

# Nationalism and Ethnic Politics

## From Political Consensus to Political Conflict and Back Again: Language Public Policy in Galicia 1989-2020 --Manuscript Draft--

<b>Full Title:</b>	From Political Consensus to Political Conflict and Back Again: Language Public Policy in Galicia 1989-2020
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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Language public policy is a key issue in Galician politics. Its symbolic uses have proven to be a powerful political resource in partisan competition. This article analyzes the strategies of the three main Galician political parties to test three related hypotheses about how political competition and language public policy are linked: (i) adversary language public policy works as a valid strategy for opposition and electoral campaigning, but (ii) it becomes a major policy problem once in office, both for nationalist and non-nationalist parties, and (iii) advocating for careful balance between languages is the [A1] best political strategy for language public policy once in office. The Spanish and Galician right-wing party, Popular Party—PP/PPdeG—which has been in office between 1989 and 2005, has strategically promoted language public policies based on an alleged equilibrium between the Spanish language—Castellano—and the Galician language—Galego—to gain nationalist conservative voters. During this period, the nationalist—Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG)—and socialist—Partido dos Socialistas de Galicia (PSdeG/PSOE)—opposition have supported positive discrimination for Galego. Political change in 2005 switched their positions; PP stood for increasing protection for Castellano, while the new nationalist and left-wing government promoted a stronger status for Galego. PP's return to office in 2009 has switched the positions again.</p>
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<b>Response to Reviewers:</b>	<p>From Political Consensus to Political Conflict and Back Again: Language Public Policy in Galicia (1989-2020). Antonio Losada List of changes. July 2022</p> <p>This is the list of changes introduced after the comments and suggestions by the reviewers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.All the editing changes suggested have been accepted.</li><li>2.All the graphics, figures and tables have been revised to make them clearer and more understandable, especially Graphic 1, Figure 1 and Tables 1,2,3 and 4.</li></ol>

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7 ***From political consensus to political conflict and back again:***  
8 ***language public policy in Galicia (1989–2020)***  
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10 9.853 words

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21 **Abstract**

22 Language public policy is a key issue in Galician politics. Its symbolic uses have proven to be  
23 a powerful political resource in partisan competition. This article analyzes the strategies of the  
24 three main Galician political parties to test three related hypotheses about how political  
25 competition and language public policy are linked: (i) adversary language public policy works  
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30 been in office between 1989 and 2005, has strategically promoted language public policies  
31 based on an alleged equilibrium between the Spanish language—Castellano—and the Galician  
32 language—Galego—to gain nationalist conservative voters and to divide the nationalist  
33 political space. During this period, the nationalist—Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG)—and  
34 socialist—Partido dos Socialistas de Galicia (PSdeG/PSOE)—opposition have supported  
35 positive discrimination for the Galego language. Political change in 2005 switched their  
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38 switched the positions again.  
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40 key words: public policy, language policy, political actors, identity  
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Language policy as a matter of study is often understood as a broad and sometimes diffuse set of tools used to guide language use in diverse social contexts and to influence language behaviors, attitudes, and interactions in a society (Johnson 2009 & 2013). It serves to denote the “authoritative allocation of resources to language in general and to written/printed language in particular” (Fishman 2006: 311). A more specific approach, more suitable for the purposes of this article, considers it as a sectorial public policy: “a set of managed and planned interventions supported and enforced by law and implemented by a government agency” (Spolsky 2004: 5) with a variety of objectives (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). These cover the different forms of government intervention, from its different levels, to influence citizens’ language patterns (Grin 2003).

Despite the growing relevance of language issues and the public policies that manage them in pluricultural or plurinational societies, “marked by trends such as immigration, sub-state nationalisms, and cultural globalization” (Lewis and Royles 2018b: 2), political science has paid language limited attention (Lewis and Royles 2018a). At the least, research has stayed far away from the academic proposition of studying them to the same extent that political science analyzes other sectorial policies such as health, education, or welfare (Grin 2003).

The bulk of the literature on language policy is regularly associated with the field of sociolinguistics. It focuses primarily on analyzing the consequences of different policies and their influence on the evolution, expansion, or disappearance of a language (Fishman 1991, 2006), on how such policies promote social change in terms of equality or discrimination (Tollefson 1991 & 2006; Levine 1991), and on the design and planning of its mechanisms for influencing languages, although with much less interest on implementation and evaluation issues (Baldauf 1994; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997; Ricento 2000, 2006, & 2015; Wright 2016). Other fields that have resorted to instruments and approaches from political science to tackle language public policies to analyze their costs and impacts include economics (Grin 2003; Wright 2016), geography (Williams 1991), and history (Johnson and Ricento 2013).

Despite the existence of this broad and multidisciplinary field of study, there is a lack of analysis and research from political science on identifying the political factors that explain language policy decisions and which political reasons explain whether certain language policy decisions are made (Lewis and Royles 2018a & 2018b). This is precisely the focus and purpose of this work: to identify those political reasons that can explain language public-policy decisions.

The study of the strategies of the political actors and the analysis of their roles in different institutional sets have proven to be powerful tools to understand the decision-making process and to explain the content of those decisions (Scharpf 1997). This article exposes and analyzes the strategies of the main political and institutional actors to set out the motivations and political causes that explain how language public policy has changed in Galicia over the last four decades. In this work, I also formulate and test some policy hypotheses that can serve to

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7 advance the goal of “improving our knowledge and explanation of the political origins of  
8 defining language public policies” (Lewis and Royles 2018b: 4).  
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10 The model of roles in public policy (Dente 1995; Losada 2001; Subirats and Dente 2014)  
11 provides a very useful tool to analyze the strategies of different actors within a specific  
12 institutional set as the Estado de las Autonomías and to understand how the roles they have  
13 chosen to play in different moments explain the political reasons as to how and why decisions  
14 have been made in Galicia in language public policy.  
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16 The model of roles in public policy posits that, in each policy arena, different actors play a  
17 series of roles in the policy-making process (see Figure 1). Sometimes, these actors choose to  
18 play that specific part, but many other times they must take that role because of their own  
19 institutional position. The model identifies the main following roles:  
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- 21 • The **Promoter** is the actor or actors that play for and mobilizes resources to push their  
22 problem definition in the agenda, to reach the other actors to build coalitions of support,  
23 and to champion a preferred solution. The specific content of the policy is what really  
24 moves them.  
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- 26 • The **Opponent** is the actor or actors that play against the policy championed by the  
27 Promoter. The policy advocated by the Promoter is the only solution they cannot accept.  
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- 29 • The **Director** is the actor or actors responsible for making the policy decisions. The  
30 Director needs to have one policy and gives relatively less attention to its content or its  
31 undesirable consequences.  
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- 33 • The **Mediator** is the actor or actors who are more concerned about the policy-  
34 production process than its contents. The degree of consensus about the solution is what  
35 matters to them, even more than the solution itself, since consensus is what legitimizes  
36 the Mediator’s presence in the policy-making process. This actor does not necessarily  
37 have their own definition of the problem or a preferred solution.  
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- 39 • The **Filter** is the actor or actors who do not have any specific interest in the policy but  
40 either act as spokespersons for another actor’s interest or strategically see the policy as  
41 means to gain an advantage in another policy arena.  
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- 43 • The **Goalkeeper** is the actor or actors who have the power to veto or to stop one  
44 solution. The Goalkeeper does not have a specific or particular interest in the policy,  
45 but without their assent, it is not possible to make the decision.  
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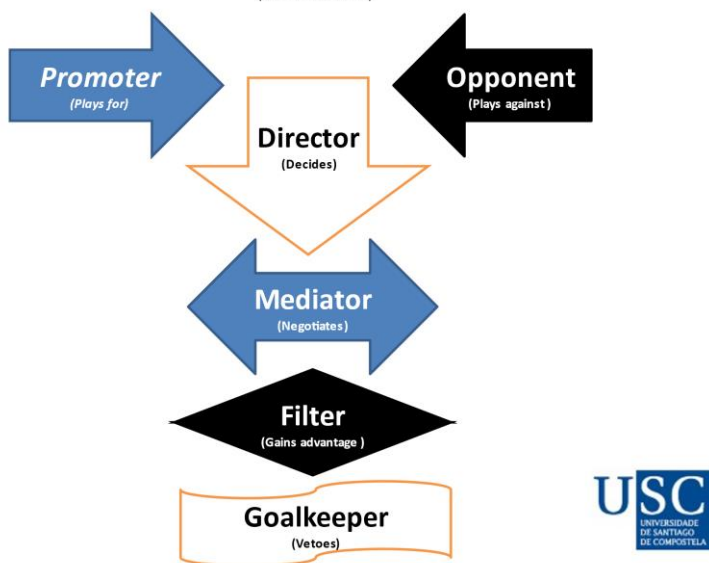
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11 **Figure 1: THE MODEL OF ROLES**

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34 The contents and symbolic uses of language public policies by the three major Galician parties  
35 have been one of the key elements of their political discourses and the design and development  
36 of their electoral competition strategies. The aim of this article is more centered around  
37 analyzing these strategic and “symbolic uses of public policies” (Edelman 1967) by the  
38 different actors than its sociolinguistic impacts.

40 There is an effective relationship between language policy and national identity; this  
41 relationship is ideological and has very specific impacts on the construction of a national  
42 identity (Blommaert 2006). Language public policy has been a prominent field for partisan  
43 competition in Galicia. Its symbolic uses, not so much because of its quantitative relevance in  
44 terms of legislation or spending, but rather because of its qualitative relevance, connects it  
45 directly with the process of constructing Galicia’s national identity.

47 In its most common meaning, national identity is understood as that aspect of one’s own social  
48 identity referring to identification as part of a group of citizens (Risse 2010), giving it a positive  
49 emotional value as part of their being as individuals (Keating 2007). We also find a civic-  
50 republican formulation characterized by the “political will” of its members to constitute a  
51 political community (Maiz 2008).

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8 The recurring distinction between cultural identity and civic identity builds on all three  
9 dominant approaches to the legitimacy of political communities. The first links legitimacy to  
10 the existence of institutions accepted by society through a social contract, the second associates  
11 the legitimacy of political communities with their correspondence with a “nation” delimited by  
12 a common culture, and the third approach links the legitimacy of institutions with the  
13 manifestation of a “common desire to live together” by members of the community (Bruter  
14 2009). From these theoretical perspectives, two ways of interpreting identity have been  
15 developed: the civic component and the cultural component. The civic component affects an  
16 individual’s identification with a political and institutional system. The cultural component  
17 affects the individual’s sense of belonging to a community with which they share a culture.  
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20 Language public policies have symbolic and real impacts on both components. As a product of  
21 the institutions of self-government, they provide relevant assistance to the very consolidation  
22 of such institutions within the perception of the members of the community as belonging to  
23 them (Losada 2000, 2001). Policies to defend and promote one’s own language affect attitudes,  
24 practices, and even legal conditions for language use and have a direct impact on the sense of  
25 belonging to a culture shared by all members of the community, even among those who reject  
26 it.  
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28 The data and information used for this analysis result from systematically studying and  
29 comparing the principles and provisions set forth in the laws, regulations, and plans approved  
30 during the period in question by the Galician parliament and the Galician government, as well  
31 as through qualitatively and quantitatively analyzing the official budgets and reports managed  
32 by the Xunta de Galicia and organizationally analyzing the departments responsible for  
33 language public policies.  
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35 The electoral programs of the three parties—PPdeG, PSdeG, and BNG—for the successive  
36 elections held in these years have also been systematically analyzed. Likewise, parliamentary  
37 debates about language policies and the most significant public statements made by the most  
38 relevant spokespersons of the main actors have been handled and evaluated, as well as the  
39 content of various personal interviews and conversations throughout these more than 30 years  
40 with the leaders of the three most relevant political parties in Galicia: Núñez Feijóo (PPdeG),  
41 Xosé Manuel Beiras (BNG), Anxo Quintana (BNG), Emilio Pérez Touriño (PSdeG), and Pachi  
42 Vázquez (PSdeG).  
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## 47 **1. Language public policy in Galicia: some history and a few hypotheses**

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49 The transition to democracy in Spain and the creation of the State of Autonomies has  
50 implied abandoning centuries of Castellano monolingualism imposed by the Spanish state. The  
51 process of official recognition for multilingualism in Spain was long and complex (Argelaguet  
52 i Argemí 1998). It has had three crucial moments:  
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1) The 1978 Spanish Constitution acknowledged the existence of “nacionalidades históricas”—historical nationalities—within the Spanish state and the official status of Castellano as well as of the “other Spanish languages”—Catalán, Euskera and Galego. Galicia is one of those “nacionalidades históricas” recognized by the Constitution and has its own official language, Galego (Rojo 1982; Gonzalez 1985).

2) The “Estatutos de Autonomía”—Statutes of Autonomy—approved by those “historical nationalities” took a further step during the 1980s, commanding autonomous public powers to guarantee the “normal and official use” of both languages and the promotion of their own national languages at all levels of public life by providing the necessary resources (Monteagudo Romero 2012). Consequently, when talking about *national language* in Spain, we are referring to Galego, Euskera or Catalán.

3) All three “nacionalidades históricas” executed this mandate to promote their own national languages by passing several *linguistic normalization laws*—Basque Country (1982), Catalonia (1983) and Galicia (1983)—that created non-symmetric language policies, looking to rebalance long decades of diglossia—inferior political, social, and administrative status for one language—and the prohibition of Galego, Catalán, and Euskera. These policies have implemented resourceful policy programs and have established a stronger official status for national languages (Losada 2012). Additionally, “new speakers have emerged in the contexts of revitalization policies since the 1980s” (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013: 287).

The scope of language public policies in the three “nacionalidades históricas” has included two key priorities: 1) increasing the use of national language in non-university education; and 2) extending the use of national language in public administration and official institutions of the autonomous community. The accelerated implementation of *normalization* policies gained widespread consensus during the 1980s and 1990s (Cabrera 1994).

Nevertheless, normalization is a controversial term. Some authors have argued that there is no real “normalization,” only the preservation of a statu quo of Castellano dominance (Cáccamo 2003). Some authors have suggested the use of “revitalization” instead (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013). This “Normalization”/“Revitalization” process was politically contested by some marginal advocates: those who attributed priority to Castellano with no recognition or compensation for their historical discrimination; and those who proposed a linguistic normalization, which would grant exclusive status to national languages and actively remove the dominate status of Castellano (Maiz and Losada 2000 & 2011).

