

RAPPORT ABOUT THE INSTITUTIONAL OBSTACLES TO THE NORMALISATION OF THE ASTURIAN LANGUAGE

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The aim of the actual communication is double. On one side, our purpose is to offer some informations about Asturian and its present sociolinguistic circumstances, and in this way bring some light on a theme which is much unknown outside Asturias. On the other side, we try to call attention on a series of peculiarities and anomalies which linguistic policy presents in Asturias in year 2002, and more precisely about the regressive measures which the regional authorities were taking, which favoured the regression and removal of a language which thirty years ago had started a promising process of social normalisation.

The Asturian case presents, therefore, an undoubtable interest for European socio-linguistics, and it may be described in a general way by means of these previous notes:

–Asturian is a minorized language which, after thirty years of normalizing labour, gathers certain fundamental prerequisites to be the object of an adequate linguistic planning: social acceptance, successful presence in the educational system, complete standarization, flourishing literary production, etc. The Asturian social normalisation process met several negative factors, but none of them is of such a magnitude as to render the project invalid.

–The greatest obstacle to the social normalisation of our language in 2002 is the reluctant or openly hostile attitude of the regional authorities.

–This regrettable situation was taking place in a democratic state of the European Community, whose Constitution offers a generous protection to the minority languages of Spain. Asturian legislation on linguistic matters, though not so ambitious

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as the one from other Spanish Autonomous Communities, also offers many possibilities which are being consciously neglected.

–Consequently, Asturian is nowadays a clearly receding language in danger of extinction. This is stated in the last or the five sociolinguistic surveys at our disposal (Francisco J. Llera Ramos, 2002); and in the *Atlas or World's Languages in Danger or Disappearing* (UNESCO, 2001).

We would like to make clear that the contents of this communication are provided by a strictly ‘professional’ or ‘technical’ overview of the facts, avoiding emotional involvement as speakers and users of the concerned language and leaving aside determined political or ideological implications.

1. General information on the Asturian language

Asturian, also called bable and Asturleonese, in view of its historical extension, is a Romanic language spoken, with different degrees of vitality, in Asturias (excepting a fringe bordering on Galicia, between the Navia and Eo rivers, where a type of Galician language is spoken in transition to Asturian), in the western part of Cantabria, the northeastern part of León, the west of León, the west of Zamora and the region of Miranda del Douro (in the northeastern corner of Portugal). The territories where the language is better preserved are, especially, Asturias and Miranda del Douro.

The Asturian population is of about a million inhabitants. Sociolinguistic surveys made in Asturias since 1977 till 2002 show that the proportion of people who pronounce themselves as Asturian speakers range between 300.000 or 350.000 people, and in some estimations those figures are surpassed. Speakers of Galician from Asturias or Galician-Asturian add up approximately to 40.000 people.

The territorial area of Asturleonese is divided into three dialectal areas: eastern, central and western. The central dialect corresponds to the cities (Oviedo/Uviéu, Gijón/Xixón, Avilés, Langreo/Llangréu, Mieres, La Pola de Siero) and most industrialized districts. It includes the majority of speakers and it is the most cultivated dialect in literature throughout history, being by these reasons raised to be base-dialect of the normative variety.

All throughout the Middle Ages Asturian was used in a great number of legal texts, especially in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the preceding centuries, the bureaucratic Latin of the Asturleonese area made nothing but clumsily conceal the true mother language of the scribes. The next dominance of the Kingdom of Castille (in which Asturias was inserted) is the cause of an increasing influence of the Castilian language in the high cultivated classes, and this would be intensified during 14th, 15th and subsequent centuries. But that influence still fails to attain the low classes, which express themselves in the autochthonous language. The most pervading influence of Castilian and the highest recession of Asturian is recorded, undoubtedly, all through the 20th century.

