions permit confirmation of matters such as: 1. in general, secondary-school students are as favourably predisposed towards Asturian as they are towards Castilian, 2. the students who study Asturian are more positive in their outlook on Asturian and Castilian, 3. the student segment that does not study Asturian has a positive outlook on Castilian but is far less predisposed towards Asturian, 4. students who consider themselves bilingual in Asturian and Castilian are favourably predisposed towards both languages, 5. students with either Asturian or Castilian as mother tongue regard the non-maternal language with suspicion, 6. there are no discernible differences with respect to Asturian or Castilian in terms of social class.

9

Prospects

The present state of linguistic recuperation in Asturias, the results from teaching, the extraordinary literary developments achieved and the social expectations and demands

allow us to view the Asturian language as having an encouraging future. That notwithstanding, and in order to safeguard this, it is necessary for it to be recognised fully as the official language of the Principality. Taking the words of Llera Ramo (1994: 177) “without a doubt the researcher who best understands the Asturian socio-linguistic reality ” we can say:

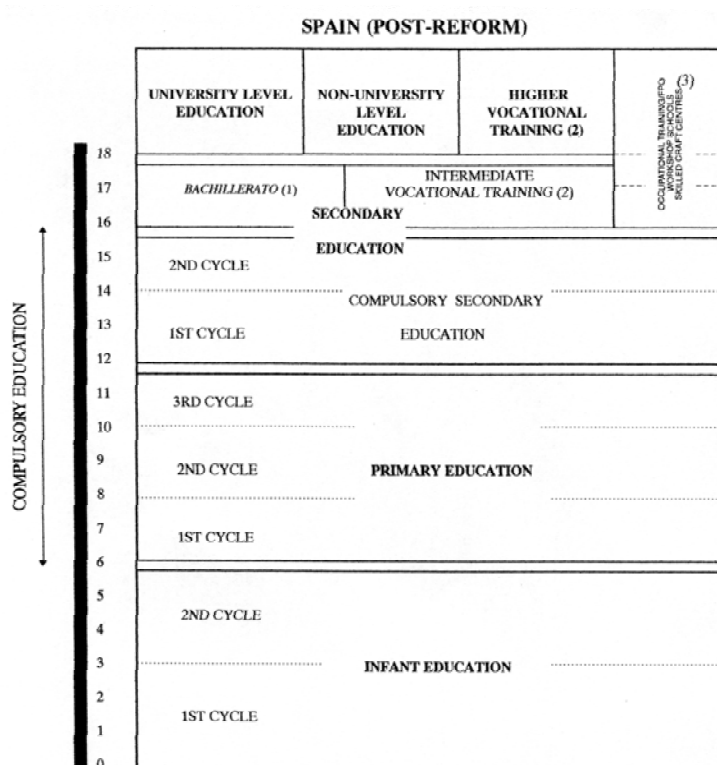
“Let us finish by saying that bilingualism is clearly the linguistic future desired and imagined by the great majority of Asturians, expressing it with great pragmatism and moderation (...) It demands a great regional consensus at the institutional level and from people of influences and leaders of public opinion on the linguistic standardisation to reinforce the already important linguistic identity of Asturians (...) Majority opinion is in favour of equality of treatment in relation to the other languages of the Iberian peninsular. Standardisation and joint official status are the measures by which Asturians stamp their aspirations for linguistic justice.”

Whatever the case, the above should not be understood as an example of exaggerated optimism since it should be borne in mind that problems exist which emanate from the resistance of sectors in society – in the minority yet powerful – who argue in opposition to standardisation and linguistic recuperation in Asturias and who convey the idea that those who defend the Asturian language are acting out of sectarian and/or nationalist interests. To convince Asturian society that such suspicions are totally unfounded and that the right to one’s own language is a profoundly democratic right is the great challenge placed before the Asturian language.

STUDENTS OF THE ASTURIAN LANGUAGE AT THE BASIC LEVELS (2001-2002 academic year)	
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	NO. OF STUDENTS STUDYING ASTURIAN
PRESCHOOL EDUCATION	1,370
PRIMARY EDUCATION	14,238
SECONDARY EDUCATION	1,080

Table 5: Students of the Asturian language at the basic levels.

Education system in Spain (EURYDICE)



1. *Bachillerato* comprises general education at upper secondary level providing access to higher education and to employment.

2. Intermediate and Higher Vocational Training comprises specific vocational training for employment. The diploma obtained at the end of Higher Vocational Training will also give direct access to certain related university courses.

3. These training courses can be entered at any age between 16 and 25. The occupational training programmes (FPO) last 800 hours, training in the workshop schools lasts 1 to 3 years, and in skilled craft centres 6 to 12 months.

----- = division in the level / type of education.

----- = alternative beginning or end of level / type of education.

References and further reading

*main legal texts
regulating Asturian
teaching*

1. General Laws

- Spanish Constitution of 1978
- Statute of the Autonomy of Asturias of 1981.
- The Educational System General Regulations Act of 1990.
- The Organic Law of Universities (LOU) of 2002.

2. Educational Legislation

- The Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act of 1998 (Principality of Asturias)

This law establishes Asturian as the traditional language of Asturias, guarantees the juridical validity of the use of Asturian by Institutions dependent on the Autonomous Government and establishes Asturian education at all educational levels.

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Addresses

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www.jgpa.es

Consejería d'Educación y Cultura del Principáu d'Asturies.
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www.educastur.princast.es

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e-mail: alla@asturnet.es
www.asturnet.es/alla/.home.html

Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana.
C/ La Gascona, 12, 3, Uviéu,
e-mail: xunta@asturies.org
www.exunta.org

<http://biblioteca.udg.es/fl/aucoc/bible.htm>
A list of relevant links on the Asturian language.

www.asturies.com
Digital journal in the Asturian language.
e-mail: info@asturiactiva.com

Other websites on minority languages

- Mercator* **www.mercator-central.org**
General site of the Mercator-project. It will lead you to the three specialized centres:
- Mercator-Education* **www.mercator-education.org**
Homepage of Mercator-Education: European Network for regional or minority languages and education. The site contains the series of regional dossiers, a database with organisations and bibliography and many rated links to minority languages.
- Mercator-Media* **www.aber.ac.uk/~merc/**
Homepage of Mercator-Media. It provides information on media and minority languages in the EU.
- Mercator-Legislation* **www.ciemen.org/mercator**
Homepage of Mercator-Legislation. It provides information on minority languages and legislation in the EU.
- European Union* **<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/langmin.html>**
At the website of the European Union an explanation is given of its support for regional or minority languages.
- Council of Europe* **<http://conventions.coe.int/>**
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. (1992) and *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995) European Treaty Series/Série des traités européens ETS 148 and 157, Strasbourg.
- Eurydice* **www.eurydice.org**
Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.
- EBLUL* **www.eblul.org/**
Homepage of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. This site provides general information on lesser used languages as well as on projects, publications and events.

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