

REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE LINGUISTIC CONFLICT OF ASTURIAN AND CASTILIAN IN NORTH OF SPAIN¹

As I said many times in class I feel more comfortable when language is related to political power. The only explanation I find for a language to become the dominant language of a nation-state or many nation-states in the world is a historical explanation. That is to say; the language of the ruling-class of a nation-state enjoys a position of privilege not because it is inherently superior to any other language but only because the position of power it enjoys. As Louis-Jean Calvet put it in *Linguistics and Colonialism*:

The dominant language is imposed according to the following scheme. First the ruling-class, then the population of the cities, and finally the countryside. In those places where the dominated language resists this process is enforced by a series of bilingualisms ... the Gallic was not the victim of Latin, it was the victim of Roman Imperialism; in the same way that Britton and Occitanian were not seriously damaged by French, but by the economic and political centralism of the French State. That is to say a form of internal colonization.

Spanish in Texas is a discriminated language because in this state Anglo-Saxon speakers are the ones with the political power to impose their language as the only one valid at a political and economic level. What I want to say and open for discussions is that a language, as well as a political system or system of values, do not emanate from heaven or any other metaphysical realm. All are the products of human beings in the process of making history. To put it more clearly, out of a relationship between man and nature history takes place and with it the economic, political and ideological structures that makes society possible.

By analysis of languages in conflict will have as a historical reference rather than metaphysical, moral or ethical explanations. It does not mean I invalidate them but rather I want to place them in a historical context which I think it is where they belong. For example, Navaho was a useful language for the Navaho people. It is a dying language today because the Navahos lost the war with the Anglo-Saxon nation-state called the U.S. and became a colonized nation. What can happen to the Navaho language if they regain their political independence is hard to say. The best comparison I can refer to is the one of Hebrew. Hebrew was also

¹ En xunetu d'esti añu lleóse esti trabayu na Universidá de Texas (Austin, EE.UU.). El so autor, l'asturianu Vital d'Andrés, presentólu nun seminariu qu'emponaba'l conoçiu sociollingüista Dr. Sled, y dio llugar a un perinteresante coloqui. La preba del interés pela llingua asturiana lleóse de les nubes llandes ta medrando y ya nun ye la primera vez que se fan trabayos d'esti sen n'otres universidaes. Asoleyamos esti testu, de xuru interesante pa los nubes lletores.

a language in the process of dying. The fact that Israel is today an independent nation-state changed the whole situation in respect to Hebrew.

Now, having this theoretical framework as a reference I want to talk about language conflict in Spain and do the best I can to bring comparisons with something more close to us: the problems Chicanos face in Texas. I want to focus my discussion in a concrete case which is the Asturian region in the North of Spain. Let me give you a brief historical review of Asturian language first.

Asturian of Bable is what remains of the Latin spoken by the Roman conquerors. When Castile became the military and political power in the Iberian Peninsula the kingdom of Asturias was incorporated to the Castilian crown. Castilian became the language of power and prestige. Thus Asturian was forced to retreat and almost disappeared except in the northern part of the kingdom or what constitutes today the Asturian region.

Few people wrote literature in Asturian after the incorporation to the Castilian crown. Earlier texts relate to legal aspects of the life of the Asturian kingdom. It was in 1839 when for the first time an anthology of Asturian literature was compiled. There we find poems written from the early 17th century until the time when Anthology was published. After that people wrote poetry and short stories more often in Bable. But we have an oral literature in Asturian which is present on many occasions such as special holidays or spontaneous gatherings. In those moments people called «monologistas» recited long poems they memorized from other monoolgistas in the past keeping the tradition alive. Today there is a revival of Asturian literature. The language has been normalized and the political status of Asturian has changed somehow. What made possible the renewed interest in Asturian as a language is something I'm going to discuss later.

Now what I want to talk is about the relationship of Asturian with Castilian. Castilian is the official language at all levels. It is the language of the schools; it is the language of the media, the civil guards, the priests, and government. Books are all in Castilian with the exception of the little material that is being published at the present in Asturian. Asturias is linguistically speaking in an advanced process of castilianization. The difference in respect to Catalonia or the basque country is tremendous. Nevertheless Asturian is spoken by almost 80 % of the population according to recent estimates (see *España un estado plurinacional* p. 40).

