

## **THE ARAGONESE LANGUAGE IN FORMAL EDUCATION. SOME RESULTS OF THE FIRST RESEARCH FOCUSED ON ITS SITUATION AND PROSPECTS**

Арагонски је један од најугроженијих језика у Европи. Упркос извештајима од стране више стручњака и институција, као што су УНЕСКО или Савет Европе, арагонска Влада је до сада покренула веома мали број иницијатива у вези са заштитом овог језика. Једна од главних области у којима језичке политике морају бити имплементирани у корист мањина и угрожених језика јесте образовање. Арагонски се учи у неким школама на територији Алто Арагон од 1997. године, али до сада нису спроведена никаква истраживања у вези са језичким компетенцијама ученика, као ни истраживања у вези са ситуацијом у којој се овај језик налази у области образовања. Са циљем да се оствари напредак, како у упознавању са социолингвистичком ситуацијом арагонског језика у школама, тако и у резултатима учења, осмислили смо истраживачки пројекат фокусиран на лингвистичке ставове заједница које се баве едукацијом, као и на језичке компетенције ученика арагонског језика.

**Кључне речи:** арагонски језик, угрожени језик, језички ставови.

### **1. Introduction**

#### *1.1. Main features of Aragonese language*

Aragonese is a *unique minority language* spoken in Aragon, a territory located in the North-Eastern part of Spain. These days Aragonese is only spoken as a traditional tongue in some areas located in the province of Huesca but there are also some new speakers in towns like Huesca and Zaragoza, the capital of Aragon. At present, Aragonese is at risk of disappearing in a short period of time and, to avoid this, urgent measures need to be taken. Some experts (López, 2014; Moreno Cabrera, 2012; Nagore, 2002) and institutions like UNESCO (Moseley, 2010) or the Council of Europe (2010) have underlined this fact over the last few decades.

We can say that, to date, linguistic rights for Aragonese have only partially been obtained. The Aragonese language was formally recognized as a regional language of Aragon by the authorities in 1996 but this fact had little effect, such as modest subsidies for activist associations and in the cultural area. In 2001 work began on a framework for language policy in which education seemed to be one of the main areas. It was an ambitious proposal of laws that guaranteed co-official status for Aragonese, but it failed to achieve approval and the first law for Aragonese language protection and promotion was only approved in 2009 (López & Soro, 2010). Although it was an important step, the law approved in 2009 wasn't enough because it didn't recognize Aragonese as a co-official language either in Aragon, or in Spain. Moreover, with the complete change of Aragonese government in 2011, turning ideologically from left to right, that law was removed and replaced by another one where Aragonese and Catalan spoken in Aragon were re-named as "Aragonese" all together. This non scientific name was ideologically introduced in order to avoid the status of Catalan as a language spoken in Aragon. So, nowadays Aragonese and Catalan spoken in Aragon are named under the same qualifier: "Aragonese" with no scientific basis. This last law, that doesn't guarantee the co-official status of Aragonese minority languages, has been deeply criticized by experts (López, 2015; University of Zaragoza, 2013) and it has also been the object of satire in different mass media. This is because LAPAO, an abbreviation that means "Lengua Aragonesa Propia del Área Oriental" / "Aragonese Language Spoken in Eastern Aragon", is the name of a language spoken in China, Birmania and Tibet. We can deduce from this example how the situation of language policy in Aragon is: there's a complete lack of actions related with the actual protection and promotion of minority languages. It is also clear the denial of Catalan as an Aragonese regional language in the last report of compliance of the Charter requirements made by the Spanish government (Secretaría de Administraciones Públicas, 2014). In the index of the report made in February 2014 there are two different sections:

- Section II), for minority languages that are co-official in their territories, and,
- Section III), for minority languages that aren't co-official in their territories.

