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Autor(en): **Suïls, Jordi / Furness, Ryan**

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## The Occitan Language in the Aran Valley

Jordi SUÏLS and Ryan FURNESS

### Résumé

Cet article présente une vue générale sur la situation de l'occitan dans le Val d'Aran, la seule vallée de l'État espagnol se trouvant sur le côté septentrional de la chaîne des Pyrénées qui possède l'occitan comme langue officielle en plus de l'espagnol et du catalan.

Dans cet article, nous en présentons en premier lieu la situation générale en termes sociolinguistiques: entrée d'une forte immigration castillanophone depuis les années 60 avec le boom du tourisme; développement des institutions autochtones de gestion politique au long des années 70-80; mise en pratique de l'enseignement en occitan et de la codification de la langue autochtone suivant les critères établis par l'Institut d'Études Occitanes.

En second lieu, nous posons le problème des critères d'élaboration linguistique qui apparaissent avec l'exploitation des nouveaux contextes d'utilisation de la langue. Nous prenons parti pour un modèle unitaire d'occitan écrit, au moins en ce qui concerne la création stylistique, en refusant implicitement l'utilisation de ressources apportées par les langues majoritaires (français, espagnol). Nous pouvons ainsi analyser les divergences que les modèles espagnol et français ont produit d'un côté et de l'autre de la frontière politique franco-espagnole, en suivant le cadre de travail de la stylistique comparée (nous comparons ici deux variétés de la même langue), pour parfois proposer des solutions unitaires.

### 0. Introduction

The Aran Valley is the small Occitan-speaking region of Spain located in the far Northwest corner of the Autonomous community of Catalonia on the Franco-Spanish border. The local variety, Aranese, is spoken by approximately 4,000 people, over half the Valley's total population of 6,991 (CENSUS 1996). Aranese is linguistically classified as a dialect of the Gascon branch of Occitan, the language spoken in southern France and the Italian Alpine valleys on the Italian-French border. Together with Catalan and Castilian, Aranese is co-official in the Valley and is used in the media, local government, and at both the primary and secondary levels in the educational system. Also, both French and English have important roles among the other languages of the Valley.

The objectives of this paper are twofold. First, in order to better understand the challenges facing the corpus planning of Occitan, a general overview of the use of the language in the Aran Valley is necessary. The particular social, geo and political contexts in which Aranese finds itself are unique. It is a minority language community in a larger majority language context (Catalan), which in turn pertains to a even larger majority language context (Spanish). This position of double subordination is compounded by the French-Occitan context which Aranese obviously shares many of its linguistic and cultural heritage via its Gascon neighbors.

The second objective of this paper, given the particular context just described, is to identify problems in the standardization of Aranese, and hopefully to find solutions to those problems. This has proven to be a very difficult task given that Aranese Occitan has been in contact with two distinct language models. One is that of Spanish and the other of Catalan. Both Spanish and Catalan have been used, due to their dominating roles as the written standards in the valley, as the models from which Aranese Occitan takes its reference. Thus, the Gascon-Occitan model has not been implemented in the Aran Valley.

This article makes the assertion that:

1. Analyzing texts from different sides of the Franco-Spanish political border gives us an image of the complexities and procedures of stylistic transference from the dominant to the minority language.
2. The process of convergence between minority and dominant languages on each side of the border inevitably brings with it the process of divergence between varieties of the minority language at both sides of the border.
3. The process of language planning includes corpus planning as one of the basic tasks.
4. If minority language is proposed a similar status as that of the dominant language, it must be afforded the opportunity to choose solutions independent of those attainable from the dominant language. In other words, we must ensure that the language has the means to produce autonomous innovation.
5. The question of what does work is not simply a function of the relationship between the users and the linguistic instrument. The attitudes are conditioned by the status of the language which determines the degree of compromise of the speakers.
6. A task of compensation of the linguistic divergences produced by the presence of a political border is needed, as well as the use of contrastive analysis between those varieties to propose common solutions be used, when possible.

