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INTRODUCTION

Minority Languages and the Future of Europe

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Introduction: Minority Languages and the Future of Europe

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Abstract: The journal *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto* (CED) / *Deusto Journal of European Studies* has published this special issue “Minority Languages and the Future of Europe” on the occasion of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Chair of Galician Studies at the University of Deusto in the current academic year 2021-2022. The issue includes eight articles by leading specialists who reflect on the current situation of the so-called minority languages in Europe and, in particular, on the present and future of Basque, Catalan and especially Galician, as closer cases in this context. In line with its interdisciplinary approach, the editors accepted proposals from different fields and perspectives, taking into account the social, legal or political dimensions, as well as the linguistic and cultural ones. The various analyses provided pay particular attention to issues such as language legislation, standardization, the language use of young people in particular, or the importance of digitization, among others.

Keywords: Minority languages, linguistic rights, linguistic normalization, Catalan, Galician and Basque, digital languages.

The journal *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto* (CED)/*Deusto Journal of European Studies* has launched the call for a special issue entitled “Minority Languages and the Future of Europe” on the occasion of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Chair of Galician Studies at the University of Deusto in the current academic year 2021-2022. There were two main reasons for this proposal.

First, the Conference on the Future of Europe began in Strasbourg in May 2021, an initiative with which the EU aimed to generate a forum for debate on Europe’s challenges and priorities and lay the foundations for institutional reform in the coming years, its capabilities, its principles and its decision-making procedures. Given the conclusions of the Conference published in May 2022, it does not seem that the issue of language(s) is currently a priority in the Community debate, despite the fact that the linguis-

tic diversity, along with the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, was one of the topics of interest to be addressed during the event. The final report of the Conference refers to multilingualism several times, but always in connection to the 24 official languages of the EU. In fact, among the proposals of the Plenary Session of the Conference contained in the report presented to the Presidents of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, only proposal 48 “Culture and Exchange” refers to the issue of regional and minority languages. It points out that these languages require special protection, in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and calls on the EU to consider setting up an institution to promote linguistic diversity at European level.

Second, November 2022 will also mark the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Member States of the Council of Europe —although in the case of Spain, it would not enter into force until its ratification in 2001— an anniversary that, in our opinion, should not go unnoticed. On the contrary, the anniversary invites taking stock of the use of this regulatory instrument over its three decades of life and its various applications today. It is also a good opportunity to evaluate, from an academic point of view, its compliance (and non-compliance) and future prospects in this regard, in particular in the Spanish State and in relation to the minority languages present in this territory.

In accordance with the above, we believe that this is a propitious opportunity for reflection, necessarily interdisciplinary, on the situation of minority languages and cultures in the future of the European Union and, in particular, on the role of Basque, Catalan and especially Galician, as closer cases, in this context. Some of the thematic axes suggested in the call included linguistic diversity and the future of Europe, the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages thirty years later, the situation and protection of minority cultures in the EU, future perspectives on the Galician, Basque and Catalan languages, the projection of minority literatures at EU level, linguistic and cultural policies in relation to European minorities, or European visions in minority cultures. Eight contributions from leading national and international specialists from various fields of academic research were accepted.

Thus, this special issue 04/2022 of *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto/Deusto Journal of European Studies*, published with the support of the General Secretariat for Language Policy of the Galician Government, through its three-decade agreement with the University of Deusto, includes eight articles written in Galician, Spanish and English. They reflect on the cur-

rent situation of the so-called minority languages in Europe, and, in particular, on the present and future — in relation to youth or digitization, for example— of Basque, Catalan and especially Galician, as closer cases in this context. In line with the interdisciplinary approach of the journal, the editors accepted proposals from different perspectives: from the social, legal or political dimensions to the linguistic and cultural ones, offering both comparative, theoretical and global analyses, as well as case studies.

Eduardo J. Ruiz Vieitez, Professor at the University of Deusto, opens this issue with an article in which he offers a valuable overview of the state of minority languages in Europe, as well as an analysis from a normative point of view. To this end, the author addresses the issue of linguistic diversity on the European continent and proposes a taxonomy of minority languages belonging to the EU. The author presents an x-ray of the treatment of these languages in the existing regulations in this territory, starting with international law and the different legal norms in the community, paying special attention to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and its implementation. Next, the paper looks at state regulation from the perspective of constitutional law, comparing the treatment given to non-official languages in the different European constitutions; it also takes into account those normative texts at the sub-state or regional level, fundamental in cases such as that of the Spanish State. The conclusions drawn reveal unfavorable trends for the future of minority languages in Europe, their situation being affected negatively not only by the official languages, but also by some immigrant languages. Finally, the author points out some outstanding challenges, such as the updating and effective application of the ECRML, the incorporation of these minority languages into ICT or the reflection on the so-called Linguistic Justice.