In all cases we can easily perceive what language is spoken in each territory: *Catalan* in Cataluña, *Catalan* also in the Balears Islands, *Gallego* in Galicia, *Valenciano* in the Valencian Community, *Euskera* in the Basque Country and also in Navarra, *Occitano* in Cataluña (Arán Valley), *Asturiano* in Asturias, *Tamazight* in Melilla and *Dariya* in Ceuta. But in the case of Aragon we see an ambiguous and non-scientific denomination: “*languages or linguistic modalities of Aragon*”.

Summarizing, we can say that up to now the Aragonese government attitude has been that Aragonese language is not a right but a folkloric object of Aragonese culture. In accordance with this view, we find the meagre support that authorities have given to Aragonese speakers, and also its anecdotic presence in some Primary Schools as an optional subject. But since 2013 the situation is even worse because the Aragonese Government has even denied the name of the two Aragonese regional languages.

In addition it's very important to underline that the Aragonese government has always been in breach of Spanish law because the Spanish Constitution of 1978 says literally that:

“Art. 3.2.: Las demás lenguas españolas serán también oficiales en las respectivas Comunidades Autónomas de acuerdo con sus estatutos” / “*The other Spanish languages will be also official in their Autonomous Communities through each autonomous law*”.

### 1.2. *Aragonese language:*

*from its birth from Latin until the present times*

Aragonese seems to have developed from Latin around the VIIIth century and it was completely consolidated as a language in IXth century. Aragonese is the first Romance language for which we have written evidence in the current Spanish territory, through the *Glosas Emilianenses / Emilianense Glossess*, written around 976 (Wolf, 1997). These are marginalia to religious texts in Latin written to help scribes understand some words not used in the Latin of their oral speech. With the Christian Reconquest from the Moors, Aragonese was expanded from the Pyrenean Mountains to the South of the Iberian mainland territory. Between 1200 and 1400 Aragonese was the most common language for administrative and

cultural purposes, although we must mention that scribes also wrote in other languages, mainly Latin. Like other languages of the Spanish State, Aragonese underwent a great shift after the XVth century because of the dominance of the Castilian kings in almost all the territory and the strong policy and influence developed by Catholic kings. Civil servants had to use Castilian (the Spanish original Romance) and this language also became the language of culture. So, Aragonese went from being the first Romance language into which classical Greek philosophers such as Tucídides and Plutarco were translated, to being a language spoken only by the lowest social classes. Aragonese started its decline because of this low prestige followed by intergenerational transmission breakdown, and it also started to be replaced by Castilian / Spanish (Conte *et al*, 1977).

Since then and up to the present day, Aragonese has become a diglossic language, as we can deduce from the Aragonese literature of XVIIIth and XIXth centuries, where Aragonese was the language spoken by the lowest social classes, principally farmers, servants and other illiterate people. In some literature works we can even find some characters that apologize for speaking in Aragonese (López, 2014b). Since the last decades of XIXth century, but principally during the first decades of XXth century, Aragonese language suffered the fastest step back in its history (Conte *et al*, 1977). The improvement of means of transportation, the arrival of tourism, the great migrations from countryside to industrialized towns, the generalization of compulsory education using the State language (Spanish) and also the arrival of mass media in the most isolated rural territories, speeded up the linguistic replacement of Aragonese by Spanish. As a consequence, most of Huesca province was totally *castilianized* during the first half of the twentieth century (Nagore, 2002). Aragonese, like many other minority languages, failed to take a significant role in modern and formal sectors of society, and nowadays we can say that there are only three northern and separated territories where there is a degree of social bilingualism (Aragonese - Spanish): the Echo Valley, the Chistau Valley and Ribagorza. The traditional linguistic community is dispersed along the territory named *Alto Aragón*, and we can also find new speaker communities in big towns such as Jaca, Sabiñánigo, Monzón, Huesca or Zaragoza. But, in general terms, one can easily perceive that there is not a continuum of the language

in the territory and so the Aragonese linguistic community is fragmented (Postlep, 2012). It's also important to point out that there's a clear diglossic division of functions between Aragonese and Spanish, especially among the older and traditional speakers. Accordingly, even in territories where there's a level of social bilingualism, Spanish is the dominant language for the "higher functions" of social life, not only for education but also for the church, the economy and the public administration.