## **1. Historical Context of the Aran Valley**

### ***1.1. Legal and dispositions***

As early as the Late Middle Ages, the Aran Valley was subject to outside rule by the Catalanian-Aragon kingdom. Although Kingdom rule was vast, the Aran

Valley was virtually left to rule itself under the so-called *Querimonia* legal text written during the reign of James the Second of Catalonia in 1312. It established certain special governing privileges under the Catalanian-Aragon kingdom. The situation remained the same until the imposition of the *Decreto de Nueva Planta* by the Spanish king Phillip the Fifth in 1716. From that moment on, the Aranese began to slowly and eventually lose all self-governing power. By 1834, the last of the autonomous political institutions, the *Conselh Generau* [General Council], which had been in place since the middle ages, was abolished under the reign of Queen Isabel the Second of Spain.

It was not until the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 that the Aranese began rebuilding their political and cultural institutions. In 1978, the Spanish state as well as the whole of Catalonia, including the Aran Valley, began the transformation towards political democracy. A new Spanish constitution was written and autonomous communities were established. The *Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya* [Statute of Catalanian Autonomy] was drafted in 1979. The Statute guaranteed basic self-governing rights for Catalonia under the newly drafted Spanish constitution. It was, and still is, the legal backbone of the *Generalitat*, the autonomous governing political institution of Catalonia. The *Conselh Generau*, which in a manner of speaking is the Aranese equivalent of the *Generalitat*, was also restored as the local governing body of the Aran Valley.

In 1983, the *Llei de Normalització Lingüística* [Catalan language Normalization Law] was written into law. It has proven to be one of the most important legal linguistic documents for both the Catalan and Occitan languages. This law gave legal protection to Catalan in its community. The Aranese, making sure to take advantage of the newly claimed language rights for Catalonia, quickly asserted their own claims to more linguistic protection for Occitan. Official recognition was given in the *Llei* in Article 28; “Era parla aranesa ei era lengua pròpia dera Val d'Aran. Es aranesi an eth dret de coneshé-lo e d'usà-lo enes relacions e actes publics...” [The Aranese language variety is the own language of the Aran Valley. The Aranese have the right to know it and express themselves in all relations and public acts...] (GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA, 1983b.)

The Aranese, having already begun the process of the normalization of Occitan with the publication of the *Nòrmes Ortografiques der Aranés* [the Orthographic Rules of Aranese] (GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA, 1983a), were well on their way to the further solidification of official recognition and the establishment of Occitan as the primary language in the Valley.

## 1.2. *Medias*

To further establish and promote the use of Occitan in the Valley, the *Generalitat* created the *Centre de Normalisacion Lingüística dera Val d'Aran* [CNLVA: Centre for Aranese Linguistic Normalization] in 1987. Its purpose was to promote the use of Occitan in all facets of society. It worked with schools, local town halls, and individual and group initiatives to continue to meet their objectives. In 1990, three years after the creation of the CNLVA, the *Lei de Regim Especiau dera Val d'Aran* [*Special Statute Law of the Aran Valley*] (GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA, 1990a) was passed by the *Generalitat* and the Catalan Parliament giving even more self-governing power to the *Conselh Generau* by allocating tax money directly to the Valley. It also established Aranese Occitan as one of the co-official languages, along with Catalan and Spanish, in the Valley. “Er aranés, varietat dera lengua occitana e pròpria d'Aran, ei oficiau ena Val d'Aran. Tanben ne son eth catalan e eth castelhan, d'acòrd damb er article 3 der Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalonha” [Aranese, a variety of the Occitan language and own language of the Aran Valley, is official in the Valley, as are Spanish and Catalan, in accordance with article 3 of the Statute of Catalan Autonomy.]

