

## Linguistic habitus and language policy in the Iberian Peninsula

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### Abstract

The Iberian Peninsula has always been a place with a variety of overlapping cultures and languages which has created a complex and mixed cultural and linguistic habitus for the people. The language policies looking to change the linguistic realities within the Autonomous Communities of Galicia, Catalonia, and Euskadi since the transition to democracy at the end of the 1970s have produced some complex questions. Is one language preferable to another for the community? What should be the language of education? This discussion examines the cases of Catalonia, Galicia and Euskadi and determines why language policy might not be so significant in creating and cementing an individual's linguistic habitus. Analysing the Statutes of Autonomy and the language policies are done so as to determine the desired linguistic habitus. The actual linguistic situation is then analysed through looking at statistics and other evidence to give a picture of the success of the language policies. In turn, this leads to a truer picture of whether a linguistic habitus in the Autonomous Communities can be determined by agency (language policy) or by structure (prestige).

### Introduction

The Iberian Peninsula has always been a place with a variety of overlapping cultures and languages. This has created a complex and mixed habitus for the people, both culturally and linguistically. Within the Kingdom of Spain, the focus of this essay, the issue of language has played a very significant role in society and has begun to be addressed by the constitution and state structures. From the transition to democracy to the modern day, Spain has seen vast changes in society: economically, socially, politically and linguistically. From the suppression of all but Castilian, to the multi-levelled linguistic reality of today, the issue of people's linguistic habitus has not been far from discussion. The selection of language policies to change the linguistic realities within the different autonomous communities of Galicia, Catalonia, and Euskadi<sup>1</sup> has produced some complex questions which this essay will attempt to answer. Can the selection of these language policies actually influence the linguistic habitus of the people, or even change it? Do other factors play a more important role? Placing the problem within the agency-structure debate within political science (and of course sociolinguistics) the essay tries to establish if agency orientated factors such as language policies or structural factors such as a language's prestige, are able to determine a person's linguistic habitus. Firstly the essay will discuss and define the issue of linguistic habitus and determine why language policy is possibly not significant in the cases of Catalonia, Galicia and Euskadi.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Euskadi is preferred here rather than *Basque Country* as the English term can refer both to the cultural and political area inside and outside Spain, whereas Euskadi is specific to the Autonomous Community within the Kingdom of Spain

## **Linguistic habitus**

Bourdieu's definition of habitus in its most basic form is that 'the habitus is a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways (sic.)' (Bourdieu 1991, p.13). In his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu, through a critique of the objectivist and subjectivist divisions of sociology, outlines his theory of habitus as a middle way, reconciling the agency-structure debate. The debate centres on the ideas that either people's behaviours are determined through individual actions or alternatively through structural factors such as class, gender or even race. Habitus on the other hand, resolves these two opposing views as a theory on human behaviour. Gilbert sums this up nicely, '...the theory offers an explanation of human understanding and action which goes beyond individualism, but does not resort to abstract social forces' (2001, p. 48). This habitus is what people use to make the best capital gain; culturally, financially and socially. May goes further, explaining Bourdieu's theory that between two groups, cultural capital is accepted as being that of the dominant group, and therefore is considered socially valuable (2001, p.48). This is particularly important when discussing issues of culture, ethnicity and also language in a multi-plural society or State.

Thompson states that an individual's linguistic habitus is merely, 'a sub-set of the dispositions which comprise the habitus' and is 'acquired in the course of learning to speak in particular contexts' (1991, p.17). Vann (1999, p.74) explains it is the product of experience and inculcation. Within the structure-agency debate, the linguistic habitus of an individual can receive pressure from the structure (e.g. expectations to speak a certain way in certain contexts by society) or from the agent (one's individual choice and experiences such as learning manners in school or at home). An individual's disposition to speak a certain language in a certain context also gives them the ability to make the best capital gain. In order to achieve a better capital gain, can an individual's disposition be influenced or even changed? If so, is it more likely for change to take place due to the actions of agents (in the case of this essay, language policy, since it is created by individuals in government) or of the structure (which are social norms and pressures, such as the prestige of a certain language)? The situations of the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Euskadi and Galicia in the Kingdom of Spain are useful in answering these questions. The mix of languages creates a complicated linguistic habitus for individuals which each Community is trying to change. This essay will show that despite the opportunities a linguistic policy can create in an Autonomous Community, structural issues of prestige are a greater determining factor in creating a linguistic habitus.