Asturias is one of the 17 Autonomous Communities which form the Kingdom of Spain since the restoration of democracy. But in the whole of the State Autonomous Communities its political, cultural, economic and demographic weight is very scant. During the most part of the 20th century, its economy has been based on a coal mining and steel industry sustained by state enterprises; since the 80's this industrial base is in decline, with a poor regeneration of the socio-economic fabric.

On cultural grounds, a certain "hard" core of our official establishment exhibits reluctance or patent hostility towards the projects of recovery and normalisation of the Asturian language; this has certainly been its historical role, but in the recent years this attitude has heightened in a worrying way. We are entitled to say, all in all, that the situation of Asturian has not just ended in a deadlock, but it begins to suffer an alarming recession.

Under these circumstances, the unbalanced coexistence of Asturian and Castilian produces: a) diglossic bilingualism; b) deterioration and recession of Asturian.

A situation of diglossia is clearly shown in Asturias. Castilian complies with its role as prestiged or dominant language: it is the language which political and cultural spheres have assumed historically, the only official one in the Principality, endowed with a big historical, cultural and political weight, and nowadays it is extended to a great part of the population, getting introduced even in the rural popular areas.

Unlike Castilian, Asturian is a minorized language surviving inside the popular social classes –though in a receding way–, with scarce possibility to be used in the spheres of power and the dominant sites of cultural production. At the ends of the 19th

century and beginnings of the 20th there were several projects of social dignifying of the language, but they were a few audacious attempts, not at all comparable to those which arose in other bilingual communities of Spain. We can truly say that the projects of recovery of the Asturian language have not been set out seriously until the year 1974. It is then that a new period begins: the ‘Surdimientu’ (Arising).

As it is, the process of recovery of Asturian owes much to the socio-cultural movements born during the 70’s. We enumerate here its main achievements: the creation of the Conceyu Bable (Bable Assembly) group in 1974; the founding of the Asturian Language Academy in 1981, which is an institution of the Autonomous community; the official introduction of teaching in several schools in 1984; the creation of the Linguistic Policy Office in 1985; the introduction of some types of studies on Asturian Philology in 1994 (not as a degree, which is still pendant); the declarations of official status of Asturian in some municipalities in 1997; and the approval of the Law of Use and Promotion of Asturian in 1998.

In contrast, all these attainments are neutralised by some negative factors: restrictions are made on the right to learn the language at the primary and secondary schools and; some pressure groups are blocking the university studies of Asturian Philology, even forbidding subjects of Asturian Language which have been functioning for 10 years; the declarations of official status at local councils have been appealed against by the central state authorities, reaching in some cases their legal elimination; the Law on Asturian is not respected neither complied with, etc.

Nowadays, there are about 250 Primary Teaching centers in which the Asturian language learning is regulated and voluntary, but this subject is nearly absent from Secondary School (in both state and private centers). At university, a great amount of students choose some of the available possibilities: optional subjects of Asturian or master’s degree in Asturian Philology. As for the mass media, Asturian is used in some fixed sections of cultural contents of some newspapers and radio stations. There is a cultural weekly paper thoroughly written in our language, but no television programming exists.

In recent years (in 2002), the process of recovery of Asturian has experienced a preoccupying dead stop. All that constitutes an actual menace for the modest

advancements on social normalisation of the Asturian language attained in the period of the *Surdimientu*, which started thirty years ago.

2. Supporting conditions for the social normalisation of Asturian

The situation of Asturian and its social dignifying process presents some characteristics highly interesting for anyone dealing with the study of this kind of phenomena in Western Europe. Let us see some data:

- *Vitality*.- Asturian has been losing speakers as time went by, particularly in the 20th century. It is, therefore, a minority language, but it is not yet in a demographically critical condition. A great part of its speakers use a hybrid modality called *amestáu* (meddle), according to the different degrees of interference with Castilian. Asturian keeps alive in better conditions in the popular circles of working or peasant classes; among old-aged or lowly-instructed people. As a result, Asturian is a language in precarious social conditions, subdued to a process of minorisation, although it still enjoys an outstanding vitality in speech.