The creation of the CNLVA and the restitution of the *Conselh Generau* have both been very important and have significantly improved the social situation of Occitan in the Valley. The most recent, and encouraging, development has been the creation in 1996 of the *Oficina der Foment e Ensenhament der Aranés* (OFEA) [The Office for the Teaching and Promotion of Aranese Occitan]. The OFEA's principal task is to manage economic affairs for the promotion of Occitan. The CNLVA, which had until that time been responsible for both the economic and social parts, has been relegated to dealing with purely linguistic matters. Both the OFEA and CNLVA have worked together to promote Occitan outside of the Aran Valley by creating Occitan language courses in Barcelona and Lleida, as well as across the French border.

The Aran Valley has always depended greatly on its Southern neighbors in all facets of daily life. Particularly, outside cultural influences have significantly altered the patterns of Aranese society. External influences have had the greatest impact in the areas of mass media, literature, television, film, and radio in the Aran Valley.

The Aranese market is small and economically not able to produce such media products on a large scale which would make them economically feasible. This has made it difficult to stop their French, Spanish, and Catalan neighbors

from exporting their mass media to the Valley. It has only been recently that the Aran Valley has seen any real amount of textual, audio and visual Occitan language materials. For the Aran Valley, as well as the whole of the Spanish state, including all of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque country, Spanish has always been the language of the mass media and most of the major literary output. In the 1950's and 60's for example, the first televisions aired censored programs under Franco's dictatorship in Spanish, the daily newspapers were in Spanish, and the only available radio emissions were, aside from the few received with difficulty from France, in Spanish. Apart from the few clandestine publications in Catalan, Galician, and Basque, books and magazines were printed almost exclusively in Spanish.

The presence of Spanish-language literature has not always been primary in the Aran Valley. The Occitan-language literary tradition was at one time the most prestigious in Europe. Troubadour poetry of the 11th and 12th centuries was held to be the most prestigious form of poetry during that time. It wasn't until the 19th century however, that Occitan, and to a much smaller extent, Aranese Occitan, saw any sort of literary revival after the Troubadour poetry. The works of French-Occitans, under the movement called Felibritge, were represented in the Aran Valley by the writer J. Condó Sambeat, who produced its work in the context of the Felibrean regional movement called *Escòlo deras Pireneos* [the School of the Pyrenees]. The last 50 years, until the 1980's, had not been a fortuitous time for Aranese Occitan literature. This contrasts with the revival of the rest of the Occitanism at the other side of the border, with authors like Bodon, Lafont, and Max Roqueta, during the 60's and 70's. Fortunately, though, by the early 1980's literary publishing began to show signs of resurgence in the Valley. Most of the publishing in Occitan, due to the introduction of Occitan in the schools, was of the didactic type. The CNLVA began the translation of a collection of children's books, *Era Galera*, into Occitan in the mid 80's. They were, and still are, the most widely read children's books available. Also, as part of the agenda of the CNLVA and now OFEA, a literary contest was created in 1990. It has grown to be one of the most important sources of new fiction creation in the Valley. Publications of didactic materials created by the *Centre de Recorsi Pedagogics dera Val d'Aran* [Centre for Pedagogical Resources of the Aran Valley] have also been very significant as well. Popular current-day fiction and poetry writings have also been on the rise. Among the most prominent writers in the Valley, Francés Boya, Pepita Caubet, Veronica Bares and Maria Vergés have written both short fiction and poetry.

The future for an improved presence of the Occitan language in general, and particularly for the Aran Valley, lies not only in fiction writing contests, poetry, and other pedagogical writings, but also in other mass media mediums. Television, radio, and even the internet in all its facets, may well be where Occitan language revival efforts need to focus their primary attention.