The situation can be compared to a certain extent to Spain in Texas. Not all Chicanos in Texas who speak Spanish are fluent in the language. We have the ones who speak Spanish with a lot of English words incorporated or sometimes English expressions intercalated. On the other hand we have the ones who speak closer to

the standard Spanish of Mexico. The same situation applies to Asturian. We have people in the cities whose Asturian is full of Castilian words and expressions but nevertheless the syntax remains Asturian. This is something we become aware of once we go to other places where Castilian is spoken. We also use Asturian words thinking they Castilian until somebody calls it to our attention. On the other hand we have people in the coal mining valleys, rural areas, and fishing villages whose Asturian will hardly be understood by Castilians from Madrid.

We have the same problem of diglossia we find among Chicanos in Texas. Whenever a subject is considered important or serious such as politics or religion Chicanos tend to switch into English. The same thing happens to most Asturians. They feel uncomfortable in their language. I would say, they feel ridiculous and inferior when they attempt to express in their language something which is thought to belong to the domain of the official language, what is considered the superior language. This is the moment when we realize that half of ourselves lacks something in order to be fully human. And to be fully human of course means to be like the colonizer, to speak like the ones who have the power. On the whole I think we are speaking not only about a linguistic problem but rather we are touching a deeper problem which is the reason why language and politics are inseparable. In other words we are dealing with human exploitation and domination. Let me give you one example.

When we were in the school Castilian represented the language with a glorious history and a glorious literature. Although Castilian was considered the correct way of speaking, whenever we left school we started talking different. We said «ye» instead of «es» which is the third person of the verb «ser» (to be). We made the plural in -es instead of Castilian -as «casas» / «cases» (houses). Instead of saying «donde» (where) we said «u» with its pronouns «ulu», «ula», «ulo» (mas. fem. neut.) that did not exist in Castilian («dónde está ese, dónde está esa...»). And whenever we use the pronouns as indirect complements we always changed the position to the end of the verb. If in Castilian was «se los he dado» we said «di-y-los, which also showed that we did not use the perfect form of the verbs either. And when we tried to pronounce the Castilian sound «g» (velar-fricative /x/) we always switched to «š» (alveo-palatal fricative). And many other things.

But nevertheless we kept thinking that something was wrong with us because that way of speaking was strictly forbidden in the classroom. Besides the ones with authority always spoke Castilian: the priest, the civil guard, the doctor, the lawyer, etc. We learned in school that Asturian was a corrupt dialect of Castilian only spoken by ignorant people. And when we were laughed at or beaten for speaking Asturian then our feeling of inferiority increased. We were in permanent conflict with ourselves.

Arias opina que usar el bable es un derecho constitucional y que la mejor manera de significarlo es su uso en actos ofciales. El Sr. Fernández García opina que ésta como algunas otras Mociones no son tan importantes como para ser objeto de tratamiento en Pleno. El Sr. Alcalde informa que la Moción se incluyó en el Pleno para que no se pensara que se excluía por estar en bable. En definitiva, el Pleno acuerda aprobar la Moción, por unanimidad, requiriendo al Ayuntamiento de Mieres, propietario del terreno, de conformidad con el artículo 181 de la vigente Ley del Suelo, para que proceda a la limpieza y adecentamiento de la finca en cuestión.

Mentantu l'Asturies real fai les coses asina, nel Ayuntamiento d'Uviéu un conceyal d'Alianza Popular, D. Rodrigo Grossi, facía, nuna xunta del so grupu, la propuesta de que delles mociones pudieran facese'n bable. Collacios de so quixeron calmar a la opinión «bienpensante» d'Uviéu entainando pa dicir que nun yera asina talmente. Que nun se trataba namás que d'una broma. Curiosu sentíu del humor. ¡Son d'un simpático...!

Pero, díes más tarde, el Sr Grossi nuna entrevista na prensa dexaba bien a les clares la seriedá de la propuesta. Per otu llau nun escritu avaláu per nueve firmes aliancistes sofítábase que la so Executiva interpelare al Gobiernu del Principáu sol desarrollu del art. 4 del Estatutu al xulgar que nun s'avanzare nel so desendolcu per parte los socialistes.