- *Urbanity*.- Asturian cities are highly castilianized linguistically, but not totally: a vivid type of *amestáu* is present in them, mainly in the boroughs and popular environments. We should add to that the masses of population migrated from the country areas and the coal-mining zones of the Nalón and the Caudal rivers, typically speakers of the language.

- *Territoriality*.- The linguistic area of Asturian roughly corresponds to the territory of Asturias (excepting the narrow Galician-speaking fringe bordering on Galicia). In a general way, people deem that there is a correspondence of the Asturian territory with the Asturian language.

- *Name of the language*.- Although since the endings of the 18th century the use of the term *bable* is already recorded, this one was left confined to the enlightened or literary spheres, and people always referred to their own way of speaking as *asturiano*, a substantive derived from the territorial name of Asturias. There are practically no denominations of a local sort, and this becomes another collective identifier.

- *Minimal legal base*.- The Autonomy Statute and the Law of Use and Promotion of Asturian reflect a kept to minimum legal base which, if political will

should be met, would allow an adequate linguistic policy to go forward. Besides, many rural local councils have local bylaws at their disposal which make easier for citizens the use and knowledge of the language.

- *Minimal institutional base.*- Asturian has got an organism, the Asturian Language Academy, which is an official entity of the Principality of Asturias. Its tasks deal with the study, promotion and regulation of the use of the Language. Moreover, there there is a specific section inside the Education and Culture Regional Council in charge of directing the linguistic policy.

- *Articulated cultural movement.*- In 1974 the *Surdimientu* begins, a movement of regeneration of the linguistic and cultural identifiers of Asturias, which sprung parallel to the democratisation process in Spain brought about with the death of the dictator Francisco Franco. The *Surdimientu*, which revitalises a certain asturianist tradition from the old times, has fostered sensitivity in favour of the Asturian language in most of the population. The creation of the Asturian Language Academy and the introduction of Asturian in a considerable part of the Asturias schools are attainments endorsed by society. Production in Asturian language, as an inherent part of the regional culture, must be inexcusably mentioned when referring to this.

- *Social acceptance.*- Asturian society, during the recent thirty years, have spectacularly taken a new turn concerning linguistic mentality. Although before Asturian was considered as an inferior dialect doomed to die out, nowadays the population think that it is one of the languages of Spain, and proves really receptive to linguistic social normalisation planning, inside some limits not at all radical (Francisco J. Llera Ramo, 2002).

Frontal opposition to linguistic normalisation is very scarce within society. But the fact that renuent or hostile positions are very mighty in the political and cultural establishment is a negative factor.

- *Support in cities and youth.*- According to statistics, the endorsement of linguistic recovery and normalisation is greatest inside youth and urban sectors.

- *Success in teaching.*- In 1984, Asturian was officially introduced as an optional subject in a number of primary and secondary schools in Asturias; later on, more educational centres were added to the experience, half of them eventually. Social

acceptation of this experience has been incontrovertible. For the first time in history, a considerable amount of children and youths leave the educational centres with a literacy of Asturian which no previous generation had ever had.

- *Increasing Literature.*- Asturian literature is today enjoying a boom which it has never met in any historical period. There has never been so many good writers, and the numbers of works published since 1975 till now widely surmounts the whole literary production since the 17th century. Good writers in Asturian have a great deal of prestige for all cultural sectors of Asturias, and they start to be known in the rest of Spain.

- *Complete linguistic normalisation.*- Cultural and academic asturianism has been able to endow the language with the instruments fit to undertake linguistic normalisation. Linguistic normalisation or standardisation of the language has been finished with no traumas: *Normes ortográfiques* ('Ortographical norms', 1981), *Gramática de la llingua asturiana* ('Asturian language grammar' 1998), *Diccionariu de la llingua asturiana* ('Asturian language dictionary', 2000). Dialectal variation has not been any obstacle at all for an agreement to be made on a commonly accepted normative model.