Mass media in Aranese Occitan really started with Baqueira ski-resort's daily radio show. It began in 1987 as an initiative primarily designed to provide weather and ski condition updates. Both Spanish and Occitan were used until the show was moved to its current location in the Valley's capital Vielha. It began collaborating with *Catalunya Informació*, the twenty four hour Catalan news radio station emitted from Barcelona, to offer a show called *Meddia Aranés*. The program widened its focus to include general news information pertaining specifically to the Aran Valley. It is still to this day the only radio program offered in Occitan in the Valley. It is often criticized for focusing too much of its programming on music, which is mostly American, and banal interviews with non-Occitan speaking people. Thus, the program does not greatly contribute to the process of Occitan normalization in the Valley.

Another area of mass media in which the Occitan language has little more than a token presence is television. The first initiative taken in the field of Television was a program broadcast to the entire province of Catalonia by TVE, a Spanish national TV station. It was a weekly 30-minute current events program which began in 1990, and ran until financial constraints forced the program off the air in 1993. Then, in 1993, in cooperation with the *Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió* [Catalan Radio and Television Corporation (CCRTV)], a weekly news program began in the valley. It started as a 20-minute news program once a week which provided everything from current events to weather. Despite the fact that viewership was on the rise, high costs of transmission gradually reduced the program to its current day programming of nine minutes per week.

Apart from television, monthly periodicals have been in existence for the last decade. They have also been the only source of Aranese language current news publications. The monthly magazine "*Toti*" was created in 1989 and lasted until 1991. Its successor, the "*Arenosi*", began printing in 1993, and continues to circulate on a monthly basis to this day. It is supported by the *Conselh Generau* and written mainly by staff members at the OFEA.

In cooperation with the *Avui*, the Barcelona-based Catalan newspaper, the *Conselh Generau* and OFEA have created the weekly supplement *Aué* written

mostly in the Aranese variety of Occitan. It is distributed on Saturdays throughout the whole of Catalonia. The supplement's primary focus is the Aran Valley. It does, however, have sections dedicated to news regarding other Occitan-speaking territories in France and Italy. Apart from the *Aué*, the newly created daily newspaper *Eth Diari* is published in the Aran Valley. It has a much more international news focus, as well as a reader opinion section.

Apart from news and current events publications in Aranese, the need for the advancement in the area of information technology will be necessary. Unfortunately, the recent past has limited this area to only a didactic CD-ROM. It was created by the Generalitat and includes the multilingual dictionary of VERGÉS. Also, in the early 1990's, a computer translation program was created by the Summer Institute of Linguistics but, given that it has not been updated, it has become practically obsolete.

Finally, an area that has gone virtually untouched is that of the visual arts. There has yet to exist any significant cinematographic creations (the local cinema shows films exclusively in Spanish). Recently, though, with the help of the Generalitat and the *Conselh Generau*, a chapter of "Les Tres Bessones" [The Triplets], a children's cartoon translated into more than 25 languages around the world and created in Catalonia, was translated into Aranese. It marks the first cartoon, and the first audio visual product, ever translated into Aranese Occitan. Current concerns of the high costs of dubbing and subtitling, and the limited market available to see such products, have restricted the visual arts to these few small initiatives and the work of local theater groups.

### ***1.3. The Occitan language and Education***

One of the most important areas, if not the most important area, in which a minority language can begin to recuperate itself is in the schools. It is in these educational institutions where many habits are born with respect to social relations. The use of the language in school gives the much needed exposure to those who will eventually play a vital role in the local society as adults. Children are given the necessary tools to create the much needed base for continued use of a language. Here begins the cycle for the need and creation of the language in society.

The Aranese education system is made up of 10 rural schools and a large elementary school in the capital Vielha. The Valley also has one high school which is also located in Vielha. The teaching of Occitan did not officially begin until the passing of the Catalan normalization law which established governmental support for the teaching of Catalan and Occitan in the Valley. In



1982-4, the official teaching was carried from the private sector to the public one. Courses were established to teach teachers the Occitan language and how to apply it in the classroom. In the 1984-85 school year, Occitan was introduced into primary and middle school education (ages 6-13) as an optional 1 hour weekly class.