Within the context of the essay, the structural factor 'prestige' (and in turn its ability to influence a person's linguistic disposition), refers to the positive or negative image a language has on its intended users, which for the case studies are the languages of Catalan, Galician and Euskara in the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Galicia and Euskadi respectively. Language policy, referring to the policies enacted by the relevant Autonomous Communities, on the other hand is agency based as it is created by individuals with a direct impact through education and other state institutions.

How does a linguistic habitus become appropriate or desired? Webb *et al* state:

The state partially orchestrates this collective habitus by creating the conditions under which certain things come to be viewed as natural and inevitable...and others

unthinkable...so it can establish what constitutes acceptable behaviour (Webb et al 2002, p.93).

The implication is that the state has power over what is acceptable or appropriate in the linguistic field, including the languages that can or should be used by society. Theoretically, it therefore means that an appropriate linguistic habitus can be invented by the state, through the selection of language policies. However in practice, is this possible? A legal declaration of what is acceptable or appropriate in the linguistic field must therefore be found. With the case of Spain, the Constitution and Autonomous Statutes would enable us to construct an appropriate linguistic habitus for the individual in Catalonia, Euskadi and Galicia.

### **Linguistic habitus in the Iberian Peninsula**

In the Spanish Constitution of 1978, Article 3.1 declares, 'El castellano es la lengua oficial del Estado. Todos los españoles tienen el deber de conocerla y el derecho a usarla.' Article 3.2 does not however rule out the use of other languages, 'Las demás lenguas españolas serán también oficiales en las respectivas Comunidades Autónomas'. This allows for individual (as well as societal) bilingualism in the Autonomous Communities according to their Statutes.

#### ***Catalonia***

In Catalonia, the Statute of Autonomy 2006 Article 6.1 states, 'el catalán es la lengua de uso normal y preferente de las Administraciones públicas' with Article 6.2 going further, 'Todas las personas tienen derecho a utilizar las dos lenguas oficiales y los ciudadanos de Cataluña el derecho y el deber de conocerlas.' This defines the individual's desired linguistic habitus in Catalonia as bilingual by stating that everyone has the right and importantly, the duty to know both official languages. By also stating that Catalan is the preferred language in public administration, it implies diglossia where Catalan is the higher language and Castilian is the lower, creating a form of hierarchical bias towards Catalan.

The Catalan Autonomous Community wishes to normalise and promote the use of Catalan, whilst respecting an individual's linguistic right to speak Castilian (Preamble I, Ref. 1998/02989) marking a desired change in the linguistic habitus of individuals. The Ley de Política Lingüística 1998 entails creating a bilingual society of bilingual individuals, since it accepts Article 3 of the Spanish Constitution and Article 6 of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy as a basis of policy. It stems also from the 1983 Law that Àngel Pradilla says, 'aimed to eradicate its [the Catalan language's] linguistic inferiority' (2001 p.64). This obviously would mark a shift in the linguistic habitus of the people of Catalonia. The 1998 Ley aimed to promote peoples' knowledge of Catalan by, 'avanzar en la generalización del conocimiento completo y el uso normal de la lengua catalana' (Preamble II, Ref. 1998/02989) again actively moving to change or influence peoples' language choice in certain contexts from Castilian to Catalan. The diglossic situation in Catalonia is also cemented by stating the Administration and Community institutions, 'deben utilizar de forma general el catalan' (Preamble IV, Ref. 1998/02989) making it the officially high, prestigious language compared to Castilian. These inferences are also supported by Àngel Pradilla who deduced that the normalisation of Catalan was to make it reach into all sections of society (2001, p.64) which would also include Castilian speaking immigrants. Therefore, a Catalan-dominated linguistic habitus is officially given more

social and symbolic capital than Castilian which in turn alienates people who don't have any connection with Catalan, notably immigrants. Vann also agrees, as,