A real alternative to this political consensus around “normalization/revitalization policy” did not appear in the Spanish political arena until the end of the 1990s, when proposals for regulating the use of *two* vehicular languages—Castellano and a national language—instead of one—the national language—in the educational system were introduced into the public debate. In the mid-2000s, open contestation against normalization/revitalization policies returned to

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7 the political scene, supported by new center-right political parties such as “Ciutatans” in  
8 Catalonia or “UPyD” in Spain that were trying to gain Popular voters.

9 Urged by these new competitors, the Spanish Partido Popular took then a firm position against  
10 the normalization/revitalization model. Two other factors can also explain this choice: 1) the  
11 end of a period for strategic compromises with nationalist parties (1997–2001), when the CiU  
12 nationalist government in Catalonia needed PP’s votes and Aznar’s PP government in Spain  
13 needed the support of CiU, and 2) the mutual reinforcement between Ciutatans, UPyD, and  
14 conservative media, which had created great pressure against language normalization policies  
15 at historical nationalities, as well as against a so-called “federalist evolution” of the Spanish  
16 State of Autonomies. PP clearly adopted a new language policy based on a predominant role  
17 for Castellano as the vehicular language in education and the advocacy for a so-called “freedom  
18 of choice” (Monteagudo Romero 2012 & 2019) for governments, employees, and parents.  
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21 The main political features of language policy in Galicia during this time can be summarized  
22 in these key points (Losada 2012; Maiz & Losada 2011):  
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24 1) It is not possible to associate exclusively language groups with political parties. Language  
25 and politics relate in a transversal way.  
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27 2) There were no significant linguistic conflicts in Galicia until 2007, thanks to the wide  
28 acceptance of a bilingual Galego–Castellano compromise with different degrees of  
29 implementation.  
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31 3) Three different models of language public policy can be identified since 1989: “harmonious”  
32 bilingualism, normalization, and a so-called “cordial” bilingualism; only the last one has  
33 clearly broken, in 2010, the wide consensus that had been shared since the Autonomous  
34 Community was created.  
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### 37 38 **1.1 The Fraga administration (1989–2004)**

39 Manuel Fraga, a former and notorious minister under dictator Francisco Franco, won  
40 the Galician election in 1989. Despite some initial mistrust, the Fraga administration embraced  
41 the linguistic normalization/revitalization model introduced by the 1983 Galician Linguistic  
42 Law. Following the principles of what he called *harmonious bilingualism*, the 247/1995 Decree  
43 established the use of Galego as the vehicular language at all levels of non-university education.  
44 There was no separation of students into different classes or schools to foster the learning of  
45 both Castellano and Galego (Rubal 1992). Official accreditation of fluency in Galego was made  
46 a compulsory requirement for government employees. A high authority for language policy  
47 was created within the Galician government, integrated in the Department of Education.  
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49 The *harmonious bilingualism* model assumed the nationalist principle that Galego “represents  
50 the strongest bond among Galician citizens” (247/1995 Decree). Fraga became a strong  
51 advocate of what he called “auto-identification” as an alternative to the “national  
52 identification” proposed by the nationalist political discourse. The model was not only aimed  
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7 toward preserving and promoting Galego; rather, linguistic normalization was an explicit goal,  
8 which resulted in the unanimous approval of the Galician Parliament of a *General*  
9 *Normalization Plan* in 2004 (PXNL), the last year of Fraga’s administration.

10 A striking resemblance can be observed between the Linguistic Normalization Law of Galicia,  
11 ruled by the right-wing PP, and Catalonia, ruled by the nationalist CiU. Both laws were passed  
12 in 1983, and the only real difference laid in the fact that Galician law does not recognize the  
13 status of the national language as *proper to* education at all levels, but only as an *official*  
14 *language*. Linguistic public policies in Galicia took Catalonia as a model for legislative  
15 development.  
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18 This formal acceptance by the Fraga administration of some “nationalist” postulates about  
19 Galego normalization/revitalization, along with the Galician PP “galeguización” process to  
20 expand its electoral space in conservative regionalism, had several main effects. It received  
21 great electoral support and was only opposed by pro-Galego groups such as MNL—Mesa pola  
22 Normalización Lingüística—and to a lesser extent by the BNG. The result was over 20 years  
23 of absence of significant language conflicts in Galicia but also a “low intensity planification”  
24 (Lorenzo Suárez 2005): repeated non-fulfillment and lack of control and evaluation of language  
25 public policies by the government (Monteagudo Romero 2012), especially in private schools.  
26 This lack of political conflict, the extreme flexibility regarding the fulfillment of the law, and  
27 the limited budgetary resources devoted to normalization/revitalization goals had a double  
28 effect, as shown by empirical studies such as the Sociolinguistic Map of Galicia (1995 & 2004):  
29 a significant increase in the cultural and social status of Galego among the population, but  
30 limited and irregular effectiveness regarding the accomplishment of normalization goals  
31 (Lorenzo Suárez 2008; Regueira Fernández 2009; O’Rourke and Ramallo 2015; Monteagudo  
32 Romero 2019), particularly in urban areas and within the younger population, as the Fraga  
33 government itself admitted in the 2004 PXNL.  
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## 37 **1.2. The Bipartito administration (PSdeG–BNG coalition, 2005–2009)**

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39 The arrival in 2005 of a new coalition government between socialists and nationalists  
40 was characterized by a moderate change in language public policy, mainly regarding the  
41 implementation process. The main objective was to effectively accomplish the Linguistic  
42 Normalization Plan that had been approved by all parties during the last days of the Fraga  
43 administration.  
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45 A new Galego decree headed toward approval by 2007, with the support of the PPdeG and  
46 after a two-year negotiation process, to keep the consensus among the three main Galician  
47 political parties that had parliamentary representation—PPdeG, PSdeG, and BNG. However,  
48 some new events, especially in the larger Spanish political arena, broke that consensus. The  
49 PP’s partisan strategy in the Spanish arena, as seen in several parliament initiatives “in defense  
50 of Castellano,” undoubtedly fostered by the presence and actions of pro-Castellano groups like  
51 *Ciutatans* and UPyD, eventually ended up directly opposing any “normalization policies” in  
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7 any historical nationality and advocating a somewhat “liberal” individual choice approach to  
8 language policy, even for an exclusive role of Castellano as the vehicular language. Beyond  
9 this, some groups of citizens supporting Castellano speakers, such as Galicia Bilingüe (GB)  
10 decided to increase their protests and gained strong Spanish media attention (Regueira  
11 Fernández 2009).  
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14 The PPdeG unexpectedly backed off and rejected the new Galego Decree, 124/2007, just a day  
15 before its negotiated approval (Monteagudo Romero 2012). The Decree could only rely on the  
16 support of the governing parties. It was entirely based on the Normalization Plan of the last  
17 Fraga government (2004) and mainly focused on how to fulfill its goals and standards, with a  
18 more effective implementation plan and more control and evaluation.  
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20 The Bipartito administration, trying and failing to maintain the language-related political  
21 consensus that had been inherited since 1989, and therefore under severe conditions of  
22 instability, had developed the bases of its language public policy around the following axes:  
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- 24 1) The systematic evaluation of effective accomplishment gained from the 2004 Linguistic  
25 Normalization Plan;
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27 2) More ambitious normalization standards: a 50% minimum of teaching in Galego in all  
28 levels in non-university education and the setting of compulsory courses to be taught in  
29 Galego in both public and private schools;
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31 3) An annual evaluation and control of the outcome and impact of the  
32 normalization/revitalization process;
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34 4) The increase of budget (up to 15%), human, and material resources for normalization  
35 policies; and  
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37 5) The creation of a new General Secretary for Language Policy (SXPL), which would  
38 receive strong political support, as a new transversal department, formally allocated to  
39 the Presidency of the Xunta de Galicia.  
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42 The approval of the 124/2007 Decree triggered a PP offensive based on a “language free  
43 choice” option against a so-called “linguistic totalitarianism” (Regueira Fernández 2009). The  
44 year 2007 spelled the end of the political consensus that had existed since 1989 and the  
45 emergence of new growing conflicts in public opinion (Monteagudo Romero 2012; 2019).  
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### 48 **1.3. The Feijóo administration (2009–2020)**

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50 The PP won the Galician election in 2009 under the leadership of a new and younger  
51 figurehead, Alberto Núñez Feijóo. Feijóo has been a public servant who made his professional  
52 career in public administration in Galicia and Madrid moving from Galician PP governments  
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7 to central PP governments. The promise of a radical change in language policy in Galicia was  
8 one of the campaign issues that allowed PPdeG to win the 2009 election. Following the Spanish  
9 PP's strategy, the new policy began asking for a new liberal perspective: the so-called "parents'  
10 freedom of choice" in education and the *friendly bilingualism* in administration were advocated  
11 for instead of the supposed "impositions" and "linguistic maximalism" endorsed in Bipartito  
12 language policies (Regueira Fernández 2009; Monteagudo Romero 2019).  
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15 One of the reasons for this policy change was the radicalization of anti-normalization positions,  
16 which characterized the Spanish PP's course of action against the PSOE administration and  
17 President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero between 2005 and 2011. For the Spanish PP and its  
18 media supporters, campaigning against the reform of the Statute of Autonomy in Catalonia and  
19 against socialist-nationalist coalition governments, in Catalonia or Galicia, became a priority.  
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21 Further reasons for this change can be found in Galician politics. One of them was the rise of  
22 new Galician PP leaders, who were ideologically distant from the soft regionalism developed  
23 during the Fraga era and closer to the more extreme centralist positions held by the Spanish PP  
24 (Monteagudo Romero 2012). Another reason was the rise of "linguistic distress" in some urban  
25 areas of electoral significance—A Coruña and Vigo—due to the more demanding  
26 implementation in private schools as promoted by the Bipartito government.  
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28 This change was best (although not exclusively) expressed through the so-called *Decree on*  
29 *Multilingualism in Non-University Education* (2009) and had three main consequences:  
30

- 31 1. In accordance with a new "multilingualism perspective" and opposition to the  
32 bilingualism and normalization that had been dominating since 1983, the English  
33 language was introduced as a third *vehicular* language in non-university education, on  
34 an equally shared basis (33%) with Galego and Castellano.  
35
- 36 2. The so-called "parents' freedom of choice" between Galego and Castellano was  
37 prescribed as a mandatory principle for all schools.  
38
- 39 3. The requirement of an official certification in Galego for public employees was  
40 canceled, to guarantee alleged "language rights" and "eliminate" those "barriers" which  
41 might keep "excellent civil servants" from being part of the Galician administration.  
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44 This radical departure from historical consensus caused social and political conflicts about  
45 language during the two first legislatures of the Feijóo administration that had been absent  
46 before then, including massive demonstrations each 17 May from 2009 to 2012, general strikes  
47 in public education on 21 January 2010, and open confrontation with opposition parties in the  
48 Galician Parliament, the Courts of Justice, and the Galego academic community. Even the two  
49 most important cultural institutions in Galicia—the Royal Galician Academy of Language  
50 (RAG) and the Council for Galician Culture (CCG)—have unequivocally rejected the new  
51 criteria of the Feijóo administration's language policy.  
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The high level of conflict and institutional, social, and political backlash against the first version of Feijóo’s decree led to the final approval of the 79/2010 Decree on Multilingualism, which included a partial reformulation of the guidelines initially announced: the return to the 50% balance between the two official languages, the lessened importance of “parents’ freedom of choice” about the vehicular language, and the reduction of the one third of teaching hours in English in non-university education. Still, the multilingual perspective that weakened the co-official status and normalization of Galego was maintained (Monteagudo Romero 2019), as was as a power devolution to school centers, which have the right to develop their linguistic plans independently under a four-year official evaluation, instead of every year, as proposed in 2007 under the Bipartito government.

The main arguments against Feijóo’s language policy are the following (Monteagudo Romero 2019):

1. Multilingualism, as a goal of public education, undermined the constitutional and statutory status of both Castellano and Galego as official languages.
2. Equal mastery of Castellano and Galego could not be acquired through linguistic balance but rather through the reinforcement and promotion of Galego, which was historically subordinate to Castellano.
3. Since 1983, the goal of reinforcing and promoting Galego had resulted in a model of normalization/revitalization policy and language immersion that had been accepted by the Constitutional Court since 1994 and was also considered as the most successful by specialists.
4. Because of the symbolic meaning of language policies and their importance in defining an identity, any change affecting it requires greater political, social, and institutional consensus.

The Decree was judicially fought by the Real Academia Galega (RAG), challenging its legality and the new criteria, which, they argued, were against the Spanish Constitution, the Galician Estatuto, and the Carta Europea de Lenguas Regionales. The Galician Superior Court of Justice’s and the Spanish Supreme Court’s ruling backed both the legality of the Decree and the policy in 2015. There was only one setback in both sentences for Feijóo’s policy: no more parents’ “consultation” in choosing the vehicular language.

One more extremely significant change must be pointed out as far as the language public policies of the Feijóo administration are concerned. Again, the General Secretary for Language Policy was brought back under the control of the sectorial Consellería de Educación, conceived with a merely educational perspective and subjected to a very relevant reduction in its powers and scope of action, in comparison to the political support and transversal character that it had

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been granted by the Bipartito government. As a result, there has been a sharp cutback in the budgets assigned to language policy, which fell to pre-2005 levels and has stayed there to this day (see Graphic 1).

Commented [A7]: If possible, remove the bottom image (that grey gradient) and change 'IGE' to 'Instituto Galego de Estatística (IGE).'

**Graphic 1: The Budgets for Language Policy Trough Time**  
(Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística. IGE)

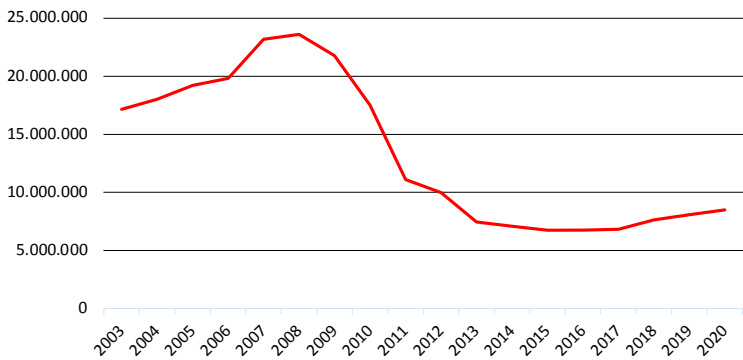


Table 1 below summarizes the main differences between the three Galician language public policy models during these last 30 years, using some key variables such as problem definition, political consensus, resources, and implementation.