We haven't any official census of Aragonese speakers, but there is some data. The first comes from the 1981 general census of inhabitants made by the National Statistics Institute of Spain. The Aragonese questionnaire included a question related to the language spoken at home by Aragonese people. The study estimated that in 1981 11,824 people spoke Aragonese at home, and there were 17,653 *passive bilinguals* too (Gimeno & Nagore, 1989). We also have data from 2001, when the Euskobarómetro research group developed a sociolinguistic survey in Huesca province. This study underlined that 24,173 people in Huesca province were *active bilinguals* (Nagore, 2002). The latest data we have are from 2011, from the general inhabitants' census. The questionnaire added, as in 1981 census, a question related to the language spoken at home. Without detailed analysis, the data showed an increase in Aragonese as the language spoken at home (54,481 speakers) and maybe the most important information is that most of the speakers are located in Zaragoza (43.8%), so it seems to be an increasing community of new speakers. Nevertheless, it's very important to take these data cautiously because no deep and detailed study of it has yet been made (Observatorio de l'aragonés, 2015).

Anyway, one can perceive a general knowledge of what Aragonese language is in all the Huesca province people and almost over the whole of the Aragonese territory. There are also a great number of Aragonese words and expressions in the Spanish spoken in Aragon and this can be seen sometimes in the linguistic landscape, especially in the names of shops, bars and restaurants. Nevertheless, in the official linguistic landscape Aragonese has only a small presence, again in some northern territories.

Focusing on the situation of Aragonese at school we can find a lot of testimonies that prove the repression suffered by children who spoke Aragonese at school (Guillén y Romanos, 2010; Lozano, 2010; Nagore,

1997; Pérez, 2007; Satué, 2001; Tomás, 1999). As also occurred with other Spanish regional and minority languages (Benet, 1978; Iza, 2011), during Franco's dictatorship speaking Aragonese wasn't allowed in any aspect of daily life including at school, but, as distinct from other languages, like Catalan, Aragonese was banned at school even before of the dictatorship period because of its low social status (Tomás, 1999; Latas, 2009). Speaking in Aragonese was understood as speaking in an incorrect and illiterate way. Even today we can still find this perception in a part of Aragonese society and some traditional speakers still feel ashamed of speaking in their mother tongue. There is no doubt that Aragonese has suffered a situation of *linguistic genocide* (Sknutabb-Kangas, 2001) during the last century, mainly due to a lack of education *in* the mother tongue for those who had, and have, Aragonese as their first language-L1.

Finally, it's important to point out again that the geographical characteristics of Northern Aragonese territory, the decreasing use of the language, the nonexistent institutional protection and promotion, and the lack of a language normative and a standard language, have led to the existence of various Aragonese dialects with different levels of vitality. However, understanding between communities is still possible nowadays. But although speakers from the Echo Valley (the most Western valley) and the Benasque Valley (the most Eastern valley) can perfectly understand each other, this reality adds a point of complexity to language planning, all the more so when it has been developed by language activists up to now.

### *1.3. The scientific study of Aragonese language*

The scientific study of Aragonese language was started during the last decade of XIX century by foreign linguists: the French Jean-Joseph Saroïhandy, the German Alwin Kuhn and the English William Dennis Elcock. Later, their work was inherited by some Spanish linguists like Juan Moneva or Pedro Arnal Cavero who studied the different aspects of the Aragonese language. According to the majority Romantic view of culture of that period, Moneva understood Aragonese as different speeches without the status of a unitary language (Benítez, 2012) and only a minority group headed by Benito Coll saw Aragonese as a unitary language but with

different dialects. The fragmentary view of Moneva was the one adopted by the majority of the members of the Romance Linguistics Department of the University of Zaragoza during the XXth century. This fact has created one more obstacle to the language's survival by favoring social debate and prejudices related to the language standardization.