All in all, we may assert that the foundations are set to carry on an appropriate linguistic policy in Asturias. The basic instruments (legal, institutional, linguistic, cultural ones) are at hand for political rulers and for society, which does not perceive the linguistic matter as a cause of conflict.

3. Some adverse factors

It is evident that normalisation of Asturian also meets some adverse factors, derived from the idiosyncrasy of our society. Here we have some of them:

- *Social recession and decrease in the number of speakers.*- In spite of its vitality, Asturian has been a recessive language for long time. Last surveys show us in real time the fall in the number of speakers. Many young people actively defending Asturian cannot speak it themselves, or speak it with a high degree of castilianization.

- *Institutional base.*- The relations of the Asturian Language Academy with the rest of institutions of the Principality have always been difficult for several causes. On

its part, the governmental section devoted to linguistic policy in the recent years has been functioning nearly ever minimally.

- *Reluctant or hostile elites.*- The sensitivity in favour of social normalisation of Asturian has not been able to permeate, or has done it very slightly, the elites which rule the course of Asturias. The establishment with the reins of power keeps being basically the same for thirty years.

- *Regressive measures.*- Since 1999 until 2002 a mighty reactionary movement is detected in the official policy towards Asturian language. This movement has been encouraged or allowed by the authorities of the Autonomous Community. There is a risk of spoiling the achievements of the last thirty years, rendering the language unprotected and exposed to minorisation and danger of substitution.

We will also mention some additional circumstances:

Asturianist movements.- During the 19th and 20th centuries, Asturias lacked a social, cultural and political movement backing the demand and recovery of the autochthonous language. The few movements of an autonomist or regionalist sort, especially during the 20's in the 20th century, did not have much social influence, neither did they really intend to revolutionize the linguistic situation. There have never been nationalist movements in Asturias so far as the endings of the 70's. The undeniably wide social base in favour of the social normalisation of the language is not the reflect of a political movement. On one side, nationalist parties born since the ending of the 70's were never a deciding factor in Asturian political life, governed overwhelmingly by the PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, Spanish Socialist Workers Party) democrats and the PP (*Partido Popular*, Popular Party) conservatives. Moreover, popular favour towards language normalisation ranks low in the voters' preference, massively supporting the aforementioned parties, whose leaders show indifference and hostility towards the deployment of the Asturian language.

Mass-media.- There only exists a weekly paper in the Asturian language. The three daily papers in Asturias just issue a few cultural sections in Asturian. Those publishing experiences of 'normal' news in Asturian were cancelled more than ten years ago in the two daily papers where they were put into practice. Some radio stations broadcast in Asturian some cultural program. There is a radio station, Radio Sele, which broadcasts entirely in Asturian, but it is not inscribed inside the commercial circuit.

Public television, TVE, does not broadcast any program in Asturian, and in the local television stations the language has a testimonial presence. The association *Periodistas pol Asturianu* ('Journalists for Asturian') strives to overcome that situation.

Catholic church.- A widely known association gathers the Catholic Christians who defend the use of Asturian in liturgy. A great effort has been made translating into Asturian the whole liturgy and the official catechism of the Spanish Episcopal Conference. A team of experts, coordinated by the international Biblical Society, is translating the Bible since the year 1989. Notwithstanding, the use of Asturian in religious services does not abound much. Besides, Asturian keeps lacking recognition from the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Administration of the Autonomous Community.- Institutions and organisms depending from the Principality of Asturias only use Asturian in certain especial occasions (for instance, some asturianist commemorations) or in official announcements concerning asturianist cultural matters.