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**Table 1: The three Galician language public-policy models**

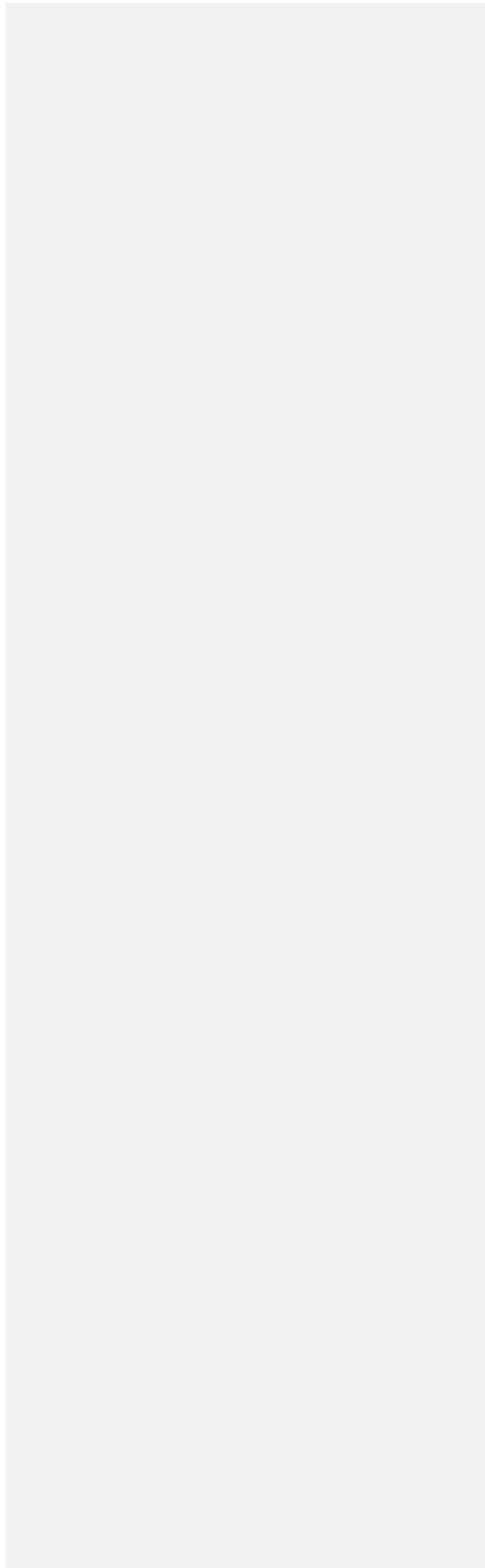
(Source: author)

	<b>“Harmonious bilingualism” (1990–2004)</b>	<b>(Unstable) normalization (2005–2009)</b>	<b>“Cordial bilingualism” (2010–2020)</b>
<b>Problem definition</b>	<i>Protection for Galego</i>	<i>Positive discrimination for Galego</i>	<i>Protection for Galego and Castellano</i>
<b>Objective</b>	<i>Low-intensity normalization</i>	<i>Normalization/ Revitalization</i>	<i>“Freedom of choice”</i>
<b>Political Consensus</b>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Language balance</b>	<i>50/50</i>	<i>Min. 50% for Galego</i>	<i>Max. 50% for Galego</i>
<b>Administrative hierarchy</b>	<i>Department of Education</i>	<i>Xunta Presidency</i>	<i>Department of Education</i>
<b>Budget and resources</b>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Implementation</b>	<i>Soft</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Very soft</i>

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**2. Actors, roles, and strategies: the political reasons for the different models for language public policy in Galicia**

The analysis of the policy-making process and outcome of Galician language public policies shows that, until 2007, there was a high degree of negotiation, compromise, and stability based on the existence of a solid, stable, and enduring social consensus about the need to strengthen and improve the sociolinguistic situation of Galego (Monteagudo Romero 2012), its importance as an element of collective identity (Cabrera 1994), and a clear preference for “sensitive bilingualism” as the chosen model for public policy. A wide majority supported positive public action for Galego in the critical year of 2007, and there is a growing perception that its social use is declining (see Tables 2 and 3).



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**Table 2: Public opinion in Galicia about the need of public promotion for Galego**

(Source: Observatorio da Lingua Galega. 2007)

<i>Agree</i>	<i>Mostly agree</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Mostly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<b>62.48%</b>	<b>23.76%</b>	<b>4.52%</b>	<b>6.40%</b>	<b>2.84%</b>

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**Table 3: Public perception about how often Galego is being used in Galicia, 2013–2019**

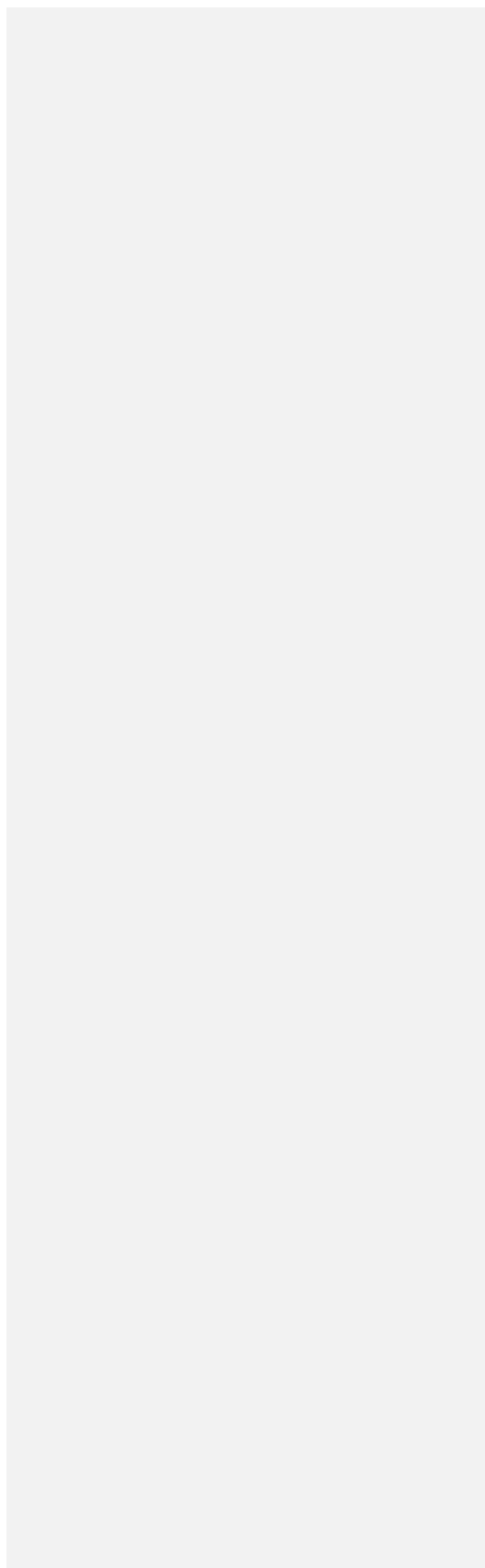
(Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística (IGE). [www.ige.eu](http://www.ige.eu))

	<i>2013</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>Very much</i>	9.50%	7.28%
<i>Quite a lot</i>	32.54%	30.23%
<i>Normal</i>	28.76%	31.82%
<i>Very few or nothing</i>	29.15%	30.67%

**Commented [A9]:** What does 'Very much' mean in this context? Support it? You need to add more detail to this table and note whether these numbers are percentages (9.5%?). Also aim to use the same number of decimal units (hundredths – 9.50 vs 9.5).

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There is also a wide consensus about the fact that the average knowledge and use of Galego have improved notably among Galician people, without a reduction or worsening of their capacities regarding to the knowledge and use of Castellano (Lorenzo Suárez 2008; Monteagudo Romero 2012). In reality, both languages present very similar situations in terms of use and social presence (see Tables 4A and 4B).

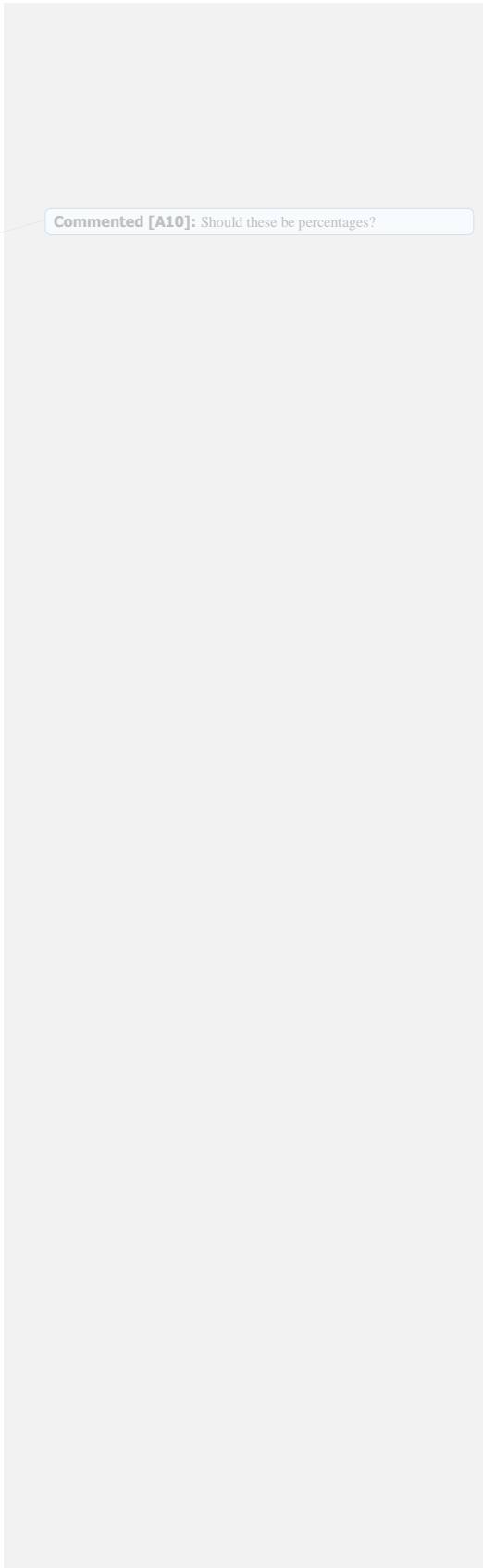


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**Table 4a: Language in Galicia by individual use, 2007**

(Source: Observatorio da Lingua Galega. 2007)

<i>Always in Galego</i>	<i>More Galego than Spanish</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>More Spanish than Galego</i>	<i>Always in Spanish</i>	<i>Other languages</i>
<b>30.24%</b>	<b>17.72%</b>	<b>19.28%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>13.76%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>



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**Table 4b: Language in Galicia by individual use, 2014–2019**

(Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística (IGE). [www.ige.eu](http://www.ige.eu))

	<i>Always in Galego</i>	<i>More Galego than Spanish</i>	<i>More Spanish than Galego</i>	<i>Always in Spanish</i>
<b>2014</b>	31.20%	20.29%	22.26%	26.25%
<b>2019</b>	30.57%	21.72%	23.32%	24.40%

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7 The introduction of a “language issue” in the political debate, especially during the 2009  
8 Galician election, was not due then to critical changes in language policies’ outcome. It was  
9 not even a response to a substantial change in the perception and evaluation by Galician public  
10 opinion about the direction, scope, or content of those policies. Therefore, it seems appropriate  
11 to undertake as the main hypothesis that the emergence of the so-called “linguistic conflict”  
12 was due mostly to partisan goals, ad hoc strategies, and opportunistic behaviors by some  
13 political actors during the electoral competition, especially the PP and its new leader, Núñez  
14 Feijóo. It was not a consequence of a set of conditions related to the situation of both languages,  
15 the performance by the educational system, or any significant changes in common perceptions.  
16 The model of roles in public policy (Dente 1995; Losada 2001; Subirats and Dente 2014)  
17 provides a very useful tool to analyze the political strategies of different actors as explanatory  
18 factors for the rise of the so-called “linguistic conflict.”  
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## 22 **2.1 The harmonious bilingualism model as balance (1983–2004): the importance of a** 23 **mediator**

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25 The Manuel Fraga administration represented a period of very stable language public  
26 policy, characterized by the presence of few actors who maintained a balance of power during  
27 those two decades. On the one hand, a Galician government led by the Galician PP placed the  
28 language issue into an intermediate position on the agenda, choosing negotiation and political  
29 consensus as the first option in dealing with the issues of language policy, as shown in the  
30 different regulations unanimously passed: the 1983 LNL, the Decree 247/1995, and, in the last  
31 stage, the General Plan for Normalization of Galego. On the other hand, PSdeG and the  
32 nationalist BNG developed, during this period, a moderate strategy in opposition. Only the  
33 BNG put more pressure on Fraga’s government about language issues. Despite the differences  
34 between the parties, it was a political situation characterized by the search for points of  
35 consensus and compromise. There were several key elements in this period:  
36

- 37 1. A political consensus regarding the definition of the so-called “linguistic problem”: the  
38 inferiority of Galego compared to Castellano and the progressive loss of Galego  
39 speakers (Monteagudo Romero 2012).  
40
- 41 2. A political consensus regarding the “solution”: the situation of Galego required a  
42 commitment by public authorities and public intervention to ensure Galego in the  
43 educational system, establishing quotas for each official language, as well as  
44 mechanisms that allowed them to ensure compliance.  
45
- 46 3. A language public policy characterized by political consensus and compromise that  
47 marked the difference from the situation in other Autonomous Communities, such as  
48 Catalonia or the Basque Country, where language policy was a recurrent issue for  
49 political debate at the state level.  
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4. A medium position for language issues in the political agenda of Galician governments, unnoticed by the national media and not subject to any greater public debate (Regueira Fernández 2009).
5. A marginal social and political position for the groups opposed to this “normalization/revitalization process” for Galego.

This “harmonious bilingualism” policy designed and implemented by the Xunta was due mainly to the PP’s political strategy, developed by Manuel Fraga since his return to Galicia. It was the outcome of a conscious pursuit of the moderate regionalist voter—the so-called “espacio galeguista”—to ensure the fragile absolute majority that Fraga had earned in his first victory in the Galician election in 1989. The occupation of this “regionalist” and “moderate” space, thanks to a symbolic and strategic use of these public policies, more closely linked to the identity issue, became a key element for Fraga’s political strategy and electoral success. This “galeguization strategy” was carried out with remarkable success and led Fraga to win several absolute majorities and to block any competition for this electoral space by other conservative regionalist forces, such as the historical Coalición Galega (Maiz and Losada 2000 & 2011).