...linguistic dispositions of this Catalan habitus have very often been manifest in social markets. In these markets, the popular Catalan position has generally been determined by practising the Catalan language, which has provided both real and symbolic profit. (Vann 1999 p.75)

In this respect, the 1998 Ley de Política Lingüística is merely a reflection of this social profit. Amongst one's peers, be they family, friends or work colleagues, any social capital to be made is through the use of Catalan when communicating instead of Castilian.

Catalan is spoken by 50.1% of the population habitually even though only 40.4% said it was their first language (Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya 2004, p. 28) which shows a preference of Catalan in everyday situations which in turn supports the 1998 Ley's wish to advance peoples' knowledge and use of the language. However, the Catalan linguistic habitus is not evenly distributed. There is a marked difference between the Barcelona metropolitan area, where more of the population is inclined to use Castilian habitually, and the rest of the Community where a Catalan-dominated linguistic habitus is more likely to be found (IEC 2004, p.29). Between friends the Catalan-dominated linguistic habitus prevails except in Barcelona where almost double the number of people use Castilian (IES 2004, p.40). With neighbours, in the workplace, in small and large shops, the doctor and to strangers, again the statistics generally show the same is true; a Catalan-lead linguistic habitus dominates in Catalonia except Barcelona (IES 2004, pp. 42-57). This does not mean that Catalan does not exist at all in Barcelona; it is only 6% less likely to be spoken in small shops whereas it is up to 30% less likely to be used amongst friends (IES 2004, pp.48-49, 40-41). In total numbers however, Catalan is spoken more than Castilian in Catalonia (IES 2004, p.28). It must be noted however, that migration from the rest of Spain and Castilian-speaking countries may have a direct affect on the language use in the Barcelona metropolitan area compared to the rest of Catalonia, being that immigrants are more likely to live in economically developed Barcelona than anywhere else in Catalonia and are more likely to speak and be spoken to in Castilian (Codo 2008, p. 189). Àngel Parilla sees the 1998 Ley as having a positive development on the linguistic habitus of Catalonia, 'Looking at the change from 1986 to 1991, we can see an improvement in each area [understanding, reading, speaking, writing]' (2001, p.73) although he does note that the 'imbalance is clear' (2001, p.74) between Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia. In education, the statistics show the use of Catalan-only or more-Catalan-than-Castilian in schools is apparent, although in Barcelona is it slightly more balanced (IES 2004, pp.44-45). This illustrates that the development of Catalan as the primary linguistic habitus of an individual in Barcelona is possible and that in this sense, Catalan's prestige, officialised in the 1998 Ley de Política Lingüística is having an effect. Indeed, Àngel Parilla states, 'that it is in the areas of education...that linguistic policy has given the most satisfactory results' (2001, p.64).

The language policy has given individuals the option and opportunity to adopt a Catalan-dominated linguistic habitus. It is however the prestige already associated with knowing Catalan within the community and people's individual choice that are making this a reality. Catalan is used in a variety of social contexts and is growing in use in place of Castilian. This change in balance has not yet occurred in cosmopolitan-Barcelona, although the numbers of people in Catalan-immersion (or dominated) education continues to rise (Angel Pradilla 2001, p.78). In this sense, the linguistic

habitus of individuals in Catalonia has begun to change, and will change further, having been made possible by the language policy, but made successful by the prestige and social capital of the language.

### ***Galicia***

In Galicia, Article 5.1 of the Statute of Autonomy 1981 says, ‘Los idiomas gallego y castellano son oficiales en Galicia y todos tienen el derecho de conocerlos y usarlos, and Article 5.3 ‘Los poderes públicos de Galicia garantizarán el uso normal y oficial de los dos idiomas...’. This places both languages legally on an equal footing. Society therefore is treated as a bilingual entity, although individuals within it may not be. Diglossia between Castilian and Galician is not legally expressed as part of the linguistic habitus of Galicia. This means neither language is legally more prestigious or preferable than the other, although an individual’s opinion may differ.