Roberto Samartim, Permanent Lecturer in the Department of Letters of the University of A Coruña (UDC), provides an analysis of subalternity and linguistic dispossession in the case of the Galician language, also paying special attention to the legal and political dimension. After identifying the normative and ideological elements on which subalternity rests in each of the three areas of language planning, the author summarizes the different positions and programmatic proposals of the main groups participating in the political and linguistic debate of the autonomous Galicia. The paper also reviews the legal and political framework and summarizes the coding process of Galician in contemporary times. The study confirms that the socialization of linguistic and ideological materials subordinate to Spanish provokes a break with the idea of a central language in the tradition of pre-autonomous Galicianism and minimizes the impact of linguistic interference from Spanish in Galician. The author concludes that the idea of language and the legal and political framework enshrine subalternity and

explain the progress of the process of linguistic and cultural interference and substitution that lead to the linguistic dispossession threatening the Galician community today.

Amelia Benito del Valle Eskauriaza, Professor at the University of the Basque Country/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV / EHU), analyzes the linguistic trends of Basque youth, focusing on the field of higher education. The author provides a very complete state of the arts that voices the sociolinguistic concern regarding linguistic normalization in the context of the Basque Country. In particular, using existing bibliography, the study reflects on the situations of linguistic conflict and diglossia in the case of the two languages coexisting in Basque society. The article dwells on the effects of the Basque Language Normalization Plans to focus, then, on communicative competence in this language and on the level of linguistic practice among the youth in the Basque Country. The study is based on data extracted from the latest sociolinguistic survey conducted by the Basque Government. To gain deeper insights, the author collects data on Basque language practice in the university environment and provides some considerations in this regard focusing on the Faculty of Education of Bilbao. The study is framed within the Spanish and European context, and it ends with some reflections on social, political and institutional attitudes towards languages in contact and linguistic diversity in general, and on minority and minoritized languages in particular.

Carsten Sinner, Professor of Linguistics and Translatology of Ibero-Romance Languages at the University of Leipzig, also contextualizes his paper in the field of university or higher education. His aim is to address the background of the study of Galician in Germany and the path followed since 2010 to include the Galician language in the academic curriculum of the University of Leipzig and thus to force the recognition of the language and, at the same time, of the linguistic plurality of Spain in Germany. The author analyzes, on the one hand, the programming and development of Galician studies in the framework of the prioritization and approach of European minority languages at the University of Leipzig and, on the other, the consequences of the introduction of the Galician language in German academia in other institutional settings. Finally, the author opens a debate on how these advances affect the normalization and promotion of the Galician language at the international level. The paper also suggests initiatives to increase the projection of Galician as a foreign language, such as those launched for Basque and Catalan by institutions such as the Etxepare Institute and the Ramon Llull Institute, respectively.

Alba Milà-Garcia, Adjunct Lecturer at Pompeu Fabra University, and **Anna Tudela-Isanta**, Lecturer at the Open University, introduce a new dimension into the debate on linguistic diversity in Europe: the importance of

minority language use in the digital sphere for normalization achievement. Specifically, the article focuses on the use of Catalan in social media, offering a diagnosis of the digital vitality of the language and a case study based on the analysis of the reference tag for sharing Catalan language content on TikTok. With the help of the bibliography existing in this recent field of study, and using a qualitative and quantitative methodology using semi-directed interviews with the creators of the hashtag #estiktokat, the authors reconstruct the process of creating it. In addition, they suggest a taxonomy based on a corpus of 216 videos extracted from the aforementioned social network to then analyze their thematic singularities. The experience of #estiktokat exemplifies the possibilities that the digital world offers, especially to young people, for communication and interaction both in Catalan and in other minority languages at national and European level.