The harmonious bilingualism approach also offered the PPdeG the possibility of enhancing the legitimacy of its own regional discourse before the Spanish PP. This “discurso galeguista” allowed the Galician PP to introduce itself as the party that ensured a balance and a consensual solution between the different positions related to the promotion and defense of Galego. The policy also worked, to some extent, as a guarantee for the more radical groups both in favor of Galego monolingualism and Castellano monolingualism.

At this stage, the roles between the different actors were played as follows (see Figure 2):

- **The PPdeG played the role of Promoter** for this harmonious bilingualism model—its solution for the “language issue.” The PP sought out political allies between the other main parties and promoted a supporting coalition based on balance: a policy of linguistic normalization/revitalization at the design and decision stages, but a guarantee of discretionary policy implementation for those groups opposed or reluctant to Galego normalization, for instance, private schools.
- **The Xunta administration headed by Fraga also acted as a Promoter and as the Director** since it was responsible for getting language policy done. Peaceful implementation, and not policy definition, was its main concern, as it was for the harmonious bilingualism.
- **MNL, BNG, and other organizations like GB played the role of Opponents, but for very different reasons.** The harmonious bilingualism model did not meet their expectations regarding both Galego and Castellano. The nationalist BNG also played a

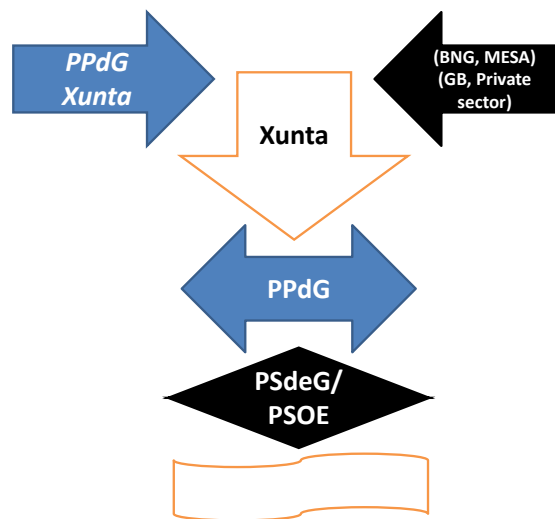
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role as opponent but showed more openness to occasional compromise. Additionally, the powerful lobby of private schools and private schools funded by the state resisted the institutionalization of Galego in the educational curriculum.

- **The PPdeG also played a key role as the Mediator.** The harmonious bilingualism model cared more for keeping a high degree of consensus than for the effectiveness in enhancing or defending Galego. This consensus became a tool to reinforce the legitimacy of both the policy and the Galician government. The BNG also tried to play this role to reinforce its prominence in the nationalist electoral space.
- **The PSOE–PSdeG played the role of Filter.** It did not have clear specific interest in language policy and held an ambiguous position on the issue of Galego normalization/revitalization. The PSdeG would strategically use language policy to gain advantage in partisan competition by negotiating opportunistic compromises with both the PPdeG and the BNG.

**FIGURE 2. ROLES AND ACTORS IN THE HARMONIOUS BILINGUALISM MODEL**

*(Source: author)*



## 2.2 From the harmonious bilingualism model to a (unstable) normalization model (2005–2009): Not all mediators can get the job done.

The change driven by the Bipartito—PSdeG and BNG—in 2005 looked to reformulate the definition of the language problem, which involved moving on from “harmonious bilingualism” toward “linguistic normalization”: the maximum policy standards for Galego in

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7 the PP's language policy became the starting point for the new policy standards set by the  
8 Bipartito.  
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10 The new policy challenged the idea that both languages had a similar status and that the main  
11 goal should be to ensure the harmonious use of both. The language problem was defined then  
12 in terms of inequality: one of the two languages—Galego—was in a position of inferiority, and  
13 it was necessary to implement proactive policies to achieve a linguistic normalization that  
14 would not happen by itself (Regueira Fernández 2009; Monteagudo Romero 2012).  
15

16 The Bipartito government went from “harmonious bilingualism” to an incremental strategy of  
17 implementation for normalizing Galego. Using the same Linguistic Plan unanimously  
18 approved by the Galician Parliament in 2004, the new policy went beyond the symbolic uses  
19 of the Plan and used it to become the benchmark in the matter of developing a new policy with  
20 more organizational, regulatory, and economic resources.  
21

22 The approval of the 124/2007 Decree without the support of the Galician PP broke the political  
23 consensus and opened a period in which the tension between the political forces considerably  
24 increased (Monteagudo Romero 2012). The same language issues that used to be an element  
25 of unity and consensus between political parties led now to a situation of confrontation between  
26 government and opposition, fostering a climate of political confrontation that transcended  
27 Galician boundaries.  
28

29 The dynamics of Spanish politics would have a significant impact upon Galician language  
30 public policy. The argument about language imposition in Galicia would also be part of the  
31 debate and clashes between political parties at a state level. In that context, a new political  
32 party, first under the name of “Unión, Progreso y Democracia,” tried to play a decisive role in  
33 the 2009 Galician election, introducing itself as an alternative political force to the two major  
34 parties and assuming the rejection of the 124/2007 Decree and the so-called “nationalists’  
35 impositions” as one of its fundamental promises.  
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38 Compared to the previous stage, there were important differences in language public policy:  
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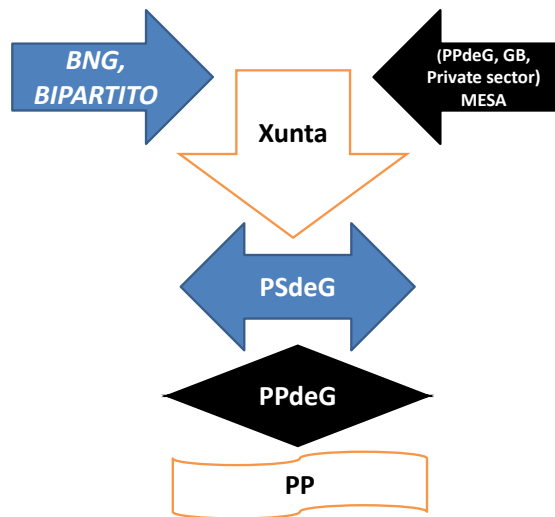
- 40 1. The breakdown of the political consensus about problem definition. It was no longer  
41 about the inferiority of Galego’s status compared to Castellano’s or the loss of Galician  
42 speakers. Language became a problem of lack of freedom and imposition. “The main  
43 sociolinguistic problem of Galicia would be not the subordination and substitution of  
44 Galego but its imposition on Spanish speakers, and the appropriate answer to this  
45 problem would be the suspension of the process of linguistic normalization”  
46 (Monteagudo Romero 2012: 21).  
47
- 48 2. The breakdown of the consensus regarding the “solution,” or the public policy to carry  
49 out. It was no more, as it was during the Fraga era, a matter of allocating quotas for  
50 each official language. There were new demands for a new education policy that  
51 allowed parents to decide which language they preferred to educate their children in.  
52

3. For the first time in its history, Galician language policy became part of the Spanish political debate. This was a major change that would alter Galician language policy to this day.
4. A rise of pro-Spanish groups, led by GB, which would achieve a key position regarding language policy, changing the constellation of actors that had existed until 2007. GB set as its main goal the derogation of Bipartito regulations and the introduction of deep changes in education policies. Repeating slogans such as “imposition” or “freedom of choice,” this group would gain in importance until it became the head of the most visible opposition to the Galego Decree and Bipartito language public policy, conducting several campaigns and initiatives that would have a significant echo in the Spanish media (Regueira Fernández 2009).
5. An important implication of the media, both Galician and Spanish, which would play a decisive role in this process.

**Commented [A11]:** Since you introduced the acronym GB above, use it here consistently and avoid writing out the entire name of the organization.

The policy change driven by the Bipartito government switched the roles played previously, rebalanced the language-balance solution promoted by harmonious bilingualism, and displaced the PP from its central position, which also enabled the formation of a powerful coalition against the normalization model (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3. ROLES AND ACTORS IN THE NORMALIZATION MODEL**  
(Source: author)



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- **The BNG and the Bipartito developed the role of Promoters** for the normalization model, although with different intensity and commitment between them. Normalization was their solution for language issues.
  - **The Xunta administration was still acting as the Director**, since it was interested in obtaining a language policy that ensured the stability of the coalition government and made policy management easier.
  - MNL remained an Opponent because they considered this new policy was not enough for Galego normalization. But, for very different reasons, another powerful coalition against the new policy appeared. **This Opponents' coalition was formed by organizations like GB, which perceived the policy as a threat, the powerful lobby of purely private and private funded by the state schools, and a new Galician PP** that no longer tried to reach the regionalists' electoral space that Fraga had pursued. The new PPdeG chose to go after the urban pro-Castellano voter that felt threatened by the Bipartito language policy and was looking for new offers.
  - **The PSOE–PSdeG also tried to play the role of the Mediator**, in the same way the Fraga's PP used to play it. The Socialists tried to achieve the centrality gained by the PP with the model of harmonious bilingualism, focusing more on consensus and the production process of the policy than on the content. But because of the problems that this moderator role created with their partner in government, also promoter of the Bipartito language policy, the polarizing strategy of the PPdeG and the PSOE's own contradictions about positive discrimination for the Galego finally resulted in the abandonment of one of the keys of the political success of the Fraga model: the degree of political consensus was no longer more important than the effectiveness in promoting or defending Galego.
  - **The PPdeG also tried to play the role of Filter**; their opposition to the policy was strategic, to gain power on the political setting by offering minor compromises in language policy in exchange for other compromises in different policy arenas.
  - Another key innovation was **the arrival of actors who played the role of Goalkeepers. Both the central government—first the PSOE and then the PP—and the Spanish PP** turned the growing importance of language issues for state politics into a greater willingness to veto whatever was decided in Galicia, so they could stop any solution that could be perceived—outside of Galicia—as a “threat” against Castellano. During the Fraga administration, the Spanish PP could not play this role because of the strong leadership of Manuel Fraga, the former Spanish leader of PP. **This was a major change for the Galician language policy arena. For the first time, Spanish political parties, especially right-wing parties, became principal actors and had real veto power.**

Commented [A12]: Perhaps 'imposing' instead?

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8 **2.3 The emergence of the cordial bilingualism model (2010–2016): no mediator, no**  
9 **consensus**

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11 The return of the PPdeG to office, after the 2009 Galician election, meant the beginning of  
12 the third and current stage of language policy in Galicia. After two years of intense debate and  
13 polarization about the language issue in education, the early months of the PP’s government  
14 were not easy in terms of language policy. Soon, the Feijóo administration found itself in a  
15 complex situation when trying to fulfill its promise of linguistic free choice, mainly because of  
16 three factors:

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18
- 19 • The solid prohibition against separating students into different classes or schools for  
20 reasons of language, established in the 1983 Linguistic Normalization Law;
  - 21 • Both the high economic and human resources costs required by the new promised  
22 “liberal” approach; and
  - 23 • The lack of consensus on the language issue inside the PPdeG, which would lead to a  
24 severe confrontation between the most centralist and pro-Castellano sectors—the so-  
25 called “Birretes”—and those who were most committed to Galego and a more  
26 regionalist vision—the so-called “boinas” (Monteagudo Romero 2019).
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30 Some other matters have changed since the 2009 election. Once the PP was back in office, the  
31 language issue was no longer a priority for its political agenda. It even became an important  
32 obstacle for day-to-day government because of the social opposition caused by its previous  
33 aggressive discourse on language policy. Political confrontation between parties about  
34 language policy remained a controversial issue in Galician politics but left the Spanish political  
35 debate.  
36

37 Unlike the previous stage, during which the Spanish media had played an important role in  
38 promoting the language issue in the political agenda, since 2009, the role played by the media  
39 has been much more discreet and quieter, just as it had been during the Fraga administration.  
40 Regarding the social groups active in language policy, significant changes can be seen. The  
41 approval of the “multilingualism decree” caused outrage among both pro-Castellano and pro-  
42 Galego groups: the former thought that the promise of free choice at school had been betrayed,  
43 and the latter considered that the new law pushed back Galego, since it re-established a  
44 percentage of hours taught in Galego like the one established in the 1995 Decree, ignoring the  
45 provisions of Fraga’s PXNL of 2004.  
46

47  
48 Protection and positive discrimination for Galego has been replaced by a problem defined by  
49 that the need for equal protection for both languages, a significant reduction of the weight of  
50 Galego in the educational system, very low budgeting for normalization programs, and very  
51 flexible implementation standards.  
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Commented [A13]: You don't refer to this as the 'Plan Xeral' above; you may need to introduce that term when you first mention the 2004 policy.

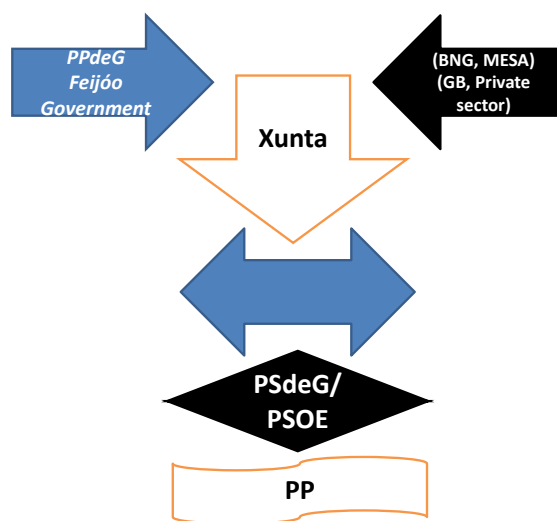
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7 However, the new strategy by Núñez Feijóo's government cannot just be explained through  
8 electoral circumstances. It is a tactical move that seeks to ensure a double goal. The first is to  
9 retrieve the central role that the model of harmonious bilingualism assigned to the Galician PP,  
10 reinforce its hegemonic position in political and electoral competition, and prevent the  
11 emergence of possible competitors for the regionalist or moderate nationalist space. The second  
12 is to prevent the consolidation of a new political stage that would be very hard to manage for  
13 Feijóo and the PP, as much as it represents an escalation of the internal contradictions involved  
14 in the regionalist discourse of the Galician PP versus the centralist and patriotic discourse of  
15 the Spanish PP.  
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17  
18 The setbacks in the process for language normalization/revitalization have worsened these  
19 contradictions and, above all, have removed the PPdeG from its privileged central position,  
20 which could lead to significant risks in opening its electoral and social spaces to new pro-  
21 Spanish or nationalist competitors (see Figure 4).  
22

- 23 • To achieve this dual aim, **the PPdeG needs to move from its now-exclusive role as a**  
24 **Promoter of cordial bilingualism to be able to take on again the roles of Promoter**  
25 **and Mediator, as it did during the period of harmonious bilingualism**, which  
26 granted it a central position. The Galician PP tries to play both the role of Promoter and  
27 the role of Mediator by presenting this model of cordial bilingualism as a new balanced  
28 solution: it keeps the symbolic and consensus elements of a normalization/revitalization  
29 policy plus the discretionary implementation of Fraga's bilingual model.  
30
- 31 • **The Xunta administration stays as Director**, since its main interest is a language  
32 policy that ensures stability and keeps management and implementation problems  
33 under control.  
34
- 35 • Again, **the actors playing the role of Opponents have changed: the coalition in**  
36 **favor of the normalization is now reinforced**, including the MNL, the PSOE, and the  
37 BNG, as well as new emerging social movements. But at the same time, the powerful  
38 coalition against normalization is still alive, since organizations such as GB, the  
39 powerful lobby of private education, and an important part of the PP do not want to  
40 keep the symbolic elements of a normalization policy and claim that free language  
41 choice must be the key element in the new policy.  
42
- 43 • In the new scenario, **no actor can truly play a Mediator role**, as no actor can credibly  
44 work for a policy-making process driven by political consensus. The Galician PP tries  
45 to play this role, but all the other key actors sharply deny its legitimacy to act as a  
46 consensus builder. The other actors no longer acknowledge the traditional centrality of  
47 the PP in the language policy arena.  
48
- 49 • **The PSOE also tries to play its role as Filter**, striking strategic compromises with the  
50 PP about minor issues on language policy.  
51

- **The Spanish PP continues to play the role of Goalkeeper**, watching so that Feijóo new policy does not move away from the national discourse in defense of Castellano. This role was reinforced by its new position as the PP took Spanish office after its victory in 2011. Promises of a “new strength” for Castellano in the public education system were a significant part of the PP’s electoral messages.