The following year, Occitan became an obligatory part of the school curriculum. The first laws of the *Generalitat* established 2 hours per week for primary schools in the valley. One problem, however, which has very much hindered Occitan language teaching, is the lack of pedagogical teaching resources specifically designed for the language. Teachers were forced, for lack alternatives, to create their own resources for use in the classroom; a problem which teachers continue to face today, even in the light of the creation of the *Centre de Recorsi Pedagogics dera Val d'Aran* [Center for Pedagogical Resources of the Aran Valley] . Its purpose was to create and stimulate the development of pedagogical resources across the curriculum. In the beginning the first Aranese language resources developed in the Center were adapted from already existing Catalan and Spanish resources.

By 1990, the year of the renewed support by the *Generalitat* to the Valley, the presence of Occitan had become stagnant. The *Conselh Generau* and local Occitan teachers thought that 2 hours a week was insufficient and that something should be done. Thus, they developed a three-tier language program for the Valley's largest primary school located in Vielha. It was a plan meant to appease everyone. The idea was that parents could choose which language they wanted their child to be primarily taught in. The program began in the 1992-3 school year and lasted only two years. In 1994, partly due to the fact that the Occitan program was the least chosen of the three-tier system, the local government made only the Occitan language program available. This created an instant backlash in the Valley. Many valley immigrant parents, and even some Aranese parents, opposed the immersion program saying that Occitan should not be the primary language of the school system. They often used the argument that Occitan was not a "useful" language once one leaves the Valley. Fortunately, the outcry died down and the Occitan language immersion program continues today to thrive in all the primary schools in the Valley.

In 1998, researchers from the University of Lleida began the first part of a research project which had as its objective to find out language attitudes among the Valley's population towards its autochthonous language and its presence in school. One of the most surprising things to come from the preliminary studies was that there were no negative attitudes found as far as teaching in Occitan was

concerned. Another surprising thing to come out of the research was that questions concerning the task of a linguistic model creation were given high approval. Those who had gone through the educational system which had only a token presence of Occitan considered the current generation of students (all of which are part of the Occitan immersion program) to have better knowledge and proper use of the language of the Valley. These factors are all very important when considering that the job of the school has been to use a language model which avoids elements that form a part of those traditionally found in Aranese.

School efforts, as well as literary contests, radio programs, cartoons, and even the little bit of television available, are all contributing to the promotion of the use of Occitan in the Aran Valley. Unification on the part of all Occitan-speaking territories can only serve to better the situation of the Occitan language in all facets of society on both sides of the political border. In order for this to happen, though, a common linguistic model must be created to further bring together what years of political separation and linguistic repression have broken apart. (information about legal status of Occitan in Aranese educational system: GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA, 1983c and 1990b)

## **2. The Road to a Common Linguistic Model**

### **2.1. Orthography**

The orthographic rules for Aranese Occitan were published in 1982 and officially adopted in 1984 (Comission..., 1982). As criteria for the work, the commission entrusted with establishing the orthographic rules adopted the conventions of the *Institut d'Estudis Occitans* (IEO).

Nevertheless, given the fact that the options of the IEO might be seen as too distant from the spoken Aranese variety, and could thus create a refusal among Aranese Occitan speakers to use certain forms, exceptions from the IEO standard were admitted, as for example the use of plural feminines in *-es* (*pòrtas* [doors]) instead of the general *-as* (*pòrtas*).

A case in point is the example of an Occitan speaker from the neighboring French valley of Luison who would use the same spoken form as in the Aranese variety, but would instead use the general Occitan standard, not the Aranese form.

These differences in the adopted conventions are not as problematic as we would expect them to be at first glance. Mutual comprehension has never proved difficult in either textual or spoken language enough to adopt the exact

same orthographic solutions in all cases. This situation is comparable, albeit on a much larger scale, to that of the divergent orthographic solutions between American and British English, or even those between eastern and western Catalan.