Place-names.- Asturian popular place-names have been currently deformed as substituted by artificial Castilian-sounding forms. The Autonomous Government set up a Commission for Place-names in the 80's, which virtually never functioned due to negligence from the authorities. The restitution of the popular place-names have had a partial relative success: in some of the roads of the autonomous net or in maps of Asturias some correctly labelled place-name signs may be read. A recent decree from the autonomous government lays down the guidelines for the officialising of the autochthonous place-names

Civil life.- The use of Asturian has not yet attained most of the spheres of civil life. Anyway, we may find samples of public use of the language somewhere: prize lists at bars, labels at some institutional departments (few of them), bilingual instructions in public telephone booths or in trains, names of shops or businesses, street graffiti, etc. In general, the urban landscape is overwhelmingly taken by Castilian. Some cultural or recreational associations use Asturian, but this is not frequent. Some political parties in Parliament –not of course PSOE or PP– sporadically use the language.

4. Denouncement of an assimilation policy in Asturias

Authorities governing in Asturias during the last thirty years have never been enthusiastic about normalisation of Asturian, and on these terms no ideological distinction between PSOE (social-democrats) and PP (centre-right) is crucial; they both share castilianizing objectives which render the Asturian language at a lower level. However, they have occasionally shown tolerant or even actively positive performances; for instance, in the Asturian parliament they have always supported the University of Oviedo in its claim to introduce the Degree in Asturian Philology, rejected by the organisms in Madrid. The contradictory behaviour of both parties is explained by the lack of a coherent linguistic planning, but also by the existence of internal factors more conscious about Asturian.

Nevertheless, in recent years, especially since 1999 until 2002, the negligence of the present government has definitely given way to an aggressive policy which risks the modest steps in the social normalisation of Asturian. This policy is based on several theoretical postulates which we could express in this manner:

Asturian is not a language, but a dialectal variety of Castilian. Or rather: Asturian is a language of inferior category, it is not a language ‘as the other ones’.

–Asturian is not an important subject; there are a lot of problems in Asturias, but no linguistic problem nor need to create it.

–People do not demand more protective measures for Asturian, they conform themselves with the present performances. Passivity (that means, non-belligerency) of people is interpreted as a pretext for the authorities’ inhibition.

–The language is not a matter of civil rights, but a device to create a false Asturian identity.

–The defense of the Asturian language leads inevitably to a nationalistic ideological factor.

Evidently, these postulates are easily refutable from linguistics or from elementary socio-linguistic verifications. For instance, socio-linguistic surveys clearly reveal that most of the population opine that autonomic authorities are not doing all they should in support of the recovery of the Asturian language. In any case, those postulates

inspire some performances detrimental to the process of normalisation of the autochthonous language. Let us see the main ones:

1) The concept of official status elevated to the category of taboo.- The Asturian authorities (that means, the majority parties) have a totally negative view of the concept of linguistic coofficial status, and they have granted it the category of taboo. According to this, the linguistic official status should create a situation of civil confrontation among Asturians. Following this view, Asturias authorities have hindered the declarations of official status which eight Asturian local councils decided in the years 1997 and 1998. Actually, authorities have banned the official status on some of those municipalities.

2) Suppression of the Linguistic Policy Office.- In 1984 a department called Linguistic Policy Office was created (dependent on the Education and Culture Council) with the mission of channeling the linguistic policy planned by the Asturias government. After subsequent changes of name and ineffectiveness, the previous government decided to suppress it in 2002.

3) Marginalisation in the University.- In 1992 the University of Oviedo, after a petition from the Faculty of Philology, agreed to create a Degree in Asturian Philology. In Spain universities enjoy a plain autonomy to establish their own degrees, in such a way that, in general, a central organism called University Council does nothing but giving its approval to this kind of decisions. With all, the Degree in Asturian Philology has been constantly boycotted from that Council, which alleges no reasons and scorns in this way the scientific authority of the University of Oviedo. In addition to this, the same University Council decided in 2002 to overturn the present especialities of Spanish Philology and Romanic Philology for including optative subjects of Asturian Language and Asturian Philology. We are due to state that the level of acceptance of these subjects on the part of students is one of the highest in the University of Oviedo.