**FIGURE 4. ROLES AND ACTORS IN THE CORDIAL BILINGUALISM MODEL**  
(Source: author)



## 2.4 Conclusion

The redistribution of roles caused by the PP’s electoral strategy in 2009 to regain power is a key element when explaining the current situation of ambiguity, indecision, and even contradictions of Feijóo governments, his successor, Alfonso Rueda, and the PPdeG about its own language policies. Linguistic political consensus has always been built in Galicia when one of the main parties played the Mediator role. But when there is no Mediator, there is no consensus.

After the breakdown of historical linguistic political consensus in Galicia, two powerful coalitions have been created, arguing opposed and mutually exclusive definitions of what a “policy of promotion of Galego” should and must mean. Social consensus about what language policy must be remains high, but there are more relevant differences about the interpretation and contents of the policy and between political actors.

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7 The PPdeG cannot find an easy, clear way to achieve again the Mediator role that secures  
8 political consensus between both coalitions, because neither of them acknowledges its  
9 legitimacy to play that part once more. Ironically, to avoid being displaced from its centrality,  
10 the PP has moved strategically and ended up losing its central position because of its attempts  
11 to reverse its own polarizing strategy. Feijóo's language policies have also suffered some legal  
12 setbacks at the Tribunal Superior de Galicia and the European Court regarding the lack of  
13 sufficient protection for Galego speakers' rights.  
14

15  
16 The PPdeG administration has now abandoned any attempt of radical change in language  
17 public policy. The PPdeG now wants to promote a model based on a similar consensus to the  
18 one it broke and cannot rebuild easily because most of the other actors do not recognize the  
19 PP's legitimacy to play this "Mediator" role. This attempt to play this role again has had a  
20 negative political impact on the Galician PP's electoral base. For instance, during the 2016  
21 Galician election, Feijóo and PPdeG had to cope with angrier criticism from his own voters,  
22 especially urban Castellano speakers, who reminded him of his broken promise of radical  
23 change in language policy.  
24

25 Nevertheless, this criticism did not have an electoral impact. In fact, Feijóo and PPdeG  
26 have increased his government majorities after the 2016 and 2020 elections, almost reaching  
27 the levels of votes and support achieved by Manuel Fraga through the golden years of  
28 harmonious bilingualism. This may also explain why the discourse of language as an individual  
29 choice held by Feijóo in the 2009 election has almost disappeared in the official rhetoric of  
30 PPdeG administration. Galego is back as a peacefully vehicular language, and it is the  
31 administration that chooses its position in the educational curriculum. The *cordial bilingualism*  
32 model looks now very much like that old and friendly *harmonious bilingualism* model.  
33

34  
35 As a general conclusion, to be tested further through the study of different cases, the Galician  
36 case has shown that polarization in language public policy may work for political parties  
37 belonging to the opposition as an effective strategy for partisan competition and campaigning,  
38 but it becomes a major political and policy problem once in office, both for nationalist and non-  
39 nationalist parties. A balance between both languages, suited and adjusted to their  
40 circumstances and needs, perceived as careful and sensitive by the social majority, has proven  
41 to be the safest strategy to achieve political consensus and more stable language public policies  
42 so far—maybe because this careful and sensitive balance is what the great majority of bilingual  
43 voters expect from their institutions, regardless of whom they vote for.  
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#### 47 Note on contributor

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52 London School of Economics (1993).  
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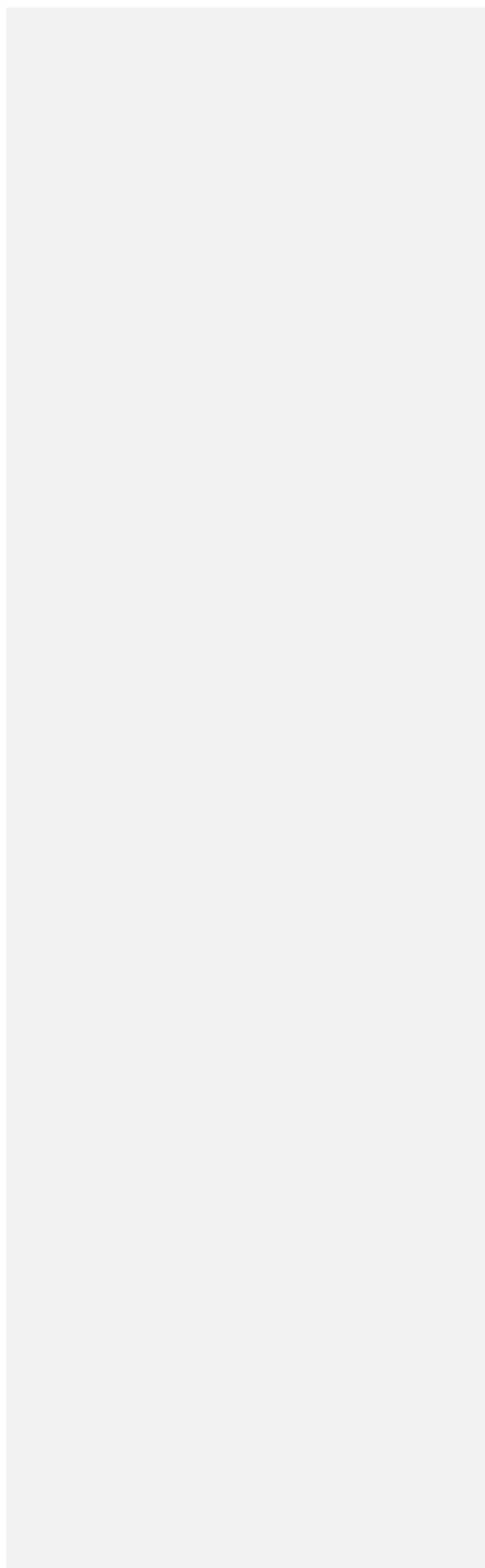
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- Figure 2: Roles and actors in the harmonious bilingualism model.
- Figure 3: Roles and actors in the normalization model.
- Figure 4: Roles and actors in the cordial bilingualism model.
  
- Graphic 1: The budgets of language public policy through time.



## *From political consensus to political conflict and back again: language public policy in Galicia (1989–2020)*

9.853 words

### **Abstract**

Language public policy is a key issue in Galician politics. Its symbolic uses have proven to be a powerful political resource in partisan competition. This article analyzes the strategies of the three main Galician political parties to test three related hypotheses about how political competition and language public policy are linked: (i) adversary language public policy works as a valid strategy for opposition and electoral campaigning, but (ii) it becomes a major policy problem once in office, both for nationalist and non-nationalist parties, and (iii) advocating for careful balance between languages is the best political strategy for language public policy once in office. The Spanish and Galician right-wing party, Popular Party—PP/PPdeG—which has been in office between 1989 and 2005, has strategically promoted language public policies based on an alleged equilibrium between the Spanish language—Castellano—and the Galician language—Galego—to gain nationalist conservative voters and to divide the nationalist political space. During this period, the nationalist—Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG)—and socialist—Partido dos Socialistas de Galicia (PSdeG/PSOE)—opposition have supported positive discrimination for the Galego language. Political change in 2005 switched their positions; PP stood for increasing protection for Castellano, while the new nationalist and left-wing government promoted a stronger status for Galego. PP's return to office in 2009 has switched the positions again.

key words: public policy, language policy, political actors, identity

Commented [A1]: More sokimply, just 'is the best...' or 'becomes the best...'?

Language policy as a matter of study is often understood as a broad and sometimes diffuse set of tools used to guide language use in diverse social contexts and to influence language behaviors, attitudes, and interactions in a society (Johnson 2009 & 2013). It serves to denote the “authoritative allocation of resources to language in general and to written/printed language in particular” (Fishman 2006: 311). A more specific approach, more suitable for the purposes of this article, considers it as a sectorial public policy: “a set of managed and planned interventions supported and enforced by law and implemented by a government agency” (Spolsky 2004: 5) with a variety of objectives (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). These cover the different forms of government intervention, from its different levels, to influence citizens’ language patterns (Grin 2003).

Despite the growing relevance of language issues and the public policies that manage them in pluricultural or plurinational societies, “marked by trends such as immigration, sub-state nationalisms, and cultural globalization” (Lewis and Royles 2018b: 2), political science has paid language limited attention (Lewis and Royles 2018a). At the least, research has stayed far away from the academic proposition of studying them to the same extent that political science analyzes other sectorial policies such as health, education, or welfare (Grin 2003).

The bulk of the literature on language policy is regularly associated with the field of sociolinguistics. It focuses primarily on analyzing the consequences of different policies and their influence on the evolution, expansion, or disappearance of a language (Fishman 1991, 2006), on how such policies promote social change in terms of equality or discrimination (Tollefson 1991 & 2006; Levine 1991), and on the design and planning of its mechanisms for influencing languages, although with much less interest on implementation and evaluation issues (Baldauf 1994; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997; Ricento 2000, 2006, & 2015; Wright 2016). Other fields that have resorted to instruments and approaches from political science to tackle language public policies to analyze their costs and impacts include economics (Grin 2003; Wright 2016), geography (Williams 1991), and history (Johnson and Ricento 2013).

Despite the existence of this broad and multidisciplinary field of study, there is a lack of analysis and research from political science on identifying the political factors that explain language policy decisions and which political reasons explain whether certain language policy decisions are made (Lewis and Royles 2018a & 2018b). This is precisely the focus and purpose of this work: to identify those political reasons that can explain language public-policy decisions.

The study of the strategies of the political actors and the analysis of their roles in different institutional sets have proven to be powerful tools to understand the decision-making process and to explain the content of those decisions (Scharpf 1997). This article exposes and analyzes the strategies of the main political and institutional actors to set out the motivations and political causes that explain how language public policy has changed in Galicia over the last four decades. In this work, I also formulate and test some policy hypotheses that can serve to

advance the goal of “improving our knowledge and explanation of the political origins of defining language public policies” (Lewis and Royles 2018b: 4).

The model of roles in public policy (Dente 1995; Losada 2001; Subirats and Dente 2014) provides a very useful tool to analyze the strategies of different actors within a specific institutional set as the Estado de las Autonomías and to understand how the roles they have chosen to play in different moments explain the political reasons as to how and why decisions have been made in Galicia in language public policy.

The model of roles in public policy posits that, in each policy arena, different actors play a series of roles in the policy-making process (see Figure 1). Sometimes, these actors choose to play that specific part, but many other times they must take that role because of their own institutional position. The model identifies the main following roles:

- The **Promoter** is the actor or actors that play for and mobilizes resources to push their problem definition in the agenda, to reach the other actors to build coalitions of support, and to champion a preferred solution. The specific content of the policy is what really moves them.
- The **Opponent** is the actor or actors that play against the policy championed by the Promoter. The policy advocated by the Promoter is the only solution they cannot accept.
- The **Director** is the actor or actors responsible for making the policy decisions. The Director needs to have one policy and gives relatively less attention to its content or its undesirable consequences.
- The **Mediator** is the actor or actors who are more concerned about the policy-production process than its contents. The degree of consensus about the solution is what matters to them, even more than the solution itself, since consensus is what legitimizes the Mediator’s presence in the policy-making process. This actor does not necessarily have their own definition of the problem or a preferred solution.
- The **Filter** is the actor or actors who do not have any specific interest in the policy but either act as spokespersons for another actor’s interest or strategically see the policy as means to gain an advantage in another policy arena.
- The **Goalkeeper** is the actor or actors who have the power to veto or to stop one solution. The Goalkeeper does not have a specific or particular interest in the policy, but without their assent, it is not possible to make the decision.

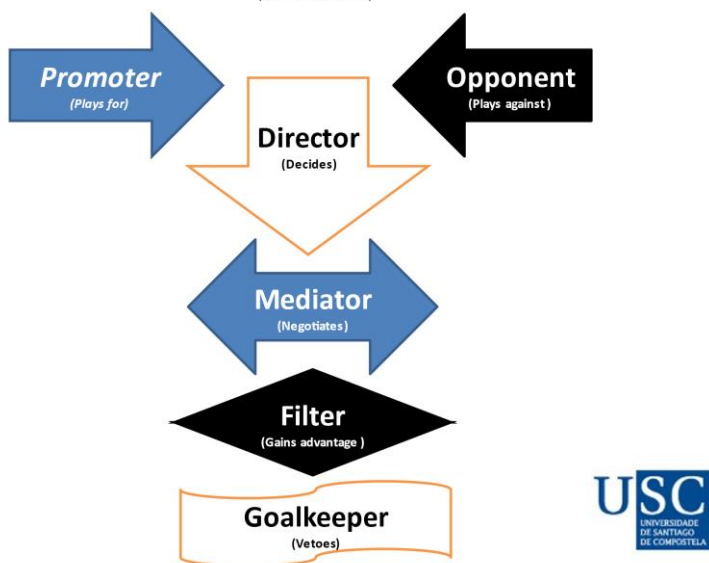
Commented [A2]: Removing the em dashes throughout this list as it makes messy work of subject–verb agreement.