Nevertheless, in the second half of XXth century, a group of researchers headed by Francho Nagore inherited the work started by Coll and created the first grammar (Nagore, 1977) and, later, the dictionary (Martínez, 1997) of Aragonese standard language. In the 1970s a process called "Renaxedura" ("Revival") of Aragonese began. According to the aims of that time, in 1969, the first novel written in an incipient normative Aragonese was published, and in 1974 writers, linguists and philologists had a meeting in order to fix a common orthography system that was later ratified in the I Conference on Normalization of Aragonese Language. Also around that time the first associations for the promotion and spread of the language were born. So in 1976 Consello d'a Fabla Aragonesa was founded, and in 1977 Rolde d'Estudios Aragoneses. Since then, a number of experts from different intellectual areas (anthropologists, linguists, philologists, lawyers, etc.) have collaborated with these and other activists' associations. They have tried to deal with the work of normalization and standardization of Aragonese that administrations have never developed up to now and thanks to their contribution there are almost 600 books published in Aragonese (López, 2014), there is an incipient literature both in dialects and in standard Aragonese, there's a little more space devoted to Aragonese in some primary schools and it also entered into the University of Zaragoza in 2012 through the Diploma of Specialization in Aragonese Philology. Aragonese has also taken a place in the linguistic landscape of some territories (mainly in the names of streets and villages). There are also some virtual tools as Wikipedia and some free software in Aragonese. In recent years there are also an increasing number of musicians who use Aragonese language in their lyrics but only some recent cinematographic works have been made in Aragonese (Obserbatorio de l'aragonés, 2015).

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the replacement of Aragonese has been and still is faster than the goals slowly accomplished by activists.

Moreover, the lack of support from the institutions has also favored the spread of unhelpful controversy concerning language standardization and especially concerning the orthography system. As a consequence in recent years activists have proposed two more different ways to write in Aragonese which are different from the one approved in 1987, and which was the most common way used among the literary Aragonese corpus.

#### *1.4. The situation of Aragonese at school*

As we know, the educational domain is considered to be one of the main areas where linguistic policies have to be focused in order to save minority languages (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991), but it is important to remember that the European Charter doesn't specify how the minority language has to be introduced at school, only stating that, "provisions will need to be made for teaching *in* the regional or minority language and in others only for the teaching *of* the language" (Council of Europe, 1992). As Gorter (2008) notes, although the European Charter is so lax in this point, there's no doubt about the importance of education to create new speakers in/of a language group and as a consequence the importance of immersion programs where the minority language is the vehicle for teaching through *strong forms* of bilingual or multilingual education.

The Aragonese language movement only began to demand a place for Aragonese in education from the second half of XXth century, when this movement was born, and especially after the 1980's. Efforts were undertaken before to spread Aragonese among adults through associations. Teaching of Aragonese (as a subject) started in 1997/1998. It started slowly, only in 4 schools where Aragonese was allotted some time as an extracurricular activity. It was introduced more than a decade after the introduction of Catalan in the schools of Eastern Aragon. And it was also introduced in very different circumstances. Catalan had been introduced as an optional subject, 3 hours per week and as a subject that was part of the official school timetable. This was because the introduction was managed by the Spanish Department for Education, who considered that Catalan had the status of a language although it hadn't that recognition in the Community of Aragon. But the case of Aragonese was different because, as a threat-



ened *unique minority language*, in 1997/1998 it hadn't had any explicit recognition as a language neither in Aragon, nor in any other territory.