4) Marginalisation in non-university teaching.- For the first time in history, the optative subjects Asturian Language was introduced in 1984 in 10 primary schools; later on the figures augmented, reaching practically half of the schools of the Principality. In 1986 it was widened to 10 secondary schools. The acceptance of the subject of Asturian has been massive in almost all the centers. Nevertheless, the

educational authorities of Asturias maintain a clearly discriminating situation towards parents or students choosing the subject.

5) Censure of the ‘Asturian language’ denomination.- The category of ‘language’ and the ‘Asturian language’ denomination have been being used with total normality in several sectors of cultural, social and political life. It is enough to say that the Asturian Language Academy is an official institution of the Principality and that ‘Asturian language’ is the name assigned to several subjects taught in all levels of the teaching system since 1984. On the other side, regional authorities have never had any objection to announce contests or publish books in ‘Asturian language’. Nevertheless, authorities have recently decided that that denomination is not valid, and they have substituted it systematically by that of ‘traditional language: bable/Asturian’. This denomination, complicated and with no tradition, has the effect of diminishing the category of Asturian. In fact, its exclusive use in the legal documents containing the guidelines of Asturian language teaching (published in June 2002) is causing a general sense of unease among the teachers.

6) Breaking of legality on linguistic matters.- The article 4 of the Autonomy Statute of Asturias and its development, the Law of Use and Promotion of Asturian, fix the immediate legal frame in which the policy of protection and promotion of the autochthonous language must be developed. Of course, the Spanish Constitution and the European Chart of Minority and Regional Languages (which in its Spanish version makes a specific reference to Asturian) also shelter our linguistic rights. Though not attaining the levels of the corresponding legal dispositions of other bilingual communities in Spain (Galicia, Basque Country, Navarre, Catalonia, Valencia and Balearic Islands) which contemplate the official status, the Statute and the Law of Use should allow any conscious government to carry out an acceptable linguistic policy. On the contrary, the authorities of the Principality of Asturias systematically fail to comply with both legal texts, only making restrictive interpretations of its reading.

7) Obstacles to the free use of Asturian.- In the present state of things, flagrant cases of linguistic discrimination are produced which, as the case has been, fail to move the authorities at all. We bring here some cases: fines to children for speaking Asturian at school; impossibility to legalize associations for presenting documentation in Asturian; denial of the right to political candidacy for the use of Asturian; etc.

As a conclusion, in Asturias we were assisting in 2002 to a change of direction concerning the political attitude towards the language. From a time characterised by the lack of interest, little enthusiasm or reluctance, we were meeting a new period in which active minorisation and aggressive measures against linguistic normalisation are the trend. Obviously enough, it deals with the commencement of a clear assimilation policy.

Meanwhile, Asturian keeps receding as a spoken language in an alarming way, and great amounts of children and youths do not express in the language of their parents and grandfathers anymore.

5. The anomaly of the Asturian case

To finish, the Asturian case is an anomaly in the whole of minority languages of the European Community, since it presents some really contradictory characteristics. On one side, it gathers a series of objective conditions which favour its social normalisation; but on the other side, the political authorities resist themselves to undertake any type of linguistic policy, and lately (2002) they have even set up a clear policy of assimilation. Society, on its part, does not esteem the theme of the language as one of its priorities, and therefore the process seems, by the moment, unable to be stopped.

6. Addenda. Situation of the Asturian language: chronology (1974-2002)

- 1974.- Creation of the group ‘Conceyu Bable’ (Assembly of Bable), pioneer of the present linguistic recovery movement.
- 1978.- Democratic Constitution is passed in Spain. It contemplates the possibility of making all the regional languages coofficial together with Castilian.- First proposals of social normalisation of Asturian, presented by ‘Conceyu Bable’.
- 1979.- *Asturias. Primera Encuesta Regional* (‘Asturias, First Regional Survey’, Oviedo, SADEI-Principado de Asturias): a socio-linguistic survey is for the first time made which evinces the positive attitude of public opinion towards Asturian.
- 1980.- foundation of the Asturian Language Academy.
- 1981.- Publishing of the *Normes ortográfiques* (‘Orthographical norms’) of the Asturian Language Academy.