L'Ayuntamiento de Xixón, paez, va poner al derechos los nomes de les parroquies del conceyu. De toes maneres nun paez nin valoratible nin xuiciosa la so propuesta (nun sabemos si firme) de pervalorar nos lletreros la espresión castellanizada sobre l'asturiana, única que toponímicamente tien xacú.

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SEDE OFICIAL

L'Academia de la Llingua Asturiana tien, dende hai unos díes, la so sede social na *c/ Santa Cruz, 6, 2ª Uviéu*. Trátase d'una oficina abierta al públicu de 12 a 14 hores tolos díes.

L'Academia fexo llegar al Sr. Conseyeru, per carta oficial, qu'aguarda, de toes maneres, que dempués d'un plazu tiempu curtiu, puea asitiase dinamente n'otru llugar, xulgando acetables les promeses del Sr. Conseyeru que'n tou momentu dixo que yera una sede *provisional* a la espera de les tresferencies que darréu se-y fairán a la so conseyería.

FELICITACIONES NAVIDIEGUES

El concursu de felicitaciones navidiegues entamáu pela Academia quedó ermu según pautu del xuráu formáu per D. Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, D. J. Antonio Castañón y D. Emilio Marcos Vallaure.

CONCURSOS

Nel mes de payares fallóse'l premiu «Xosefa Jovellanos» (nun sabemos a qué esi nome. Si se pon «Xosefa», ¿por qué «Jovellanos»?) entamáu pela Conseyería d'Educación y Cultura del Principáu.

Premióse una obra presentada per D. Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, en prosa, qu'aguardamos seya editada pela citada consejería.

El xuráu del premiu formábenlu Dña. Ana María Cano, D. Miguel Ramos Corrada y D. Carlos Rubiera Tuya.

Lluís Armando Muñiz, de La Felguera, foi'l ganador del concursu lliterariu entamáu pela Xunta de Fiestes de les Cebolles Rellenes del Entregu.

Esta Xunta que tolos años llama a concursu, premió esti añu a tres rapazos pelos sus trabayos n'asturianu; dos del Colexu Nacional El Parque de Bliemea, y otu a una participante del colexu les monxes del mesmu Entregu.

UNA BONA INICIATIVA DE LA TELEFÓNICA

Según una anuncia que güei podemos asoleyar la CTNE pidió una versión asturiana de los testos plurilingües qu'apaecen nes cabines espardíes per viles y ciudaes.

Esta bona iniciativa será bien acoyida n'Asturies axuntando asina la nuestra llingua a les otres.

XUNTA D'ESCRITORES ASTURIANOS

Nel mes de payares fíxose una *Xunta d'escritores asturianos*, agora ya llegalizada, y que tien ente los finxos la defensa de la llingua y de los sos intereses inteletoales.

Lóxicamente la xunta acueye a tolos escritores en llingua asturiana que s'enfoten nello.

LLETURES PA RAPACINOS

Con oxetu de llograr una bona lliteratura pa rapazos y rapacinos en llingua asturiana y al mesmu tiempu pa dir algamando'l material pedagóxicu afayaízu, l'Academia de la Llingua llama a dos concursos:

1. De *lletures* (cuentos, rellatos, poesía, métodos de llingua asturiana, etc.) pa rapacinos d'E.X.B.

2. De *lletures* (cuentos, rellatos,, poesía, métodos de llingua asturiana, etc.) pa rapazos de Bachiller.

Los finxos d'estos concursos son:

a) Puen participar llibremente y en número indefiníu toes aquelles presones interesaes.

b) La temática ye llibre y será valoratible'l tipu d'illustración que s'axunte al testu.

c) El xuráu fórmenlu tres presones escoyíes pela Academia de la Llingua.

d) Los orixinales empobinaránse al apartáu 574 d'Uviéu enantes del 15 de mayu de 1984.

e) El trabayu mandarásen nun sobre zarráu onde se llante: «*Lletures pa rapacinos* (E.X.B. / Bachiller)». Dengún niciu asoleyará la identidá del autor. Nun sobre pequeñu y zarráu dientru del anterior pondrásen nome y seños del concursador.

f) El fallu del xuráu darásen a conocer oficialmente pel boletín de l'Academia *Lletres Asturianes*.

g) L'Academia premiará los trabayos que'l xuráu aconsese cola so emprentación y regalú de 50 exemplares.

h) Los trabayos fairánse según les Normes Ortográfiques de l'Academia de la Llingua.

i) Los trabayos premiaos son propiedá de l'Academia. En dengún casu se tornarán los orixinales a los sos autores.

j) A les decisiones del xuráu nun podrá retrucase. Ésti entiende los presentes finxos.