Up to now Aragonese has not had a curriculum but since 2007 it has some "curricular orientations" published by the Aragonese Department for Education, after Spanish education policy was partially decentralized and managed by each Autonomous Community. It is also important to point out that, in accordance with the Autonomous Curriculum, since 2007 Aragonese has had the chance to have a place in the school timetable even as a language of instruction, but always depending on the decision of each individual school (Campos, 2013). Nevertheless, it can be said that this right has only existed on paper, as we will see below.

We can say that a real and strong language policy for Aragonese in the educative area has been almost nonexistent until recent years. Although the Spanish government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001, the Charter requirements haven't been implemented in the case of the Aragonese minority language. We can see it in the last report (number four) made by the Spanish government, related to compliance with the Charter requirements between 2010 and 2013. In the case of Aragonese, the last recommendation from the Council of Europe was to guarantee the study of the language at all educational levels. The answer made by the authors of the mentioned report was that the Aragonese government, in accordance with its new languages law of 2013, makes voluntary access to Aragonese easy in the towns that request it (Secretaría de Estado de Administraciones Públicas, 2014). In practice we find that both towns and schools are completely uninformed about their linguistic rights and there are, in fact, very few schools that request Aragonese language. In its 12th Article, the law recognizes: "the right to receive teaching of languages or linguistic modalities in the territories of historical predominant use, through a suitable offer in schools". But in the practice we find the non-observance of the law because parents or students of all these historical territories do not have the chance to decide if they want to study Aragonese, or *in* Aragonese, or not. Aragonese can be introduced as a subject and even as a language of instruction only in those schools where the school board asks for it. After that, if they have decided to include it, Aragonese is introduced as an extra-curricular or cur-

ricular area and *in* or *out* of the official school timetable, depending again on the decision of each school board. And it is very important to explain at this moment that the majority of school board members in Huesca's rural schools (where Aragonese is still partially spoken) are supply teachers who come from the capital (Zaragoza) and usually hope to gain some points in order to have the chance of choosing a new job destination in bigger towns and in the capital. This kind of professional generally hasn't any knowledge or involvement with the culture, traditions or landscape of that territory and they don't perceive the teaching and revival of Aragonese as an important issue (Campos, 2013). Neither do they receive any information on the Aragonese linguistic reality during their training as teachers in the University of Zaragoza. Taking into account these facts, it is easy to understand why only 26 schools have Aragonese tuition which is never taken too seriously, and is an extracurricular optional subject. Only in some schools is Aragonese a compulsory subject but generally only during the Pre-Primary period. As a consequence, there are a lot of schools, even those located in the area where there's a level of social bilingualism that don't offer Aragonese teaching because of the prejudices and/or interests of a school board that in most of the cases does not represent people from these territories. They don't give enough value to Aragonese and therefore they usually decide not to introduce it in their schools.

Taking into account this situation we can say that the current situation of Aragonese at school is the same as that of most European minority languages in the nineteenth or early twentieth century (extra-curricular classes at Primary levels).

## **2. Our research project**

### *2.1. Research questions and design*

Considering the previously mentioned situation we had a number of research questions related with the situation and prospects of Aragonese at school, especially taking into account that there isn't any research developed in this area. We only have a study made by Huguet in 2006 related to linguistic attitudes of Secondary School students, the results of

which show a good valuation of Aragonese among the languages that were evaluated in that survey (Aragonese and Catalan, that are the two regional languages of Aragon; Spanish, the state language and French and English, the two foreign languages that students usually learn at Secondary School in Aragon).

We can summarize our research questions as:

1. Why don't school boards and teacher boards introduce the teaching of Aragonese or introduce it only in an almost insignificant way?
2. Is there any possibility of a bigger presence of Aragonese in the schools of Huesca Province?
3. As parents and students cannot decide anything related with teaching *of* and *in* Aragonese: what are their views about different possible ways of introducing teaching *of* and *in* Aragonese?
4. After almost two decades of teaching of Aragonese: how is it taught and what do students get through this teaching?