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**Figure 1: THE MODEL OF ROLES**

(Source author)



The contents and symbolic uses of language public policies by the three major Galician parties have been one of the key elements of their political discourses and the design and development of their electoral competition strategies. The aim of this article is more centered around analyzing these strategic and “symbolic uses of public policies” (Edelman 1967) by the different actors than its sociolinguistic impacts.

There is an effective relationship between language policy and national identity; this relationship is ideological and has very specific impacts on the construction of a national identity (Blommaert 2006). Language public policy has been a prominent field for partisan competition in Galicia. Its symbolic uses, not so much because of its quantitative relevance in terms of legislation or spending, but rather because of its qualitative relevance, connects it directly with the process of constructing Galicia’s national identity.

In its most common meaning, national identity is understood as that aspect of one’s own social identity referring to identification as part of a group of citizens (Risse 2010), giving it a positive emotional value as part of their being as individuals (Keating 2007). We also find a civic-republican formulation characterized by the “political will” of its members to constitute a political community (Maiz 2008).

The recurring distinction between cultural identity and civic identity builds on all three dominant approaches to the legitimacy of political communities. The first links legitimacy to the existence of institutions accepted by society through a social contract, the second associates the legitimacy of political communities with their correspondence with a “nation” delimited by a common culture, and the third approach links the legitimacy of institutions with the manifestation of a “common desire to live together” by members of the community (Bruter 2009). From these theoretical perspectives, two ways of interpreting identity have been developed: the civic component and the cultural component. The civic component affects an individual’s identification with a political and institutional system. The cultural component affects the individual’s sense of belonging to a community with which they share a culture.

Language public policies have symbolic and real impacts on both components. As a product of the institutions of self-government, they provide relevant assistance to the very consolidation of such institutions within the perception of the members of the community as belonging to them (Losada 2000, 2001). Policies to defend and promote one’s own language affect attitudes, practices, and even legal conditions for language use and have a direct impact on the sense of belonging to a culture shared by all members of the community, even among those who reject it.

The data and information used for this analysis result from systematically studying and comparing the principles and provisions set forth in the laws, regulations, and plans approved during the period in question by the Galician parliament and the Galician government, as well as through qualitatively and quantitatively analyzing the official budgets and reports managed by the Xunta de Galicia and organizationally analyzing the departments responsible for language public policies.

The electoral programs of the three parties—PPdeG, PSdeG, and BNG—for the successive elections held in these years have also been systematically analyzed. Likewise, parliamentary debates about language policies and the most significant public statements made by the most relevant spokespersons of the main actors have been handled and evaluated, as well as the content of various personal interviews and conversations throughout these more than 30 years with the leaders of the three most relevant political parties in Galicia: Núñez Feijóo (PPdeG), Xosé Manuel Beiras (BNG), Anxo Quintana (BNG), Emilio Pérez Touriño (PSdeG), and Pachi Vázquez (PSdeG).

## **1. Language public policy in Galicia: some history and a few hypotheses**

The transition to democracy in Spain and the creation of the State of Autonomies has implied abandoning centuries of Castellano monolingualism imposed by the Spanish state. The process of official recognition for multilingualism in Spain was long and complex (Argelaguet i Argemí 1998). It has had three crucial moments:

1) The 1978 Spanish Constitution acknowledged the existence of “nacionalidades históricas”—historical nationalities—within the Spanish state and the official status of Castellano as well as of the “other Spanish languages”—Catalán, Euskera and Galego. Galicia is one of those “nacionalidades históricas” recognized by the Constitution and has its own official language, Galego (Rojo 1982; Gonzalez 1985).

2) The “Estatutos de Autonomía”—Statutes of Autonomy—approved by those “historical nationalities” took a further step during the 1980s, commanding autonomous public powers to guarantee the “normal and official use” of both languages and the promotion of their own national languages at all levels of public life by providing the necessary resources (Monteagudo Romero 2012). Consequently, when talking about *national language* in Spain, we are referring to Galego, Euskera or Catalán.

3) All three “nacionalidades históricas” executed this mandate to promote their own national languages by passing several *linguistic normalization laws*—Basque Country (1982), Catalonia (1983) and Galicia (1983)—that created non-symmetric language policies, looking to rebalance long decades of diglossia—inferior political, social, and administrative status for one language—and the prohibition of Galego, Catalán, and Euskera. These policies have implemented resourceful policy programs and have established a stronger official status for national languages (Losada 2012). Additionally, “new speakers have emerged in the contexts of revitalization policies since the 1980s” (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013: 287).

The scope of language public policies in the three “nacionalidades históricas” has included two key priorities: 1) increasing the use of national language in non-university education; and 2) extending the use of national language in public administration and official institutions of the autonomous community. The accelerated implementation of *normalization* policies gained widespread consensus during the 1980s and 1990s (Cabrera 1994).

Nevertheless, normalization is a controversial term. Some authors have argued that there is no real “normalization,” only the preservation of a statu quo of Castellano dominance (Cáccamo 2003). Some authors have suggested the use of “revitalization” instead (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013). This “Normalization”/“Revitalization” process was politically contested by some marginal advocates: those who attributed priority to Castellano with no recognition or compensation for their historical discrimination; and those who proposed a linguistic normalization, which would grant exclusive status to national languages and actively remove the dominate status of Castellano (Maiz and Losada 2000 & 2011).

A real alternative to this political consensus around “normalization/revitalization policy” did not appear in the Spanish political arena until the end of the 1990s, when proposals for regulating the use of *two* vehicular languages—Castellano and a national language—instead of one—the national language—in the educational system were introduced into the public debate. In the mid-2000s, open contestation against normalization/revitalization policies returned to

the political scene, supported by new center-right political parties such as “Ciutatans” in Catalonia or “UPyD” in Spain that were trying to gain Popular voters.

Urged by these new competitors, the Spanish Partido Popular took then a firm position against the normalization/revitalization model. Two other factors can also explain this choice: 1) the end of a period for strategic compromises with nationalist parties (1997–2001), when the CiU nationalist government in Catalonia needed PP’s votes and Aznar’s PP government in Spain needed the support of CiU, and 2) the mutual reinforcement between Ciutatans, UPyD, and conservative media, which had created great pressure against language normalization policies at historical nationalities, as well as against a so-called “federalist evolution” of the Spanish State of Autonomies. PP clearly adopted a new language policy based on a predominant role for Castellano as the vehicular language in education and the advocacy for a so-called “freedom of choice” (Monteagudo Romero 2012 & 2019) for governments, employees, and parents.

The main political features of language policy in Galicia during this time can be summarized in these key points (Losada 2012; Maiz & Losada 2011):

- 1) It is not possible to associate exclusively language groups with political parties. Language and politics relate in a transversal way.
- 2) There were no significant linguistic conflicts in Galicia until 2007, thanks to the wide acceptance of a bilingual Galego–Castellano compromise with different degrees of implementation.
- 3) Three different models of language public policy can be identified since 1989: “harmonious” bilingualism, normalization, and a so-called “cordial” bilingualism; only the last one has clearly broken, in 2010, the wide consensus that had been shared since the Autonomous Community was created.

### **1.1 The Fraga administration (1989–2004)**

Manuel Fraga, a former and notorious minister under dictator Francisco Franco, won the Galician election in 1989. Despite some initial mistrust, the Fraga administration embraced the linguistic normalization/revitalization model introduced by the 1983 Galician Linguistic Law. Following the principles of what he called *harmonious bilingualism*, the 247/1995 Decree established the use of Galego as the vehicular language at all levels of non-university education. There was no separation of students into different classes or schools to foster the learning of both Castellano and Galego (Rubal 1992). Official accreditation of fluency in Galego was made a compulsory requirement for government employees. A high authority for language policy was created within the Galician government, integrated in the Department of Education.

The *harmonious bilingualism* model assumed the nationalist principle that Galego “represents the strongest bond among Galician citizens” (247/1995 Decree). Fraga became a strong advocate of what he called “auto-identification” as an alternative to the “national identification” proposed by the nationalist political discourse. The model was not only aimed

toward preserving and promoting Galego; rather, linguistic normalization was an explicit goal, which resulted in the unanimous approval of the Galician Parliament of a *General Normalization Plan* in 2004 (PXNL), the last year of Fraga's administration.

A striking resemblance can be observed between the Linguistic Normalization Law of Galicia, ruled by the right-wing PP, and Catalonia, ruled by the nationalist CiU. Both laws were passed in 1983, and the only real difference laid in the fact that Galician law does not recognize the status of the national language as *proper to* education at all levels, but only as an *official language*. Linguistic public policies in Galicia took Catalonia as a model for legislative development.

This formal acceptance by the Fraga administration of some “nationalist” postulates about Galego normalization/revitalization, along with the Galician PP “galeguización” process to expand its electoral space in conservative regionalism, had several main effects. It received great electoral support and was only opposed by pro-Galego groups such as MNL—Mesa pola Normalización Lingüística—and to a lesser extent by the BNG. The result was over 20 years of absence of significant language conflicts in Galicia but also a “low intensity planification” (Lorenzo Suárez 2005): repeated non-fulfillment and lack of control and evaluation of language public policies by the government (Monteagudo Romero 2012), especially in private schools. This lack of political conflict, the extreme flexibility regarding the fulfillment of the law, and the limited budgetary resources devoted to normalization/revitalization goals had a double effect, as shown by empirical studies such as the Sociolinguistic Map of Galicia (1995 & 2004): a significant increase in the cultural and social status of Galego among the population, but limited and irregular effectiveness regarding the accomplishment of normalization goals (Lorenzo Suárez 2008; Regueira Fernández 2009; O'Rourke and Ramallo 2015; Monteagudo Romero 2019), particularly in urban areas and within the younger population, as the Fraga government itself admitted in the 2004 PXNL.

## **1.2. The Bipartito administration (PSdeG–BNG coalition, 2005–2009)**

The arrival in 2005 of a new coalition government between socialists and nationalists was characterized by a moderate change in language public policy, mainly regarding the implementation process. The main objective was to effectively accomplish the Linguistic Normalization Plan that had been approved by all parties during the last days of the Fraga administration.

A new Galego decree headed toward approval by 2007, with the support of the PPdeG and after a two-year negotiation process, to keep the consensus among the three main Galician political parties that had parliamentary representation—PPdeG, PSdeG, and BNG. However, some new events, especially in the larger Spanish political arena, broke that consensus. The PP's partisan strategy in the Spanish arena, as seen in several parliament initiatives “in defense of Castellano,” undoubtedly fostered by the presence and actions of pro-Castellano groups like *Ciutatans* and UPyD, eventually ended up directly opposing any “normalization policies” in

any historical nationality and advocating a somewhat “liberal” individual choice approach to language policy, even for an exclusive role of Castellano as the vehicular language. Beyond this, some groups of citizens supporting Castellano speakers, such as Galicia Bilingüe (GB) decided to increase their protests and gained strong Spanish media attention (Regueira Fernández 2009).

The PPdeG unexpectedly backed off and rejected the new Galego Decree, 124/2007, just a day before its negotiated approval (Monteagudo Romero 2012). The Decree could only rely on the support of the governing parties. It was entirely based on the Normalization Plan of the last Fraga government (2004) and mainly focused on how to fulfill its goals and standards, with a more effective implementation plan and more control and evaluation.

The Bipartito administration, trying and failing to maintain the language-related political consensus that had been inherited since 1989, and therefore under severe conditions of instability, had developed the bases of its language public policy around the following axes:

- 1) The systematic evaluation of effective accomplishment gained from the 2004 Linguistic Normalization Plan;
- 2) More ambitious normalization standards: a 50% minimum of teaching in Galego in all levels in non-university education and the setting of compulsory courses to be taught in Galego in both public and private schools;
- 3) An annual evaluation and control of the outcome and impact of the normalization/revitalization process;
- 4) The increase of budget (up to 15%), human, and material resources for normalization policies; and
- 5) The creation of a new General Secretary for Language Policy (SXPL), which would receive strong political support, as a new transversal department, formally allocated to the Presidency of the Xunta de Galicia.

The approval of the 124/2007 Decree triggered a PP offensive based on a “language free choice” option against a so-called “linguistic totalitarianism” (Regueira Fernández 2009). The year 2007 spelled the end of the political consensus that had existed since 1989 and the emergence of new growing conflicts in public opinion (Monteagudo Romero 2012; 2019).

### **1.3. The Feijóo administration (2009–2020)**

The PP won the Galician election in 2009 under the leadership of a new and younger figurehead, Alberto Núñez Feijóo. Feijóo has been a public servant who made his professional career in public administration in Galicia and Madrid moving from Galician PP governments

to central PP governments. The promise of a radical change in language policy in Galicia was one of the campaign issues that allowed PPdeG to win the 2009 election. Following the Spanish PP's strategy, the new policy began asking for a new liberal perspective: the so-called "parents' freedom of choice" in education and the *friendly bilingualism* in administration were advocated for instead of the supposed "impositions" and "linguistic maximalism" endorsed in Bipartito language policies (Regueira Fernández 2009; Monteagudo Romero 2019).

One of the reasons for this policy change was the radicalization of anti-normalization positions, which characterized the Spanish PP's course of action against the PSOE administration and President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero between 2005 and 2011. For the Spanish PP and its media supporters, campaigning against the reform of the Statute of Autonomy in Catalonia and against socialist-nationalist coalition governments, in Catalonia or Galicia, became a priority.

Further reasons for this change can be found in Galician politics. One of them was the rise of new Galician PP leaders, who were ideologically distant from the soft regionalism developed during the Fraga era and closer to the more extreme centralist positions held by the Spanish PP (Monteagudo Romero 2012). Another reason was the rise of "linguistic distress" in some urban areas of electoral significance—A Coruña and Vigo—due to the more demanding implementation in private schools as promoted by the Bipartito government.

This change was best (although not exclusively) expressed through the so-called *Decree on Multilingualism in Non-University Education* (2009) and had three main consequences:

1. In accordance with a new "multilingualism perspective" and opposition to the bilingualism and normalization that had been dominating since 1983, the English language was introduced as a third *vehicular* language in non-university education, on an equally shared basis (33%) with Galego and Castellano.
2. The so-called "parents' freedom of choice" between Galego and Castellano was prescribed as a mandatory principle for all schools.
3. The requirement of an official certification in Galego for public employees was canceled, to guarantee alleged "language rights" and "eliminate" those "barriers" which might keep "excellent civil servants" from being part of the Galician administration.