However, text production in standard Occitan is not as anecdotal as some would like to believe. The existence of periodical publications has been constant and, even today, literary reviews, journals, and magazines bring the possibility of constant contact with texts in the Occitan speaker's own language.

For a common standard, however, the most important problems are not the small divergences in orthographic codification. The symbolic effect of the presence of graphic differences, like those which we cited earlier, is easy to overcome. The existence of a political border has had negative consequences in the process of linguistic elaboration.

### **3. Two main types of textual divergence**

The lax attitude shown towards the IEO norm has, as a consequence, widened the gap between texts on opposite sides of the political border. These divergences can be classified into two different categories. On one hand, there are those which are due to historical separation normally connected to the structure of the language (in the form of particular options for phonology, morphology, syntax or specialization in lexis and semantics). On the other hand, there are those which are due to functional specialization, often limited to a given register (that of the periodical writing style) and resulting from the exploitation of a same linguistic system in different cultural contexts.

#### ***3.1. Historical divergences.***

For some grammatical differences, for example those which concern morphology, it is, practically speaking, impossible to reverse the divergences found. One example is the disappearance of the distinction of auxiliaries. Generally, in Occitan, as well as in other Romance languages like Italian, there are two options; either *aver*, which is used for transitive and intransitive verbs, or *èster* which is used with inaccusatives and pronominals. For the Aranese, the use of these two auxiliaries has leveled in favor of *aver*. Probably, the frequent use of the passive forms in general Occitan, if compared with the Aranese variety, is related to the fact that passives share form with all those where the auxiliary is *èster* (the subjacent relationship between passive sentences and sentences with inaccusative verbs has been often debated in syntax literature).

Therefore, passive constructions are not marked in general Occitan, but they are clearly marked in Aranese.

- a. General Occitan:
  - a.1. *Seràn arribats a l'ostal* (inaccusative) [They will arrive at home]
  - a.2. *Seràn portats a l'ostal* (passive) [They will be brought home]
- b. Aranese Occitan
  - b.1. *Auràn arribat a casa* (inaccusative) [They will arrive at home]
  - b.2. *Seràn portats a casa* (passive) [They will be brought home]

### 3.2. *Differences derived from elaboration.*

The second type of divergences, those which derive from the actual process of the creation of written texts, which we will call stylistic differences, can be found sometimes tied together with the earlier mentioned structural characteristics. Therefore, maintenance of auxiliary selection, and the high frequency of passive sentence structures in all other varieties of Occitan except Aranese, has favored the acceptance, in non-Aranese texts, of sentences with preverbal topicalization of indefinite subjects (Theta-marked as Patient) like:

- (1) *En octobre accions comunas eston lançadas a l'Universitat Paul Sabatier peus estudiants e ensenhants de matematicas e d'informatica (La Setmana, 28, p.3)* [In October, collective actions were initiated at the University of Paul Sabatier by students and professors of mathematics and computer science].

Conversely, in Aranese Occitan, this same example would normally be written very differently. Rather than using a passive sentence, Aranese Occitan would opt for a pronominal form (impersonal and a postverbal direct object) as in the following example:

- (2) *Rebremen que des dera Val d'Aran s'encetèc ua auta campanha, que dempús s'estienec entà tota Catalonha, entara crompa de (...). Des d'aciú se n'envièren quate. (Aué, 22-V-99, p.2)* [They remember that from the Aran Valley another campaign began, which later extended to the rest of Catalonia (...). From here, four were sent.]

An interesting note here is that both solutions (passive and impersonal) are possible for all the Occitan-speaking areas (including Aranese), but the tendency to use one or the other option brings the writers to the adoption of different discursive strategies.

A certain typology can be created following a model similar to that of an analysis of translation. More concretely, it would then be considered to be a part

of compared stylistics, if we think that we are simply taking the texts of a variety and asking what would be different in the other side of the border for a similar text.