- 1982.- The Autonomy Estatute of Asturias is passed. Its 4th article, concerning Asturian (under the name ‘bable’) lays out the guidelines for its protection and promotion. It does not use the denomination ‘language’ nor does recognise its official status.
- 1984.- Asturian is officially introduced in some schools as an optional subject. – The Linguistic Policy Office is created.- The second regional survey, *Asturias. Segunda Encuesta Regional* ("Asturias, Second Regional Survey", Oviedo, SADEI-Principado de Asturias), is issued.
- 1985.- Asturian is introduced for the first time in the University of Oviedo by means of the optional subject Asturian Language, in the Primary Teaching College.- The new estatutes of the University of Oviedo recognise the ‘Asturian language’ (under that very denomination) and reject discrimination by its use.
- 1986.- A railways worker is sanctioned by his enterprise for using words in Asturian while carrying out his labour. The problem is solved after the intervention of the trade unions and the president of the Principality of Asturias. Some taxi drivers from Oviedo are sanctioned by their enterprise for using Asturian.
- 1987.- Some pressure groups from the socio-cultural establishment create the association ‘Amigos de los Bables’, whose aims are to impede the entrance of Asturian in the educational system and to fight against the normalisation of the language. They get support and understanding from a part of the authorities and the regional mass-media. The third regional survey is issued.- Pressure groups from the socio-cultural establishment manoeuvre against the first doctoral thesis presented in the University of Oviedo.- The 1st Congress of Asturian Writers take place.- The colective ‘Manuel Fernández de Castro’ is born, aiming to promote the use of Asturian in the religious spheres.
- 1988.- The pressure groups adverse to linguistic normalisation success in suppressing the only program in the Asturian language in the Spanish Television in Asturias, lasting 15 minutes per week.- Asturian is officially introduced in a few secondary schools. The first doctoral thesis redacted in the Asturian language is read in the University of Oviedo, with the German romanist Helmut Lüdtke as president of the tribunal; the thesis is boycotted by the anti-normalisation establishment.- A Proposal of

a Law of Use of Asturian is presented at the Asturian Parliament by means of a popular initiative; the proposal is rejected by the Government.- The anti-normalisation establishment launches a heavy campaign against the recovery of Asturian.

- 1989.- The teachers collective ‘Lengua y Enseñanza’ (‘Language and Teaching’) does not attain legalisation for not presenting its documentation in Asturian.- The 2nd Congress of Asturian Writers takes place.
- 1991.- The Faculty of Philology of the University of Oviedo passes the introduction of two optional subjects of Asturian Language in the Degree of Spanish Philology.
- 1992.- Some citizens protest against the Mieres Local Council for not receiving documents written in the Asturian language.
- 1993.- The Government Board of the University of Oviedo blocks the introduction of two optional subjects of Asturian Language in the Degree of Spanish Philology.- The Faculty of Philology of the University of Oviedo passes the creation of the Degree in Asturian Philology.- The Asturian Parliament rejects some documents from certain parliamentarians for being written in Asturian. The Principality of Asturias cancels the validity of knowledge of Asturian as a merit for the state applications.
- 1994.- Master’s Degree on Expert in Asturian Philology (for primary school teachers) and Especialist in Asturian Philology (for degrees in philology) are introduced in the University of Oviedo.- *Los Asturianos y la Lengua Asturiana. Encuesta Sociolingüística para Asturias* (‘Asturians and the Asturian Language. Socio-linguistic survey for Asturias’), directed by the sociologist F. J. Llera Ramo is published.- The rectorate of the University of Oviedo rejects a document of the president of the Asturian Language Academy for being written in Asturian.
- 1995.- The University Council in Madrid denies the introduction of two subjects of Asturian Language in the Spanish Philology Degree.
- 1996.- Finally, the University Council in Madrid passes the introduction of two subjects of Asturian Language in the Spanish Philology Degree.- A certain political party is not allowed to present candidacy to the elections in Asturian.- The mayor from Ribadesella cuts the economic aid to a pipe band for including in its name the autochthonous placename ‘Ribesella’.- A judge from Mieres bans Asturian to be the

language used in a marrying ceremony in the Council of Riosa.- A certain party from the Asturian parliament is rejected a written communication for being written in Asturian.- 20.000 people rally in Oviedo demanding coofficial status for Asturian.- Eminent militants from the PSOE party criticise the party's direction's official lines and support the coofficial status for the Asturian language.