Taking into account the complex sociolinguistic situation of Aragonese and also the variable treatment of the language in the schools where it has been introduced, we decided to try to get a general picture of the situation focusing on the linguistic attitudes of the school community (teachers, governing bodies, students, families, teacher training students) and the linguistic competence achieved by students of Aragonese in different contexts. We found the multiple-case design to be the most coherent in order to deal with this research and we also consider a multi-methodological approach as the most appropriate for this kind of exploratory study. The study of linguistic attitudes of teacher training students has been developed as a parallel complementary research project.

## *2.2. Two main methods: quantitative and qualitative research*

### *2.2.1. Quantitative research: linguistic attitudes*

The schools that took part in the study were all the state schools of the Huesca province located in the territory of historical use of Aragonese. We took the only “*legal*” map that exists where Aragonese and Catalan of Aragon domains are marked. This is the map of the proposal of laws

made by the Department of Culture of the Aragonese Government in 2001 (López, 2012).

There were a total of 79 schools, a proportion of which are situated in areas where Aragonese had a grade of social vitality ( $N = 17$ ), with the remaining schools situated in areas where Spanish is the dominant language and Aragonese was almost completely replaced by Spanish in the second half of XXth century. Among all the schools we find also the schools where Aragonese is taught as a subject ( $N = 26$ ). Moreover, among these, a proportion of schools have the teaching of Aragonese in the school timetable ( $N = 12$ ) and the remaining as an extracurricular activity ( $N = 14$ ).

Our sample included all the students of the last two grades of Primary Education (10–12 years). We chose this year-group because of general recommendations from experts on language attitudes (Baker, 1992). There is some controversy about it, but the view that psycholinguistics traditionally spread is that children usually create strong linguistic attitudes when they become teenagers. Regarding the parents, we left a questionnaire for each family in schools with less than 100 students and for half of families in centers with more than 100 students. In the case of teachers, we left a questionnaire for each teacher in every school. In the case of trainee teacher students we took a sample of almost 1.000 students of first and last year of that degree, in order to have a representative group of prospective Aragonese teachers.

#### *2.2.1.1. Materials*

In the case of schools we created three questionnaires based on previous researches with similar aims (Baker, 1992; Huguet, 2006; Martínez Ferrer, 1995). Finally we had three different types of questionnaire: one for teachers, one for families and one for students. Our questionnaires included various sections: 1) languages use; 2) attitudes towards Aragonese; 3) attitudes towards Aragonese at school. In addition, questionnaires for schools where Aragonese is thought had an additional section with questions related to the participants' experience with the subject.

In the case of children, the questions were all worded in a child-friendly way. Moreover, questions involved a combination of tick-box responses and questions with open response in order to allow participants to give a more detailed view about some aspects (mainly their experience

with Aragonese at school). Tick-box questions were set on a five-point Likert scale whereby participants could tick a box that best expressed their view. It is important to point out that at this time this fieldwork is still ongoing.

In the case of teacher training students we took a questionnaire used in similar research, based on the Sharp *et al* (1973) questionnaire and used in the case of Asturian teacher training students (González y Armesto, 2004; González y Huguet, 2001), taking into account that the Asturian sociolinguistic context and minority language status are very similar to that of Aragonese. We found it interesting to add a question-battery related to views about multilingualism. As our questionnaire was partially modified we validated it through a pilot study and obtained a high Alpha of Cronbach ( $\alpha$  .864).

### 2.2.2. *Quantitative research: linguistic competence*

We did this measurement through a test adapted from the “diagnostic evaluation test” used by the Aragonese government in order to test the English linguistic competence of primary students between 10-12 years during the academic year 2009/2010. This test was created from a communicative language teaching and learning point of view. We also adapted the test into Aragonese trying to guarantee that it was coherent with the standards of A1/A2 of the European Framework of Reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

We did a pilot study in May 2014, in order to validate our adapted test. The test was done by 3 groups of students whose profile was similar to the 3 general kind of students of Aragonese we believed to exist: 1) students located in areas where Aragonese has still a certain level of social bilingualism, 2) students located in areas of historical use of Aragonese who are studying it as L2/L3 in the school timetable, 3) students located in areas of historical use of Aragonese who are studying it as L2/L3 out of the school timetable.

