

Reviews

Beswick, Jaine E. 2007. *Regional Nationalism in Spain. Language Use and Ethnic Identity in Galicia*. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

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At first sight, some people might be surprised by the fact that a book devoted to Galician language and ethnicity is written in English. However, on second thoughts, if we stop to think for a while, this fact and its implications are, as we shall see, among the best achievements of this study. To begin with, the language used allows it to reach a broader audience since it may attract the attention not only of scholars and researchers interested in Galician and its issues but also any other person interested in sociolinguistics, language diversity, linguistic rights, ideologies and ethnicity, etc. In addition to this, it is quite important to underline that the author is a non-Galician writer, which consequently means that the work will most probably be impartial, neutral, rather than subjective and impassioned.

The book analyses, describes and explains linguistic, sociolinguistic, ethnic, cultural and socio-political aspects of Galician. Moreover, not only contemporary issues are dealt with but also historical matters such as the relationship between Galician and Spanish, on the one hand, and Galician and Portuguese, on the other. An interesting analysis of Galician revitalisation is offered, which is especially relevant if the pressure exerted by the Spanish language is considered. Also, the presence of two co-official languages, their use and role, and the speakers' perceptions are analysed. Despite the title of the book, which apparently excludes Portuguese, it deals quite extensively with the relation and similarities between Galician and this language, which makes sense for historical reasons but also due to the formal similarities that still exist between the two languages and related issues, such as self-identification practices, which are focused on on several occasions throughout the book.

The book is divided into three main parts, preceded by the foreword and an introduction and followed by some detailed notes on the chapters, seven appendices, a short glossary of linguistic (mainly phonetic) terms and the references.

Clive Willis, in the Foreword, introduces some of the main topics of the book: 1) the pressure exerted by the Spanish and Portuguese on Galician and the affinity of the latter with the former two; 2) the now fortunately completely disregarded and old-fashioned view that Galician is a dialect of Spanish; 3) the reluctance of the population in the cities to speak Galician.

In the Introduction the author presents the framework of the book as well as some key concepts and anticipates some issues such as the users' attitudes towards Galician, diachronic and synchronic interaction, similarities and differences between Galician and both Portuguese and Spanish, the use of this language at different life stages, the question of whether a shift in language use is taking place, the relationship between nation and ethnicity, social and political linguistic policies and planning strategies, the question of whether Galician is an autonomous language, different from Portuguese, etc. The aims of this work as well as the four hypotheses that Beswick poses are also stated at this point.

Part I, "Politics and Privilege: Linguistic Identity and the Role of Standardisation in Galician," comprehends chapters one to three and is devoted to three basic notions in this work: language, culture and identity. Furthermore, it describes the use and status of Galician, and its origins from the time when it was Galician-Portuguese up to the present day. Chapter one outlines some of the main issues and concepts that are key for the rest of the book, such as nationalism and regionalism, ethnicity and multiple identities, the concept of multilingual community, linguistic and ethnic rights, political and social attitudes towards the language, revitalisation and revival, etc. Chapter two is one of the essential chapters, for it allows the audience to understand the contemporary state of Galician. It offers a political and historical approach to Galician from its origins and delves into issues such as the repression suffered by this language at different stages or periods in its "development". Probably its most relevant point is the consideration or appreciation of the changing status of Galician as a marker of ethnic identity from its former condition as Galician-Portuguese and later as a "dialect" of Spanish (resulting from territory divisions). Chapter three is linked to chapter two, both chronologically and thematically, as it focuses upon the contemporary Galician situation, which is mainly the consequence of the facts and situations explained in chapter two. Thus, the historical attempts to revitalise political, social and linguistic consciousness concerning the Galician language as well as democratic efforts to do so led to a need for an official Galician orthographic standard, that is, for the creation of a norm.