#### 4. The Creation of Stereotypical units

The same as a translator has to define, consciously or not, the units with which he or she works, he or she must be able to see these units as one of the ways of stylistic creation, and in consequence, of possible divergences between two varieties of the same language that find themselves in different cultural contexts.

For example, one type of unit recurrent in written texts is that which associates a noun and an adjective:

(3.a.) *un ivèrn rigorós* [A severe winter]

(3.b.) *un bombardeg intens* [An intense bombing]

or that which associates a participle or a definite article with an adverb:

(4.c.) *grèument blessat* [Badly injured]

(4.d.) *diametraument opausat* [Diametrically opposite]

or even that which associates a verb with a complement, sometimes corresponding to a verb relating to a noun complement:

(5.a) *aportar un cambi - cambiar* [To bring about a change, to change]

(5.b) *hèr un crit - cridar* [lit. to make a cry/shout, to shout or scream]

(5.c) *obtier la majoritat* [To obtain the majority]

It is obvious that a prescriptive grammar has no power over these types of associations. They are, theoretically, free. But, in reality, they are the recurring formulas that a writer often has to use when elaborating a text. They are fixed solutions to many cases, but those that are useful and commonly used in periodical publications easily become stereotyped and rather neutral in terms of effective language for other types of texts, where they would be avoided.

The formulas tend, then, to fall into the category of lexicalization. Therefore, the form *balhar delegacion* in the fragment:

(6) *Lo centre balha delegacion entà reglar problèmas qu'a deishat poirir de longa* (*La Setmana*, 27, p.1) [The centre hands off responsibility to solve problems that it has left aside (lit. decay, rot) for a very long time.]

which is not normally expected to arise in an Aranese Occitan text. What one would find in its place would be something like *delegar*:

- (7) *S'aprovèc tanben delegar ar alcalde entà qu'assistisque ara subasta...* (Aué, 22-V-99, p.6) [It was also approved the handing off of responsibility to the mayor so that he would be present at the auction.]

If Aranese Occitan opts for a non articulated form, it is probably due to the fact that Castillian and Catalan do exactly the same (*delegar*), but this is not the only option, as is shown by non-Aranese *balhar delegacion* in front of French *déléguer*.

Identifying cases of lexical transference, however, is by no means an easy task, even though external reference like the Spanish form *delegar* is evident. In the first place, speakers are usually not aware that they are importing forms from another language, and secondly, both *delegar* and *balhar delegacion* could be viable solutions in both varieties. It thus makes it impossible to talk about simple lexical transfer.

Creations of this type, however, do not normally represent as much difficulty as one might expect. Periodistic language normally shares resources between both cultures. Distance, at the level of the reader's perception, in the given examples of *delegar* and *balhar delegacion*, does not inhibit intercomprehension or awareness of linguistic unity, but it can be a problem, as will be seen, when moving to the level of discourse organization.

## 5. The Induced Creation at the Discourse Level

The need for creative activity in the elaboration of written languages often brings the writers to use some terms metaphorically. This metaphorical use often takes the model of the stylistic distribution of the dominant language. Different varieties of the same language that use the same register but with different dominant languages will make different choices. Take the following example from an Aranese text:

- (8) *Aguesta [flòta de veïculs] [se poirie veir incrementada] entath pròplèu mes de junh* (Aué, 15-V-99, p. 3) [This fleet of vehicles (lit. could be seen increased) this coming month of June]

What is interesting to point out here is that the term *flòta* in non-Aranese Occitan is perfectly comprehensible, and it is attested to in Alibert's dictionary with the sense of “a group of (people, for example)”, derived from the idea of “group of ships of a country”. In Aranese, however, as in Spanish, it takes the special sense of a group of vehicles used by public services, for example, the

police. Therefore, even though this possibility does exist for all the Occitan texts, the term itself is simply absent in non-Aranese texts.