The test had three sections: 1) listening, comprehension, competence, 2) writing comprehension competence and 3) items of syntax and grammar through a text. We decided to add a complementary activity that consisted of writing about anything the students wanted to say. This writing was qualitatively evaluated according to the A1/A2 European Framework standards (Council of Europe, 2001):

- “*Soy capaz de escribir postales cortas y sencillas, por ejemplo para enviar felicitaciones*”.
- “*Soy capaz de escribir notas y mensajes breves y sencillos relativos a mis necesidades inmediatas. Puedo escribir cartas personales muy sencillas, por ejemplo agradeciendo algo a alguien*”.

Quantitative data from the rest of the exercises were analyzed according to the criteria used by the Aragonese government for the evaluation of English competence. We obtained the average for each student group, for each part of the test, and also for the complete exam.

### 2.3. *Qualitative research*

We decided to dig deeper into the situation of Aragonese teaching via informal discussions with the researcher. We decided carry out focus group interviews with teachers, governing bodies and the families from the schools where Aragonese is taught. In the case of schools sharing governing bodies with other schools we didn't carry out one interview with families of each school but we chose one or two of them. In the case of children's attitudes we decided to develop the same approach based on focus group interviews, but after interviewing students from two schools we considered changing the method because of the limited amount of information given by students. Finally, we chose one indirect approach based on a book-diary. We left one of these diaries in each school where Aragonese is taught. Elder students of Aragonese were in charge of writing it, answering different questions related to their views about Aragonese courses, and also about attitudes of teachers, peers and family. They reflected on their book-diary questions during a whole academic year, once per week.

At the same time we had an in depth interview with all the teachers that have worked as Aragonese teachers since the initiative started in 1997/1998. So we registered a total of 15 life stories where we tried to go deeper into their experience and status in each school and also in the methodologies they have been using and the results they have had so far.

All the questionnaires created for the different interviews and focus groups varied so we could assess all the participants' views on a number of issues. The interviewer had a list of specific subjects or pre-categories

extracted from theories and previous studies on linguistic attitudes, especially in minority language contexts. Some of these categories were: motivation to learn the language; relationship between language and political ideologies; the particular areas where Aragonese is more likely to be used; the relevance and utility of the development of different linguistic policy aspects; views about linguistic policy developed in other Spanish territories and the importance that a minority language needs to have at school.

Nevertheless, we tried to develop this work from the most ethnographical point of view as possible and consequently these themes were only guidelines for the interviewer. She used them in order to guide a little the participant's answers, especially when there were moments of silence or they diverted their answers to other areas unrelated to the research. When questionnaires were completed they were reviewed by a number of experts.

The focus groups took the form of one group (or two groups in the case of families from rural centers formed by various schools / villages) for each of the different kind of participants whose attitudes we wished to discover: teachers, governing bodies and families.

### **3. Some results and conclusions**

We are currently finishing the fieldwork at schools, so we haven't analyzed the data from the survey and interviews yet. But we have some interesting data from the pilot study of linguistic competence of students of Aragonese and also from the additional study focused on linguistic attitudes of teacher training students of the University of Zaragoza.

We will underline the main results and some conclusions we can interpret from these data. The data on linguistic competence shows an interesting panorama. Although students have insignificant contact with Aragonese at school, the data shows great results in comprehension skills in all groups (Table 1). This could be for two reasons: on the one hand, as a Romance language, Aragonese has similarities with Spanish; on the other hand, the Spanish spoken in Huesca province has a lot of lexicon and structures from Aragonese (Aragonese is a strong substrate of the Spanish spoken in Aragon in general). Nevertheless, if we take into account

the grammatical part, we can say that only children from contexts where Aragonese has a certain level of social bilingualism are able to pass the test. It is very interesting also to compare the results of children who study Aragonese as a subject during school time with the results of those who learn it as an extra-school activity. The first group obtained a significantly better competence in all skills, but especially in written skills.