In Galicia, the main aim of the Ley de Normalización Lingüística 1983 (Ref. 1983/90056) is, ‘la puesta en marcha de...la plena recuperación de nuestra personalidad colectiva...’ and, ‘uno de los factores fundamentales de esa recuperación es la lengua’. The job of the language policy therefore is to enhance the use of Galician by individuals within the Autonomous Community. Article 1 confirms this by stating, ‘Todos los gallegos tienen el deber de conocerlo [el idioma gallego] y el derecho de usarlo’ which means that all Galicians would therefore have to be bilingual, because of Article 3.1 of the Spanish Constitution. The major problem with Galician as a medium of communication and in developing its use in an individual’s linguistic habitus is that it lacks the social prestige of Castilian, instead being seen historically as a backward, rural language (Wright 2004, p.215) and even to the present day, ‘it is not the language of advancement, prestige and “cool”’ (Beswick 2007 p.249). People see more social and economical capital vested in communicating in Castilian, a view also supported by Beswick (2007, p.222), ‘its [Galician’s] sociolinguistic relationship with Castilian has not been resolved’. The importance of prestige is touched on by Williams and defined as, ‘the relative value of one language over another in social advancement’ (1992, p.137) emphasising the significance of class on language use and prestige. With Galician, the idea that it is used by the poor and rural gives it less prestige than the urban and more ‘profitable’ Castilian language. The Xunta has attempted to end this negative issue of prestige by saying in Article 6.3 of the Ley, ‘los poderes públicos de Galicia promoverán el uso normal de la lengua gallega’ therefore trying to demonstrate its usage in more formal contexts.

Uniformly, across age, educative-level and gender boundaries, Galician is well understood by over 80% of the population and around 15% know it more or less (Instituto Galego de Estadística 2007). However, the younger and more educated someone is, the less likely they are going to speak it which shows the importance of prestige in linguistic habitus. If younger and more educated people refuse to speak the language, it is because it is of low benefit to them regardless of the educative incentives and policies in place to promote the knowledge of the language. Hermida comes to the conclusion that Galician use in schools ‘tends to degalicianise Galician-speakers’ because Castilian is the preferred language in schools (2001, p.127) which implies to students that the Galician language and culture do not have a high level of prestige. It is important as she notes Galician’s presence in schools is vital for the language to become a part of people’s linguistic habitus since it is a ‘means of presenting it to pupils as being perfectly valid for general communication’ (2001, p.127). She explains that the prestige of Galician is knocked due to its lack of use in

the mass media and in church where it is used in only 7.2% of sermons (2001, p.128). Beswick, in a more recent study also notes the Church's resistance to using Galician (2007, p.186) as well as the limited use of Galician in the media (2007, p.183). The influence of this on younger generations is significant and Beswick notes that only a well marketed image for Galician could, 'persuade the 14-year-old Galician girl, and many others like her, that it is okay, or even rather prestigious, to talk about pop idols in Galician' (2007, p.249). If the linguistic habitus of younger individuals were to incorporate both languages in the public and private sphere, then arguably the language policy can be deemed successful. The statistical information however, shows a strong divide between the use of Galician according to age, despite similar levels of knowledge and understanding (IGE 2007). Whereas an older individual's linguistic habitus inclines them to communicate in Galician in a variety of high and low social contexts (at work, with government administration, in banks, in shops, with friends and at the doctors), younger generations, women more than men, are inclined towards using Castilian in shops, banks, with friends and with government administration (IGE 2007). This shows a trend away from Galician as people's linguistic habitus, despite the language policy implementation. Even speaking to their parents at home, amongst the youngest especially, 55% prefer Castilian (IGE 2007). Only those over 30 years are more likely to speak Galician, and even then, it is just over half (54%) (IGE 2007). Not continuing a linguistic habitus over to new generations and the lack of (social or economical) capital attached to the language demonstrates the negative attitude people have towards Galician. Unfortunately for Galician, people under the age of 50 don't appear to view it as being so important or having much value, as around 53-55% of parents speak to their child (or mainly speak to them) in Castilian (IGE 2007). This downward trend will inevitably continue if people's attitude towards the language does not change.