Itziar Gonzalez-Dios, Adjunct Lecturer, and **Begoña Altuna**, Postdoctoral Researcher belonging to the HiTZ center (Ixa group) of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), also deal with the digital field to address its importance for the survival of languages, focusing their study on natural language processing and language technologies for Basque. Thus, the authors focus on the natural language processing resources and linguistic technology that have been developed for the Basque language, their impact on the process of converting Basque into a “digital language” and the applications and challenges that have appeared in the multilingual communication scenarios. They also present some of the best-known products, the NLP technologies behind them and the basic tools and resources that support them, with the aim of providing a guide or model for other European minority languages that are beginning their journey towards digitization.

Lucia Cernadas, Lecturer in Galician at Oxford University, provides an analysis of the information extracted from the Galician Book Project database (Samartim & Cernadas 2020), which allows her to confirm some of the hypotheses formulated by previous research on translation into Galician, as well as to formulate some new hypotheses. The article addresses the translations published between 2005 and 2012 by 25 publishers incorporated into the Galician publishing field since the year 2003, with the aim of analyzing volumes and dates of publication, literary genre and language of origin. It also addresses the relationship between these publications and the discourse of cultural normalization. The empirical information provided, together with the author’s critical comments, contributes to a greater understanding of the cultural model of a European minority language in one of its fundamental manifestations, literary translation. Both the analysis and the methodology used throughout it can serve as a future model for the case of other linguistic or cultural contexts.

María Pilar García Negro, Honorary Professor at the University of A Coruña, offers an article, which comes as an epilogue to this special issue on minority languages and the future of Europe. Her article is an interesting reflection on the political and media use of sociolinguistic concepts or expressions in the Spanish public sphere. Thus, the author relies on numerous bibliographic references and various sources to review notions, such as common language, language conflict, immersion, multilingualism or linguistic normalization applied to the case of minority languages that coexist with Spanish, the official language, at the State level (and, by extension, at the European level). Through this process, she sheds light upon the political dimension of the minority languages and their relationship to the problematic (pluri) national question. The arguments unfolded in the article point to the occasional legal and political manipulation of these concepts in the current discourses in Spain. Finally, the author relates these discourses to the normative dimension that affects Galician, Catalan and Basque, as well as their normalization, at the legal and social level, in which the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages occupies a key place.

About the authors

M.^a Luz Suárez Castiñeira is Professor at the University of Deusto. After graduating in English and German Philology from the Free University of Brussels, she received her PhD in Comparative European Literature at the University of the Basque Country (1992). Since then she has taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the University of Deusto in Modern Languages, Modern Languages and Management, and International Relations as well as in the Erasmus Mundus Master Programme in Euroculture. She has done her research in the field of comparative literature, first, and later, since 2003, in the field of European Integration, focusing her study on its cultural dimension. She has also participated in several European projects around inter- and transcultural dialogue, the construction of European identity and the dimension of multilingualism and its relationship with the concept of European citizenship. Among other responsibilities, she has been vicedean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, director of the Institute of European Studies and director of the Department of International Relations and Humanities. Currently, she is actively involved in the editing process of the Journal *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto*, of which she is deputy editor-in-chief. She has been the director of the Chair of Galician Studies since it was created at the University of Deusto.

Diego Rivadulla Costa is a Postdoctoral Researcher (Xunta de Galicia competitive postdoctoral grant) in the Galician Linguistic and Literary Research Group (ILLA) of the University of A Coruña. A Doctor in Literary Studies with an International Mention and Extraordinary Award from the same university, he was previously hired as a pre-doctoral student in the Department of Letters of the same university and as a lecturer in Galician language and literature at the University of Deusto, where he was in charge of the activities of the Chair of Galician studies since 2020. He was a visiting researcher at the EHEHI Casa de Velázquez (École des hautes études hispaniques et ibériques) in Madrid, at Aarhus University (Denmark) and at the University of Lisbon. His fields of research are literary and cultural studies, with special attention to contemporary Galician literature, cultural memory studies and Iberian studies. He is the author of numerous peer-reviewed publications in specialized journals and books, most of them on the subject of historical memory and the representation of the civil war and the Franco regime in Galician narrative and theater. He currently participates in the funded projects *Recuperación do patrimonio teatral da Galiza 4 (1936-1973)*. *Emigración, exilio e resistencia interior* (Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación, PID2020-115649RB-I00) of the Universidade da Coruña and *Memory Novels LAB: Laboratorio Digital de Novelas sobre Memoria Histórica Española* (Generalitat Valenciana, GV/2021/183) of the Universitat de València.