The rest of the phrase, *se poirie veir incrementada*, shows a metonymical use derived from the register. The same as the high frequency of passives brings to the possibility of placing indefinite subjects in first position of the sentence in non-Aranese texts, as in (1), the high frequency of impersonal-pronominal verbs as in (2) gives Aranese an open door to the adoption of the pronominal use of (8), similar to Spanish “se podria ver incrementada”. And then, as cases like (1) are extremely rare in Aranese texts, cases like (8) are not found in non-Aranese texts.

Lexical association and metaphorical creation condition the whole discourse, at least at the sentence level. The distance then becomes greater. It either becomes a serious handicap to mutual comprehension or conditions the perception of the texts coming from one side of the political border by the speakers of the other side.

If the cultural distance produced by the traditional presence of a political border is confirmed at the level of the texts, the perception of distance is reinforced and the possibilities to share a common reference are compromised.

The divergent consequences of the presence of different dominant languages on each side of the political border are deeply rooted and go beyond the level of pure lexical borrowing (even conditioning the configuration of a standard) when the structural distance between the languages in question (Spanish-Occitan-French, in this case) is not great. This makes the transfer of discursive resources easy, which, in turn, makes both varieties of the same language divergent in the same sense as the dominant languages diverge between them. The relative distance is then enlarged at the level of folk linguistic perception and the process is implicit in the efforts for linguistic elaboration if an option concerning this fact is not explicitly assumed. The role of purism cannot be judged then without considering how distant the languages are (or are seen) between one another in terms of structure (see LAMUELA, 1987, “linguistic distance”).

## **6. Conclusion**

In this article, it has shown by examples revealing the existence of diverse levels. At each level, one is able to find stylistic divergences in separate varieties of the same language. This is due to both historical grammatical divergence and recent dominant language influences which differ on both sides

of the political border. The first level being that of pure lexical or grammatical transfer, as pointed out in the example of the use of auxiliaries which has resulted in grammatical convergence on the part of the Aranese towards the Spanish model. A second level found within stylistic divergences is that of the creation of lexical associations, at times pseudolexical, where *balhar delegacion* is a lexical equivalent of *delegar*. Often tied to this, the third level is in the metaphorical specialization of lexical units, as was shown in the example of *flòta* in *flòta de veïculs*. Finally, the fourth level, is that of mechanical discourse resources like those in the example of the utilization of the passive forms; a fact that is indirectly tied to the possibility or impossibility to choose between *èster* and *aver* as valid auxiliaries. Example (8) shows us the fact that the different levels are rarely independent.

In sociolinguistic terms, a brief analysis confirms that this type of divergence derives from the fact that the language does not function according to common references (LAMUELA, 1994). Despite these circumstances, it is possible to propose solutions for aspects of stylistic choices which are neither those of a purely structural nature nor those which deal with cultural aspects in a wider sense.

For example, it would be difficult to make realistic proposals regarding the use of auxiliaries in Aranese Occitan. However, it would be possible to propose an increment in the use of the passive forms at the level of text production, context permitting, of course. These possible solutions could be used for lexical resources as well.

By far the most limiting factor is clearly that of the degree of acceptance among the Aranese Occitan themselves, as well as the other Occitan speakers in France and Italy. But the awareness of linguistic unity on one hand and the obligation for recuperation of social areas of linguistic use on the other, are factors that inhibit the refusal of innovative solutions which may occur. The access of the language to areas such as education and the media implies an acceptance of linguistic innovation for new uses.

In Aran, conservative attitudes tended to defend the localist option, even when they were based on the model of the dominant language, against the adoption of innovations that followed the general Occitan model. That was clearly manifested when some local writers opposed resistance to accept the IEO orthographic rules for the teaching of vernacular. Those writers argued in favor of the mixed character of Aranese Occitan and refused a purist treatment of the language (for details, see LAMUELA, 1990).



Such attitudes are now in the past. The adoption of an independent solution and the diffusion of innovations in the schools have not supposed any difficulty for the maintenance of feelings of linguistic loyalty.

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