Beswick does not believe that Galician is on the verge of death, instead she ascribes to the view that Galician, if actively and positively proclaimed by the Xunta, can make a comeback as part of a bilingual autonomous community and help to revitalise the Galician identity. If the language policy is able to do this, by making the use of Galician more widespread in contexts and sections of society that are highly regarded, then the situation, and the linguistic habitus of individuals will have changed towards a direction that they see more favourably. There have been some improvements and maybe the language, like Beswick believes, is not in eternal decline however much still needs to be done to change the linguistic habitus of individuals and society. As the language policy is not actively tackling this issue of prestige, it proves that an individual's linguistic habitus is heavily dependant upon the structural factor of prestige and use within society and that a language policy alone cannot change this dramatically.

### ***Euskadi***

In Euskadi, Article 6.1 of the Statue of Autonomy 1979 states, 'El euskera...tendrá, como el castellano, carácter de lengua oficial en Euskadi, y todos sus habitantes tienen el derecho a conocer y usar ambas lenguas.' This implies that the Basque linguistic habitus of society is bilingual, allowing for Castilian and Basque. Institutional diglossia (i.e. a preference of one language over another within institutional contexts), which would create a hierarchy between the two languages, is ruled out because in Article 6.2, 'Las instituciones comunes de la Comunidad Autónoma, teniendo en

cuenta la diversidad socio-lingüística del País Vasco, garantizarán el uso de ambas lenguas,...’ again confirming the political and institutional equality of both languages.

The *Ley Básica de Normalización del uso del Euskera* (1982) attempts to place the Basque language at the forefront of public life, therefore supporting a mainly Basque-speaking linguistic habitus for the individual. The Preamble recognises, ‘al euskera como el signo más visible y objetivo de identidad de nuestra comunidad...’ Article 2 also says, ‘la lengua propia del País Vasco es el Euskara’ although Article 3 also makes Castilian an official language. This creates a sense of prestige around Basque, and importantly links it to ‘national’ identity and encourages its use as the ‘natural’ language of an individual’s linguistic habitus.

However, the statistics show that 52% of the population of the Basque Autonomous Community are monolingual Castilian speakers with 72% saying they considered it their first language (Eustat 2008). Of the few individuals who consider themselves bilingual, only about 20% use Basque more often than Castilian (Eustat, 2008). This shows the linguistic habitus of many individuals to be Castilian (-dominated) which makes the aims of the language policy that much harder to enact. Cenoz and Perales already note the difficulty in keeping Basque as a first language pointing out, ‘the most important factor affecting the use of Basque is the number of Bascophones in the subject’s social networks’ (2001, p.95). This proves that the social capital of Basque is directly linked to its extent of diffusion throughout society.

Of those who speak Basque, the statistics show that they are up to 25% more likely to speak Basque in municipal offices than Castilian, but in more familiar settings such as with friends, workmates or local shops, this drops to only a 16%-5% preference (Eustat, 2008). It is not surprising that Castilian would be used more as over half the general population are monolingual non-Basque speakers. On the contrary, those who do know how to speak Basque are not monolingual as Cenoz and Perales note, they are, ‘bilingual in Basque and a romance language’ (2001, p.94) again influencing and affecting their linguistic habitus where Castilian in most non-formal situations has more social capital. In more formal situations, it is evident that Basque-speakers find using Basque gains them more social profit. At home, equal numbers of Basque speakers were inclined to speak either Basque or Castilian although there is a conscious recognition by 75% to speak to their children in Basque (Eustat 2008). This again has future implications for the linguistic habitus as native-Basque speakers are generally helping to maintain its use whilst neo-Basque speakers may increase. The language policy has helped as it has increased the supposed-value of knowing Basque to be virtually equal with that of Castilian particularly in public administration. The language policy also supports the use of Basque immersion schooling. Notably, over half the number of students throughout the Basque Autonomous Community now go to a Model D school (Basque immersion) and this trend appears to be increasing as more pupils experience Basque-only education instead of Castilian-only (Eustat 2007). This will have positive implications in the future for the success of a Basque-dominated linguistic habitus in individuals as long as it is sustained and improved upon. The more Basque becomes known by individuals, the more it will be diffused in non-formal situations (since more people will understand it) and therefore the more the linguistic habitus of individuals will change towards an equally Basque-language and Castilian-language orientation in all contexts, as the capital gained from knowing Basque in different social contexts will become greater. The attitude of people towards Basque is positive. Fishman states that in 1986, ‘48% of the population is of the opinion that Basque is very useful in finding