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This radical departure from historical consensus caused social and political conflicts about language during the two first legislatures of the Feijóo administration that had been absent before then, including massive demonstrations each 17 May from 2009 to 2012, general strikes in public education on 21 January 2010, and open confrontation with opposition parties in the Galician Parliament, the Courts of Justice, and the Galego academic community. Even the two most important cultural institutions in Galicia—the Royal Galician Academy of Language (RAG) and the Council for Galician Culture (CCG)—have unequivocally rejected the new criteria of the Feijóo administration's language policy.

The high level of conflict and institutional, social, and political backlash against the first version of Feijóo's decree led to the final approval of the 79/2010 Decree on Multilingualism, which included a partial reformulation of the guidelines initially announced: the return to the 50% balance between the two official languages, the lessened importance of "parents' freedom of choice" about the vehicular language, and the reduction of the one third of teaching hours in English in non-university education. Still, the multilingual perspective that weakened the co-official status and normalization of Galego was maintained (Monteagudo Romero 2019), as was as a power devolution to school centers, which have the right to develop their linguistic plans independently under a four-year official evaluation, instead of every year, as proposed in 2007 under the Bipartito government.

The main arguments against Feijóo's language policy are the following (Monteagudo Romero 2019):

1. Multilingualism, as a goal of public education, undermined the constitutional and statutory status of both Castellano and Galego as official languages.
2. Equal mastery of Castellano and Galego could not be acquired through linguistic balance but rather through the reinforcement and promotion of Galego, which was historically subordinate to Castellano.
3. Since 1983, the goal of reinforcing and promoting Galego had resulted in a model of normalization/revitalization policy and language immersion that had been accepted by the Constitutional Court since 1994 and was also considered as the most successful by specialists.
4. Because of the symbolic meaning of language policies and their importance in defining an identity, any change affecting it requires greater political, social, and institutional consensus.

The Decree was judicially fought by the Real Academia Galega (RAG), challenging its legality and the new criteria, which, they argued, were against the Spanish Constitution, the Galician Estatuto, and the Carta Europea de Lenguas Regionales. The Galician Superior Court of Justice's and the Spanish Supreme Court's ruling backed both the legality of the Decree and the policy in 2015. There was only one setback in both sentences for Feijóo's policy: no more parents' "consultation" in choosing the vehicular language.

One more extremely significant change must be pointed out as far as the language public policies of the Feijóo administration are concerned. Again, the General Secretary for Language Policy was brought back under the control of the sectorial Consellería de Educación, conceived with a merely educational perspective and subjected to a very relevant reduction in its powers and scope of action, in comparison to the political support and transversal character that it had

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been granted by the Bipartito government. As a result, there has been a sharp cutback in the budgets assigned to language policy, which fell to pre-2005 levels and has stayed there to this day (see Graphic 1).

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**Graphic 1: The Budgets for Language Policy Trough Time**  
(Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística. IGE)

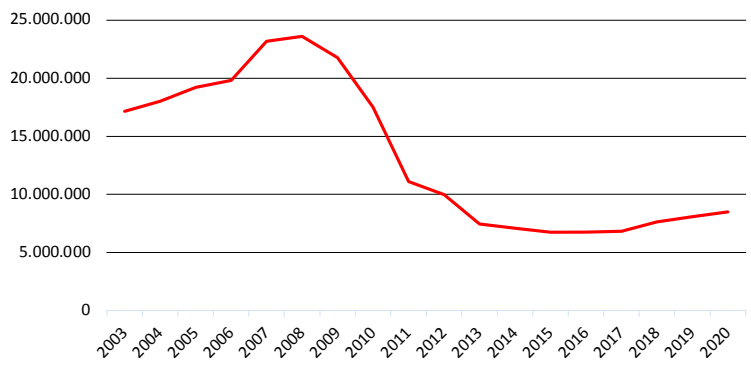


Table 1 below summarizes the main differences between the three Galician language public policy models during these last 30 years, using some key variables such as problem definition, political consensus, resources, and implementation.

**Table 1: The three Galician language public-policy models**

(Source: author)

	<b>“Harmonious bilingualism” (1990–2004)</b>	<b>(Unstable) normalization (2005–2009)</b>	<b>“Cordial bilingualism” (2010–2020)</b>
<b>Problem definition</b>	<i>Protection for Galego</i>	<i>Positive discrimination for Galego</i>	<i>Protection for Galego and Castellano</i>
<b>Objective</b>	<i>Low-intensity normalization</i>	<i>Normalization/ Revitalization</i>	<i>“Freedom of choice”</i>
<b>Political Consensus</b>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Language balance</b>	<i>50/50</i>	<i>Min. 50% for Galego</i>	<i>Max. 50% for Galego</i>
<b>Administrative hierarchy</b>	<i>Department of Education</i>	<i>Xunta Presidency</i>	<i>Department of Education</i>
<b>Budget and resources</b>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
<b>Implementation</b>	<i>Soft</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Very soft</i>

## **2. Actors, roles, and strategies: the political reasons for the different models for language public policy in Galicia**

The analysis of the policy-making process and outcome of Galician language public policies shows that, until 2007, there was a high degree of negotiation, compromise, and stability based on the existence of a solid, stable, and enduring social consensus about the need to strengthen and improve the sociolinguistic situation of Galego (Monteagudo Romero 2012), its importance as an element of collective identity (Cabrera 1994), and a clear preference for “sensitive bilingualism” as the chosen model for public policy. A wide majority supported positive public action for Galego in the critical year of 2007, and there is a growing perception that its social use is declining (see Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2: Public opinion in Galicia about the need of public promotion for Galego**

(Source: Observatorio da Lingua Galega. 2007)

<i>Agree</i>	<i>Mostly agree</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Mostly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<b>62.48%</b>	<b>23.76%</b>	<b>4.52%</b>	<b>6.40%</b>	<b>2.84%</b>

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**Table 3: Public perception about how often Galego is being used in Galicia, 2013–2019**

(Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística (IGE). [www.ige.eu](http://www.ige.eu))

	<i>2013</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>Very much</i>	9.50%	7.28%
<i>Quite a lot</i>	32.54%	30.23%
<i>Normal</i>	28.76%	31.82%
<i>Very few or nothing</i>	29.15%	30.67%

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There is also a wide consensus about the fact that the average knowledge and use of Galego have improved notably among Galician people, without a reduction or worsening of their capacities regarding to the knowledge and use of Castellano (Lorenzo Suárez 2008; Monteagudo Romero 2012). In reality, both languages present very similar situations in terms of use and social presence (see Tables 4A and 4B).

**Table 4a: Language in Galicia by individual use, 2007**

(Source: Observatorio da Lingua Galega. 2007)

<i>Always in Galego</i>	<i>More Galego than Spanish</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>More Spanish than Galego</i>	<i>Always in Spanish</i>	<i>Other languages</i>
<b>30.24%</b>	<b>17.72%</b>	<b>19.28%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>13.76%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>

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**Table 4b: Language in Galicia by individual use, 2014–2019**

(Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística (IGE). [www.ige.eu](http://www.ige.eu))

	<i>Always in Galego</i>	<i>More Galego than Spanish</i>	<i>More Spanish than Galego</i>	<i>Always in Spanish</i>
<b>2014</b>	31.20%	20.29%	22.26%	26.25%
<b>2019</b>	30.57%	21.72%	23.32%	24.40%

The introduction of a “language issue” in the political debate, especially during the 2009 Galician election, was not due then to critical changes in language policies’ outcome. It was not even a response to a substantial change in the perception and evaluation by Galician public opinion about the direction, scope, or content of those policies. Therefore, it seems appropriate to undertake as the main hypothesis that the emergence of the so-called “linguistic conflict” was due mostly to partisan goals, ad hoc strategies, and opportunistic behaviors by some political actors during the electoral competition, especially the PP and its new leader, Núñez Feijóo. It was not a consequence of a set of conditions related to the situation of both languages, the performance by the educational system, or any significant changes in common perceptions. The model of roles in public policy (Dente 1995; Losada 2001; Subirats and Dente 2014) provides a very useful tool to analyze the political strategies of different actors as explanatory factors for the rise of the so-called “linguistic conflict.”

## **2.1 The harmonious bilingualism model as balance (1983–2004): the importance of a mediator**

The Manuel Fraga administration represented a period of very stable language public policy, characterized by the presence of few actors who maintained a balance of power during those two decades. On the one hand, a Galician government led by the Galician PP placed the language issue into an intermediate position on the agenda, choosing negotiation and political consensus as the first option in dealing with the issues of language policy, as shown in the different regulations unanimously passed: the 1983 LNL, the Decree 247/1995, and, in the last stage, the General Plan for Normalization of Galego. On the other hand, PSdeG and the nationalist BNG developed, during this period, a moderate strategy in opposition. Only the BNG put more pressure on Fraga’s government about language issues. Despite the differences between the parties, it was a political situation characterized by the search for points of consensus and compromise. There were several key elements in this period:

1. A political consensus regarding the definition of the so-called “linguistic problem”: the inferiority of Galego compared to Castellano and the progressive loss of Galego speakers (Monteagudo Romero 2012).
2. A political consensus regarding the “solution”: the situation of Galego required a commitment by public authorities and public intervention to ensure Galego in the educational system, establishing quotas for each official language, as well as mechanisms that allowed them to ensure compliance.
3. A language public policy characterized by political consensus and compromise that marked the difference from the situation in other Autonomous Communities, such as Catalonia or the Basque Country, where language policy was a recurrent issue for political debate at the state level.

4. A medium position for language issues in the political agenda of Galician governments, unnoticed by the national media and not subject to any greater public debate (Regueira Fernández 2009).
5. A marginal social and political position for the groups opposed to this “normalization/revitalization process” for Galego.

This “harmonious bilingualism” policy designed and implemented by the Xunta was due mainly to the PP’s political strategy, developed by Manuel Fraga since his return to Galicia. It was the outcome of a conscious pursuit of the moderate regionalist voter—the so-called “espacio galeguista”—to ensure the fragile absolute majority that Fraga had earned in his first victory in the Galician election in 1989. The occupation of this “regionalist” and “moderate” space, thanks to a symbolic and strategic use of these public policies, more closely linked to the identity issue, became a key element for Fraga’s political strategy and electoral success. This “galeguization strategy” was carried out with remarkable success and led Fraga to win several absolute majorities and to block any competition for this electoral space by other conservative regionalist forces, such as the historical Coalición Galega (Maiz and Losada 2000 & 2011).

The harmonious bilingualism approach also offered the PPdeG the possibility of enhancing the legitimacy of its own regional discourse before the Spanish PP. This “discurso galeguista” allowed the Galician PP to introduce itself as the party that ensured a balance and a consensual solution between the different positions related to the promotion and defense of Galego. The policy also worked, to some extent, as a guarantee for the more radical groups both in favor of Galego monolingualism and Castellano monolingualism.

At this stage, the roles between the different actors were played as follows (see Figure 2):

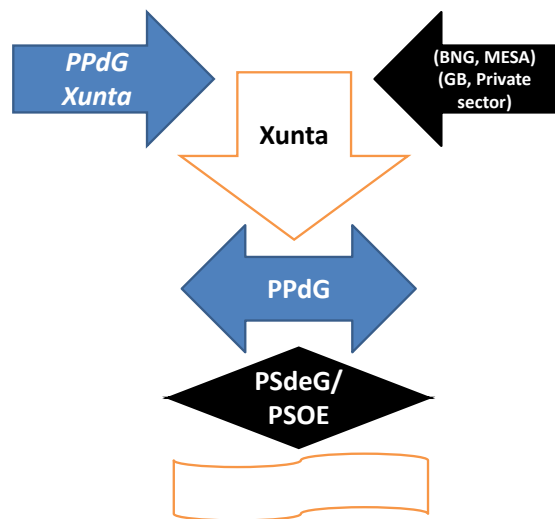
- **The PPdeG played the role of Promoter** for this harmonious bilingualism model—its solution for the “language issue.” The PP sought out political allies between the other main parties and promoted a supporting coalition based on balance: a policy of linguistic normalization/revitalization at the design and decision stages, but a guarantee of discretionary policy implementation for those groups opposed or reluctant to Galego normalization, for instance, private schools.
- **The Xunta administration headed by Fraga also acted as a Promoter and as the Director** since it was responsible for getting language policy done. Peaceful implementation, and not policy definition, was its main concern, as it was for the harmonious bilingualism.
- **MNL, BNG, and other organizations like GB played the role of Opponents, but for very different reasons.** The harmonious bilingualism model did not meet their expectations regarding both Galego and Castellano. The nationalist BNG also played a

role as opponent but showed more openness to occasional compromise. Additionally, the powerful lobby of private schools and private schools funded by the state resisted the institutionalization of Galego in the educational curriculum.

- **The PPdeG also played a key role as the Mediator.** The harmonious bilingualism model cared more for keeping a high degree of consensus than for the effectiveness in enhancing or defending Galego. This consensus became a tool to reinforce the legitimacy of both the policy and the Galician government. The BNG also tried to play this role to reinforce its prominence in the nationalist electoral space.
- **The PSOE–PSdeG played the role of Filter.** It did not have clear specific interest in language policy and held an ambiguous position on the issue of Galego normalization/revitalization. The PSdeG would strategically use language policy to gain advantage in partisan competition by negotiating opportunistic compromises with both the PPdeG and the BNG.

**FIGURE 2. ROLES AND ACTORS IN THE HARMONIOUS BILINGUALISM MODEL**

*(Source: author)*



## 2.2 From the harmonious bilingualism model to a (unstable) normalization model (2005–2009): Not all mediators can get the job done.

The change driven by the Bipartito—PSdeG and BNG—in 2005 looked to reformulate the definition of the language problem, which involved moving on from “harmonious bilingualism” toward “linguistic normalization”: the maximum policy standards for Galego in

the PP's language policy became the starting point for the new policy standards set by the Bipartito.

The new policy challenged the idea that both languages had a similar status and that the main goal should be to ensure the harmonious use of both. The language problem was defined then in terms of inequality: one of the two languages—Galego—was in a position of inferiority, and it was necessary to implement proactive policies to achieve a linguistic normalization that would not happen by itself (Regueira Fernández 2009; Monteagudo Romero 2012).

The Bipartito government went from “harmonious bilingualism” to an incremental strategy of implementation for normalizing Galego. Using the same Linguistic Plan unanimously approved by the Galician Parliament in 2004, the new policy went beyond the symbolic uses of the Plan and used it to become the benchmark in the matter of developing a new policy with more organizational, regulatory, and economic resources.

