

21 Días co Galego e + **(21 Days with Galician and More)**

Establishing the habit of using the Galician language at all times and in all places



Gregorio Ferreiro Fente, a Galician Language and Literature teacher in secondary education. Currently, he works as a technical teaching advisor at the General Secretariat of Language Policy of the Galician Government. He is the author of articles and books on Galician literature.

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This report focuses on “21 Días co Galego e +” (21 Days with Galician and More), an intriguing project that aims to motivate school-age young people to use the Galician language in the multiple activities in which they interact socially every day.

The degree of intergenerational reproduction, especially within the family sphere, is one of the most precise indicators of the vitality of a language. In bilingual social contexts, parents may —consciously or unconsciously— choose to stop passing the family language on to their children and adopt the other language of the community, the socially dominant language, for their socialisation, because of its higher level of institutionalisation, greater prestige and the assumed better prospects of upward mobility for its speakers. In these contexts, formal education proves to be a primary agent of transmission of the socially non-dominant language to children, both with parents who speak the language but do not pass it on to them, as well as with parents who do not speak the language. In any case, the education system has traditionally been assigned certain objectives in this matter which are not always useful, as has been proven so many times. Formal education is certainly an indispensable tool for the acquisition of language skills and even favourable attitudes towards the non-dominant language. However, it has been shown that the education systems in bilingual contexts in which bilingual education models have been implemented are often unable to take the use of the non-dominant language in which students will be proficient after years of schooling beyond the border of the academic sphere. In other words, students acquire sufficient skills in that language, have a favourable perception of it and even use it for academic purposes in the classroom, but still use the dominant language in multiple other social interaction activities.





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Aware of this paradox, language planners have been focusing their efforts on the design and launch of strategies and actions intended to encourage young people to use the non-dominant language in spheres and settings where they never or rarely use it. However, language planners themselves are equally aware that it is not easy for youths to take that leap. Why? What barriers do young people find and have to overcome in order to incorporate the socially non-dominant language into their everyday lives? Trying to answer these questions leads us to the consideration of multi-layered factors (political, social, psychological and others). According to experts, routines, fear of ridicule, the absence of previous reflexion on one's own language-related decisions, an adverse social and family atmosphere, the limited presence of the language in public and leisure spaces, and a lack of support or recognition by one's parents and teachers regarding institutional language policies, to mention some of the most frequently alleged reasons, all have an unfavourable impact.

Since 2013, Galician teacher Pilar Ponte has been developing a project the aim of which is precisely to encourage the students in the secondary school where she teaches to change their linguistic habits for a specific period of time. This initiative consists basically of suggesting to the students that they should make a commitment to speak in Galician 24 hours a day for the 21 days the programme lasts, inside and outside the classroom. This duration is based on the assumption that became popular from the 1950s on, and was subsequently qualified by psychology, according to which human beings must repeat a given type of behaviour for at least 21 days for it to become a habit. Hence also the name of the project: “21 Días co Galego e +” (21 Days with Galician and More).

For two years now, the Departments of Education and Culture of the Galician Government have collaborated in the launch and implementation of this initiative. The 2019 edition, which took place between 14 January and 3 February, saw the participation of a total of 95 teachers and 1,316 students, aged 12 to 18 years, from four high schools. The central element underpinning the programme was a blog on which a new entry was posted every day containing the tasks the students needed to carry out, as well as recordings showing the young people's reflections on their experiences. A session was subsequently organised in Santiago de Compostela for students from the four schools to spend time together and meet each other in person, exchange views and carry out activities in common. Although students are the key figures in the programme, the involvement of the other members of the education community (parents associations, teachers and administration and services staff) is considered to be one of the prime elements required for the programme to be successful.



The latest edition had a very strong impact in the sphere of Internet and social networks, as proven by the fact that the blog of the programme was followed by many other teenagers who were interested in this experience. Also, the videos made by the students had approximately 15,500 views on the YouTube channel of the programme. The Facebook page “21 Días co Galego e +” was visited by 7,634 different people, while the Twitter account was read by 14,900.

Though a detailed assessment of the latest edition of the programme is not yet available, it is considered that the objectives set have been attained: to encourage the participating young people to improve and increase their use of the Galician language and to reflect on their relationship with the languages they are in contact with in their everyday lives, particularly the Galician language.//

RESOURCE

<https://blogs.xunta.gal/21diascogalegoemais>

Contact for further information on the project: 21dcgemais@gmail.com

PARTICIPATING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- Instituto de Educación Secundaria A Pontepedriña, Santiago de Compostela
- Instituto de Educación Secundaria Ramón Otero Pedrayo, Ourense
- Instituto de Educación Secundaria Antón Alonso Ríos, Tomiño
- Instituto de Educación Secundaria Francisco Daviña Rey, Monforte de Lemos

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