work; 66% is of the opinion that those who know Basque have better jobs than those who do not' (1991, p.173). Both percentages higher than the actual number of Basque speakers showing that Castilian speakers too have a positive attitude towards knowing Basque. This issue of attitude and in turn, prestige, is important for the success of the language policy in creating the appropriate linguistic habitus.

However, other factors play an important role. The media is predominantly Castilian-language (Cenoz and Perales 2001, p.98) and the political connotations of overtly expressing a Basque identity (particularly due to the violent nature of ETA) can be viewed negatively. In terms of Basque identity, the Basque language was not always prominent. In fact, in the early days of Basque nationalism, the exclusive concept of race was more important than language which differs from Catalan nationalism which took more inclusive civic overtones and consistently laid importance on the Catalan language (Conversi 1997, p.179). History, mixed with the current political situation and the effects of institutional factors such as the media, also influence the linguistic habitus of people in the Autonomous Community. As earlier stated, being a Basque speaker means being bilingual in Spanish too, so to move towards a monolingual Basque speaking situation is legally impossible due to Article 3 of the Spanish Constitution 1978. Also, the economic relevance in using Basque compared to Castilian is limited in a globalised world, which in turn limits the use of the language in certain contexts.

Looking at the linguistic habitus of individuals in the Basque Autonomous Community, it can be inferred that forward steps have been taken towards making it orientated towards the Basque-language. Although the number of Basque speakers is still minimal, it is increasing and education will play a major role in upgrading people's knowledge of the language. The increase in the knowledge of Basque by individuals and therefore its new presence in an individual's linguistic habitus is also confirmed by the level of prestige people place upon knowing it, by speaking to their children in Basque, or even sending them to Basque immersion schools. People's positive perceptions of the language created by the linguistic policy are evident in the education system where Basque immersion dominates. Therefore it can be deduced that the individual actions made possible by the language policy are the key in successfully beginning the change in the linguistic habitus of people in Euskadi and will be further determined by the structural issue of prestige and social capital that the language holds.

## **Conclusions**

When looking at the language policies of the Autonomous Communities of Spain, the issue of prestige plays a dominant role. In Catalonia and Galicia, where knowledge of the respective languages is high, the prestige of the Catalan language has meant that the linguistic habitus of individuals to accommodate and promote it has been largely successful. It is the default language of administration and education, giving it a significant edge over Castilian in terms of prestige. Galician on the other hand suffers from a lack of prestige which has meant the preferred linguistic habitus for individuals has not taken shape in the Galician Autonomous Community as quickly or successfully as wished. The use of the language is uncertain, neither being well used by the respected institutions of the Church and media, nor as the main medium of education. The linguistic policy has not yet fully reversed the negative effects of the lack of prestige and it is this issue that most needs to be tackled. In Euskadi, the prestige of the language and the social capital related to it has meant that Basque,



despite its minimal usage at the moment, will in the future become more used as part of an individual's linguistic habitus in the Community. The rise of Basque-only schooling and the successful intergenerational passing-on of the language are evidence of its success as a language with prestige. Looking at the Autonomous Communities of Spain, it can be inferred that the judicious selection of language policies more essentially shaping an appropriate linguistic habitus for the individual. However, what makes a language policy successful and influential is based on the prestige a language holds in its respective community.

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