It is important to underline that the most important difference between groups was found in the writing part. Children who learn Aragonese as an L2/L3 in contexts without any maintenance of the language aren't able to put together simple sentences using Aragonese syntax and lexicon. Children who take classes during school time could do texts partially in Aragonese. They were only able to write texts in Spanish introducing some sentences and words in Aragonese. But those children who take classes out of school time, declined to do that part of the exam and some of them tried to do it but they only wrote one sentence.

Table 1: Results of each group of participants for each part and in general.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Listening comprehension (max. 35)</b>	<b>Writing comprehension (max. 35)</b>	<b>Grammar (max. 30)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Group L1	29.53	30.91	2.11	86.55
Group L2/L3 (school time)	32.87	32.08	11.25	76.20
Group L2/L3 (out of school)	29.33	21.77	8.03	59.13

Data from the survey of teacher training students shows good attitudes to the Aragonese language. Attitudes towards Spanish (the L1 of most of participants = 93.31%) has a high average ( $\mu$  8.51), but it is interesting to see that English has the highest average ( $\mu$  8.75). Nevertheless there is not a statistically significant difference between them. Next come attitudes towards Aragonese ( $\mu$  6.22). This language has a better score than a majority international language studied in Aragon such as French but there is not, again, a significant difference between averages. Maybe the most important data is that related to Catalan. Attitudes towards this language are unfavorable and very far from the average of the other languages ( $\mu$  3.27).



The great difference between attitudes towards Aragonese and attitudes towards Catalan is especially relevant in some statements. For example, 85.3% of participants were in favour of the study of Aragonese at school in territories where it is spoken. But only 56.3% of participants answer the same in the case of Catalan. Moreover, only 55.1% of participants said they liked to listen to Catalan, compared to 86.8% of participants that liked to listen to Aragonese. In addition, 30.3% of participants said that they would like to speak Catalan but 55.5% said that they would like to speak Aragonese. Further, 17.1% of participants would like to study Catalan as a part of their teaching training studies compared to 45.0% who said that they would like to study Aragonese. Finally, 69% of trainee teachers felt they ought to acquire a better knowledge of Aragonese but only 14.3% felt the same about Catalan.

In conclusion, the first data from our research shows two important facts: 1) children who learn Aragonese in schools located in territories where there is not a level of social bilingualism do not accomplish a minimum A1/A2 level of competence according to the CEFR; 2) according to the data of the teacher trainee survey it seems that we have future Primary teachers significantly predisposed to integrate the Aragonese language into their life, but nevertheless at the same time accuse it of having a lack of functionality when it comes to economic and work issues, which evidently could end up translating into a preference for learning those languages that are guaranteed to help them in their future job prospects.

Finally, it is important to highlight that these are only some of the first partial results that reflect only a small part of a research project that is still being developed. So it can only be understood as a short approach to the situation of Aragonese language in Education.

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### **Abstract**

Aragonese is one of the most endangered languages in Europe. In spite of the reports made by several experts and institutions such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the Aragonese government has developed very few actions related to its protection to date. One of the main areas where linguistic policies in favor of minority and endangered languages have to be implemented is the educational one. Aragonese has been taught in some schools of the *Alto Aragón* territory since 1997, but there has not been any research related either to the linguistic competence of its learners, or its situation in the educational field. With the purpose of make progress on both the knowledge of the sociolinguistic situation of Aragonese at school and the results of its teaching; we have designed a research project focused on the educative community linguistic attitudes and also on Aragonese learners' linguistic competence.

**Keywords:** Aragonese language, threatened language, linguistic attitudes.

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