- 1997.- The Government Board of the University of Oviedo agrees to demand from the University Council in Madrid the creation of the Asturian Philology Degree.- Eight Asturian Local Councils declare coofficial status of Asturian in their municipal territories.- Gijón's Local Police rejects documents written in Asturian from some citizens.- The reform of the Asturias Autonomy Estatute starts, and a strong social and political debate arises around the question of the coofficial status for the Asturian language.- A second big rally takes place in Oviedo claiming for the official status of Asturian.

- 1998.- The University Council in Madrid denies the creation of the Asturian Philology Degree. The Asturian parliament opposes unanimously to that decision.- The possibility that, in the future, the Asturian parliament, under certain conditions, could accept the coofficial status for the Asturian language is frontally rejected by the PSOE, a fact which impedes the introduction of any linguistic reform in the Autonomy Estatute.- The Asturian Language Academy issues the Asturian language grammar (*Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana*), which proves an editorial success.- Spain adjoins to the European Chart of Regional and Minority Languages, including a reference to Asturian as a language aim of protection.- The Law of use and Promotion of Asturian is passed. It does not contemplate the coofficial status, although it foresees ample measures of protection.

- 1999.- The new socialist government in the Principality abolishes the Linguistic Policy Office.- The third big demonstration claiming for the coofficial status of the Asturian language takes place in Oviedo.- Asturian language primary school teachers protest in demand of better working conditions.

- 2000.- The Asturian Language Academy issues the Asturian Language Dictionary (*Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana*), which is presented in the Asturian Parliament, in absence of the President of the Principality. It is sold out in less than a week.- The Asturias Electoral Board rejects the candidacy of a certain political party for

being written in Asturian. The Constitutional Tribunal in Madrid, agreed later with this party's claim.- A manifesto signed by 140 personalities of the social, cultural and political life of Asturias appears in the press, alerting on the risk run by Asturian and the necessity of undertaking linguistic normalisation plans.

- 2001.- Again, the University Council in Madrid denies the creation of the Degree in Asturian Philology.- The Spanish Government Delegation in Asturias cancels the coofficial status of Asturian in some local councils where it had been proclaimed.- Radio Sele, the only radio station broadcasting uniquely in Asturian, meets that its licence to broadcast is denied with no apparent reason.-A school in Villaviciosa fines its pupils with 0,15 euros for saying words in Asturian; a certain judge stipulates that fining someone for speaking Asturian is not an offense.

- 2002.- The University Council in Madrid stops the studies of Spanish Philology and Romanic Philology for including three subjects of Asturian Language.- The Spanish government Delegation in Asturias declares invalid the official status of Asturian in other municipalities which had proclaimed it.- The Education and Culture Council of the Asturian government passes the document laying out the guidelines of Asturian teaching in primary and secondary schools; its contents constitute a turn to the past and fails technically to be applied by the teachers. In this document the denomination 'Asturian language' is censored, and Asturian is treated as if it were a dialect of Castilian.- Big demonstration in Oviedo protesting against the restrictive policy of the Asturias government on linguistic matters.- Famous writers in Castilian and Asturian sign a manifesto for the official status of the Asturian language.- Several parliamentarians representative of all political factions subscribe a declaration contemplating the demand of coofficial status for Asturian.- Members of the PSOE in the city of Langreo face their party's regional direction by demanding official status for Asturian.- The Asturian Language Academy gives to light an important document, the 'Raport on the repression and non-recognition of the Asturian language'.

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