The approval of the 124/2007 Decree without the support of the Galician PP broke the political consensus and opened a period in which the tension between the political forces considerably increased (Monteagudo Romero 2012). The same language issues that used to be an element of unity and consensus between political parties led now to a situation of confrontation between government and opposition, fostering a climate of political confrontation that transcended Galician boundaries.

The dynamics of Spanish politics would have a significant impact upon Galician language public policy. The argument about language imposition in Galicia would also be part of the debate and clashes between political parties at a state level. In that context, a new political party, first under the name of “Unión, Progreso y Democracia,” tried to play a decisive role in the 2009 Galician election, introducing itself as an alternative political force to the two major parties and assuming the rejection of the 124/2007 Decree and the so-called “nationalists’ impositions” as one of its fundamental promises.

Compared to the previous stage, there were important differences in language public policy:

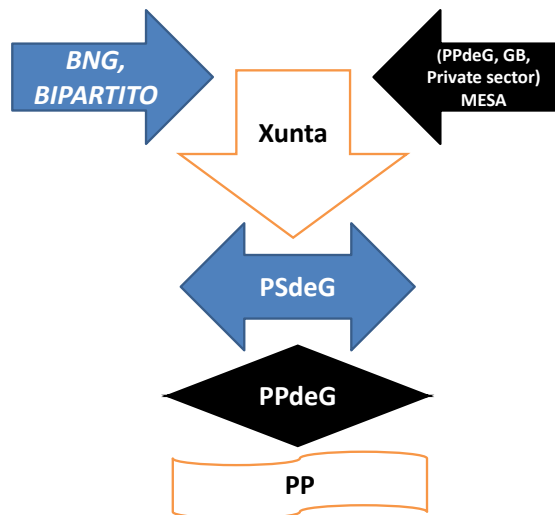
1. The breakdown of the political consensus about problem definition. It was no longer about the inferiority of Galego's status compared to Castellano's or the loss of Galician speakers. Language became a problem of lack of freedom and imposition. “The main sociolinguistic problem of Galicia would be not the subordination and substitution of Galego but its imposition on Spanish speakers, and the appropriate answer to this problem would be the suspension of the process of linguistic normalization” (Monteagudo Romero 2012: 21).
2. The breakdown of the consensus regarding the “solution,” or the public policy to carry out. It was no more, as it was during the Fraga era, a matter of allocating quotas for each official language. There were new demands for a new education policy that allowed parents to decide which language they preferred to educate their children in.

3. For the first time in its history, Galician language policy became part of the Spanish political debate. This was a major change that would alter Galician language policy to this day.
4. A rise of pro-Spanish groups, led by GB, which would achieve a key position regarding language policy, changing the constellation of actors that had existed until 2007. GB set as its main goal the derogation of Bipartito regulations and the introduction of deep changes in education policies. Repeating slogans such as “imposition” or “freedom of choice,” this group would gain in importance until it became the head of the most visible opposition to the Galego Decree and Bipartito language public policy, conducting several campaigns and initiatives that would have a significant echo in the Spanish media (Regueira Fernández 2009).
5. An important implication of the media, both Galician and Spanish, which would play a decisive role in this process.

**Commented [A11]:** Since you introduced the acronym GB above, use it here consistently and avoid writing out the entire name of the organization.

The policy change driven by the Bipartito government switched the roles played previously, rebalanced the language-balance solution promoted by harmonious bilingualism, and displaced the PP from its central position, which also enabled the formation of a powerful coalition against the normalization model (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3. ROLES AND ACTORS IN THE NORMALIZATION MODEL**  
(Source: author)



- **The BNG and the Bipartito developed the role of Promoters** for the normalization model, although with different intensity and commitment between them. Normalization was their solution for language issues.
- **The Xunta administration was still acting as the Director**, since it was interested in obtaining a language policy that ensured the stability of the coalition government and made policy management easier.
- MNL remained an Opponent because they considered this new policy was not enough for Galego normalization. But, for very different reasons, another powerful coalition against the new policy appeared. **This Opponents' coalition was formed by organizations like GB, which perceived the policy as a threat, the powerful lobby of purely private and private funded by the state schools, and a new Galician PP** that no longer tried to reach the regionalists' electoral space that Fraga had pursued. The new PPdeG chose to go after the urban pro-Castellano voter that felt threatened by the Bipartito language policy and was looking for new offers.
- **The PSOE–PSdeG also tried to play the role of the Mediator**, in the same way the Fraga's PP used to play it. The Socialists tried to achieve the centrality gained by the PP with the model of harmonious bilingualism, focusing more on consensus and the production process of the policy than on the content. But because of the problems that this moderator role created with their partner in government, also promoter of the Bipartito language policy, the polarizing strategy of the PPdeG and the PSOE's own contradictions about positive discrimination for the Galego finally resulted in the abandonment of one of the keys of the political success of the Fraga model: the degree of political consensus was no longer more important than the effectiveness in promoting or defending Galego.
- **The PPdeG also tried to play the role of Filter**; their opposition to the policy was strategic, to gain power on the political setting by offering minor compromises in language policy in exchange for other compromises in different policy arenas.
- Another key innovation was **the arrival of actors who played the role of Goalkeepers. Both the central government—first the PSOE and then the PP—and the Spanish PP** turned the growing importance of language issues for state politics into a greater willingness to veto whatever was decided in Galicia, so they could stop any solution that could be perceived—outside of Galicia—as a “threat” against Castellano. During the Fraga administration, the Spanish PP could not play this role because of the strong leadership of Manuel Fraga, the former Spanish leader of PP. **This was a major change for the Galician language policy arena. For the first time, Spanish political parties, especially right-wing parties, became principal actors and had real veto power.**

Commented [A12]: Perhaps 'imposing' instead?

### 2.3 The emergence of the cordial bilingualism model (2010–2016): no mediator, no consensus

The return of the PPdeG to office, after the 2009 Galician election, meant the beginning of the third and current stage of language policy in Galicia. After two years of intense debate and polarization about the language issue in education, the early months of the PP's government were not easy in terms of language policy. Soon, the Feijóo administration found itself in a complex situation when trying to fulfill its promise of linguistic free choice, mainly because of three factors:

- The solid prohibition against separating students into different classes or schools for reasons of language, established in the 1983 Linguistic Normalization Law;
- Both the high economic and human resources costs required by the new promised “liberal” approach; and
- The lack of consensus on the language issue inside the PPdeG, which would lead to a severe confrontation between the most centralist and pro-Castellano sectors—the so-called “Birretes”—and those who were most committed to Galego and a more regionalist vision—the so-called “boinas” (Monteagudo Romero 2019).

Some other matters have changed since the 2009 election. Once the PP was back in office, the language issue was no longer a priority for its political agenda. It even became an important obstacle for day-to-day government because of the social opposition caused by its previous aggressive discourse on language policy. Political confrontation between parties about language policy remained a controversial issue in Galician politics but left the Spanish political debate.

Unlike the previous stage, during which the Spanish media had played an important role in promoting the language issue in the political agenda, since 2009, the role played by the media has been much more discreet and quieter, just as it had been during the Fraga administration. Regarding the social groups active in language policy, significant changes can be seen. The approval of the “multilingualism decree” caused outrage among both pro-Castellano and pro-Galego groups: the former thought that the promise of free choice at school had been betrayed, and the latter considered that the new law pushed back Galego, since it re-established a percentage of hours taught in Galego like the one established in the 1995 Decree, ignoring the provisions of Fraga's PXNL of 2004.

Protection and positive discrimination for Galego has been replaced by a problem defined by that the need for equal protection for both languages, a significant reduction of the weight of Galego in the educational system, very low budgeting for normalization programs, and very flexible implementation standards.

**Commented [A13]:** You don't refer to this as the 'Plan Xeral' above; you may need to introduce that term when you first mention the 2004 policy.

However, the new strategy by Núñez Feijóo's government cannot just be explained through electoral circumstances. It is a tactical move that seeks to ensure a double goal. The first is to retrieve the central role that the model of harmonious bilingualism assigned to the Galician PP, reinforce its hegemonic position in political and electoral competition, and prevent the emergence of possible competitors for the regionalist or moderate nationalist space. The second is to prevent the consolidation of a new political stage that would be very hard to manage for Feijóo and the PP, as much as it represents an escalation of the internal contradictions involved in the regionalist discourse of the Galician PP versus the centralist and patriotic discourse of the Spanish PP.

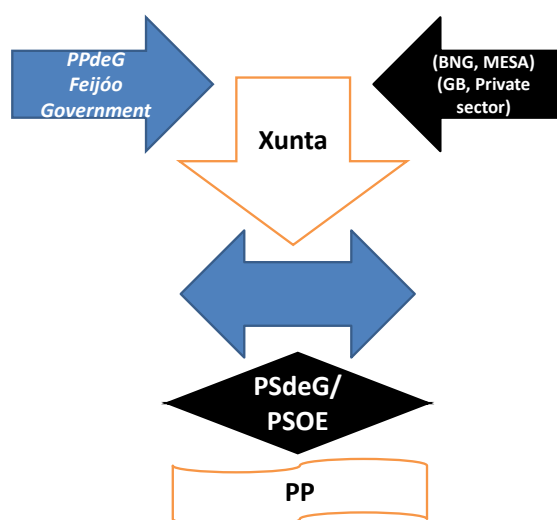
The setbacks in the process for language normalization/revitalization have worsened these contradictions and, above all, have removed the PPdeG from its privileged central position, which could lead to significant risks in opening its electoral and social spaces to new pro-Spanish or nationalist competitors (see Figure 4).

- To achieve this dual aim, **the PPdeG needs to move from its now-exclusive role as a Promoter of cordial bilingualism to be able to take on again the roles of Promoter and Mediator, as it did during the period of harmonious bilingualism**, which granted it a central position. The Galician PP tries to play both the role of Promoter and the role of Mediator by presenting this model of cordial bilingualism as a new balanced solution: it keeps the symbolic and consensus elements of a normalization/revitalization policy plus the discretionary implementation of Fraga's bilingual model.
- **The Xunta administration stays as Director**, since its main interest is a language policy that ensures stability and keeps management and implementation problems under control.
- Again, **the actors playing the role of Opponents have changed: the coalition in favor of the normalization is now reinforced**, including the MNL, the PSOE, and the BNG, as well as new emerging social movements. But at the same time, the powerful coalition against normalization is still alive, since organizations such as GB, the powerful lobby of private education, and an important part of the PP do not want to keep the symbolic elements of a normalization policy and claim that free language choice must be the key element in the new policy.
- In the new scenario, **no actor can truly play a Mediator role**, as no actor can credibly work for a policy-making process driven by political consensus. The Galician PP tries to play this role, but all the other key actors sharply deny its legitimacy to act as a consensus builder. The other actors no longer acknowledge the traditional centrality of the PP in the language policy arena.
- **The PSOE also tries to play its role as Filter**, striking strategic compromises with the PP about minor issues on language policy.

- **The Spanish PP continues to play the role of Goalkeeper**, watching so that Feijóo new policy does not move away from the national discourse in defense of Castellano. This role was reinforced by its new position as the PP took Spanish office after its victory in 2011. Promises of a “new strength” for Castellano in the public education system were a significant part of the PP’s electoral messages.

**FIGURE 4. ROLES AND ACTORS IN THE CORDIAL BILINGUALISM MODEL**

*(Source: author)*



## 2.4 Conclusion

The redistribution of roles caused by the PP’s electoral strategy in 2009 to regain power is a key element when explaining the current situation of ambiguity, indecision, and even contradictions of Feijóo governments, his successor, Alfonso Rueda, and the PPdeG about its own language policies. Linguistic political consensus has always been built in Galicia when one of the main parties played the Mediator role. But when there is no Mediator, there is no consensus.

After the breakdown of historical linguistic political consensus in Galicia, two powerful coalitions have been created, arguing opposed and mutually exclusive definitions of what a “policy of promotion of Galego” should and must mean. Social consensus about what language policy must be remains high, but there are more relevant differences about the interpretation and contents of the policy and between political actors.

The PPdeG cannot find an easy, clear way to achieve again the Mediator role that secures political consensus between both coalitions, because neither of them acknowledges its legitimacy to play that part once more. Ironically, to avoid being displaced from its centrality, the PP has moved strategically and ended up losing its central position because of its attempts to reverse its own polarizing strategy. Feijóo's language policies have also suffered some legal setbacks at the Tribunal Superior de Galicia and the European Court regarding the lack of sufficient protection for Galego speakers' rights.

The PPdeG administration has now abandoned any attempt of radical change in language public policy. The PPdeG now wants to promote a model based on a similar consensus to the one it broke and cannot rebuild easily because most of the other actors do not recognize the PP's legitimacy to play this "Mediator" role. This attempt to play this role again has had a negative political impact on the Galician PP's electoral base. For instance, during the 2016 Galician election, Feijóo and PPdeG had to cope with angrier criticism from his own voters, especially urban Castellano speakers, who reminded him of his broken promise of radical change in language policy.

Nevertheless, this criticism did not have an electoral impact. In fact, Feijóo and PPdeG have increased his government majorities after the 2016 and 2020 elections, almost reaching the levels of votes and support achieved by Manuel Fraga through the golden years of harmonious bilingualism. This may also explain why the discourse of language as an individual choice held by Feijóo in the 2009 election has almost disappeared in the official rhetoric of PPdeG administration. Galego is back as a peacefully vehicular language, and it is the administration that chooses its position in the educational curriculum. The *cordial bilingualism* model looks now very much like that old and friendly *harmonious bilingualism* model.

As a general conclusion, to be tested further through the study of different cases, the Galician case has shown that polarization in language public policy may work for political parties belonging to the opposition as an effective strategy for partisan competition and campaigning, but it becomes a major political and policy problem once in office, both for nationalist and non-nationalist parties. A balance between both languages, suited and adjusted to their circumstances and needs, perceived as careful and sensitive by the social majority, has proven to be the safest strategy to achieve political consensus and more stable language public policies so far—maybe because this careful and sensitive balance is what the great majority of bilingual voters expect from their institutions, regardless of whom they vote for.

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Figure 2: Roles and actors in the harmonious bilingualism model.

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Figure 4: Roles and actors in the cordial bilingualism model.

Graphic 1: The budgets of language public policy through time.

***From Political Consensus to Political Conflict and Back Again: Language Public  
Policy in Galicia (1989-2020).***

*Antonio Losada*

*List of changes. July 2022*

This is the list of changes introduced after the comments and suggestions by the reviewers.

1. All the editing changes suggested have been accepted.
2. All the graphics, figures and tables have been revised to make them clearer and more understandable, especially Graphic 1, Figure 1 and Tables 1,2,3 and 4.