CURSOS DE LINGUA ASTURIANA

La Universidá Popular Municipal de Xixón vien enxertando na so programación cursos de Llingua Asturiana p'adultos dende qu'entamó a funcionar va pa dos años.

Nel segundu cuatrimestre-83, que principió'l día 10 d'ochobre, hai programaos dos cursos d'asturiana con un total de 46 participantes matriculaos, (homes y mueres de toles edaes —con mayoría de moçedá—, y estudios).

Los cursos tán al cargu de Carlos Rubiera, —miembru de l'Academia de la Llingua Asturiana—; y nellos prácticase la fala y la escritura (según normes de l'Academia, claro ta), estúdiase la lliteratura clásicu y modernu y les cuestiones d'actualidá que cinquen a la normalización llingüística (diglosia, enseñancia, etc.).

Al mesmu tiempu, organícense charles-colóqui y debates abiertos con especialistas na llingua y lliteratura asturianas.

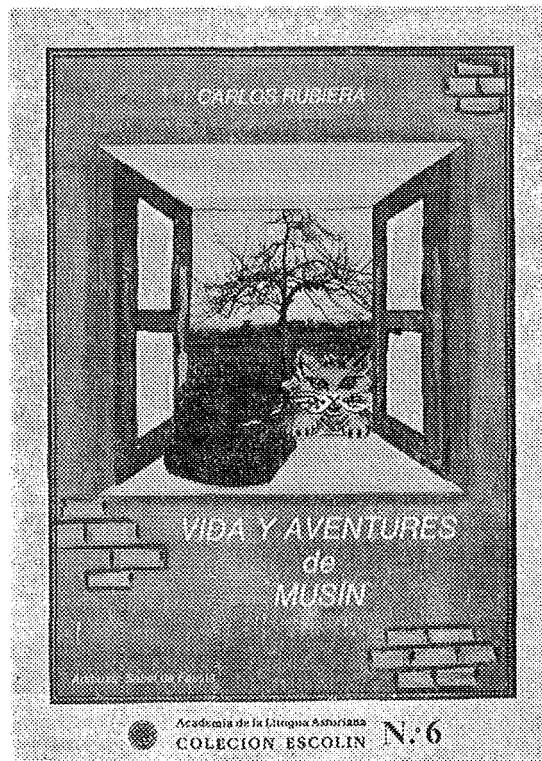
Per otu lláu, la Universidá Popular de Xixón enxerta na so programación otros cursos y talleres que cinquen dellos temes de cultura asturiana, comu son: «Historia de Asturias»; «Conocimiento de la naturaleza asturiana»; «Gaita» y «Baile Regional» (Sic.).

Llibrería Asturiana

VIDA Y AVENTURES DE MUSÍN

Dientru la *Colección Escolín* de l'Academia asolé-yase agora'l númberu 6, de títulu *Vida y aventuras de Musín*. El so autor ye Carlos Rubiera Tuya, miembru d'esta institución.

Trátase d'un llibru de lletura, afayaizu pa rapacinos, con una prosa fácil y con unos bonos dibuxos,



a tou color, tamién del autor y portada de Sabel de Fausta.

Per otu llau, comu se mos diz tamién, ésti ye'l llibru primeru de les aventuras d'esti gatu, *Musín*, al que seguirán darréu otros colo que, asina, llógrase un mayor interés na lletura.

ÑUBLU DE MAR Y DE DISTANCIA

Con esti títulu asoleya la Consejería d'Educación y Cultura del Principáu la novela curtia que se premiara nel III premiu de narraciones curties en llingua asturiana entamáu pela dicha consejería.