Part II, entitled "Forms and Features: Galician Linguistic Conventions and Characteristics", consists of chapters four to six and concentrates on matters such as diachronic development, similarities and differences between Galician and Portuguese, on the one hand, and Galician and Spanish, on the other; as well as idiosyncratic features of Galician, among others. Chapter four focuses on some basic concepts and issues for the discussion that follows. Thus, for example, the explanation of allophonic variation is of great importance for phenomena such as the *gheada*, which is explained in chapter six, or also that of code-switching. This concept, with all its linguistic and social implications, is taken up again in chapter nine. For these reasons, this chapter may be regarded as especially useful for readers who may be unfamiliar with linguistic concepts. Chapter five resumes some of the topics considered in chapters two and three, such as the diachronic evolution of Galician and the normativization or establishment of some *Normas Ortográficas*. But the main focus of this chapter is on the similarities

between Galician and Portuguese and Galician and Castilian Spanish. Quite interestingly, the author concludes that there is a “transitional dialect” between Southern Galician and Northern Portuguese. Apart from that, she also examines the creation of an oral standard. Chapter six analyses (socio)linguistic variation by studying two prototypical phonetic or allophonic characteristics of Galician, namely, the *gheada* and the velar nasal, the former being (unfortunately) a common topic for pejorative jokes both outside and inside Galicia. According to Beswick, these two features may be considered as a mark of identity and also a basic concept for the arguments in favour of ethnicity in Galicia, as claimed in this book.

Part III is devoted to “Prestige and Practice: Language and Identity in Galicia” and comprehends chapters seven to nine. As explained in the following lines, in this part Beswick goes back to some topics commented on in the previous parts in order to emphasize revitalisation practices, bilingualism and diglossia in Galicia, etc. Thus, chapter seven is connected with parts two and three since it deals with questions such as sociolinguistic variation and normalisation in Galician. It also focuses on political, linguistic and educational issues which may be crucial for the survival of Galician. Moreover, the author examines the role of the media in language diffusion and people’s attitudes towards it. Chapter eight analyses language use and selection and the domain of usage of Galician and Spanish by means of an empirical study carried out in Santiago de Compostela. For this purpose, the author interviews different age-group individuals, trying to determine whether language change (which seems to be in progress) and attitude towards the language are related to age. Chapter nine, the last one, summarizes the main arguments and discussions of the eight preceding chapters. Beswick concludes by arguing that the four hypotheses put forward at the beginning of the book have been corroborated. Though the stated resistance to eradicate the sense of Spanish identity is quite significant, the most original claim and/or conclusion of this work is, in our opinion, that there is an intrinsic character of Galician ethnic identity.

After this brief summary of the main topics and achievements of the book, the main impression one may have is that it is quite a complex work, due to its contents. However, after a careful reading of the study, the impression is different: it is a very readable tool in which all chapters are scrupulously related to each other as well as conveniently ordered. In general it may be said that the discussions can be easily followed thanks to, for example, the fact that the language used is not highly specialised. Thus, the book becomes one of the best sources for scholars but also for any person who may be interested in either the situation of Galician, even if unfamiliar with (socio)linguistics, or in sociolinguistics and/or minority languages in general. For specialised audiences it seems addressed in particular to those interested in topics such as minority languages, language identity, controversial issues concerning Galician, users’ attitudes, normativisation and the similarities of Galician with Portuguese and Spanish, for example. Mention should be made of the treatment of Galician from its early stages until now, that is, the treatment of Galician diachronically and synchronically. The way in which controversial issues such as political and institutional

matters are dealt with is also remarkable and illuminating. An in-depth study of all the already mentioned topics is carried out both theoretically and empirically.

In addition to the underlined advantages of the book as regards its readability and interest, structurally the work is also very attractive. Moreover, tables and figures throughout the book contribute to an appealing explanation and illustration of the different topics.

Perhaps one of the shortcomings of this book, if there is one, is that all the themes dealt with are commonplace for any educated person living in or closely linked to? Galicia. However, the book is a very good source of information for any person who is not familiar with the situation of Galician. Furthermore, a longitudinal study would contribute to corroborating some of the conclusions, instead of a chronological study of how people behave at different stages of their lives.

However, for all the above mentioned reasons, as well as for the onlooker approach adopted, the book is highly recommendable for any person interested in the Galician language.