

# Comparison between the french and asturian bilingual primary education systems

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## Abstract

Although France has been traditionally reluctant to Foreign Language teaching we can say its intentions are deep and have a wide point of view as they focus in aspects such as integration, cultural awareness and other sociological aspects. The case of Asturias is more a policy of fast implementation and essay-error oriented towards work rather than culture in some cases in the real life application. Let's see this kind of difference

**Keywords:** education, bilingualism, foreign language, culture

**Título:** Comparación entre el sistema bilingüe francés y el asturiano.

## Resumen

Podemos observar que mientras que en el país de Francia ha sido tradicional el interés existente por los idiomas extranjeros podemos decir que ha ido creciendo su integración cultural y otros aspectos socioculturales. El caso de la región de Asturias es mas un caso de política y ensayo-error orientado al trabajo antes que a la cultura en algunos casos reales de su aplicación. Vamos a ver las diferencias entre estos dos distintos sistemas de bilingüismo.

**Palabras clave:** educacion, bilingüismo, idioma extranjero, cultura.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bilingualism is a complex concept and so are the different understandings and so are the executions of Bilingual Education around the world. In this document I will compare two primary bilingual education system's examples that focus on very different dimensions of the bilingual phenomenon.

The first one is the case of bilingualism in France and the second is the case of bilingualism in Asturias. France historical importance in bilingualism is relative as we can say France has traditionally fostered the values of the Republic, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity (Maximilien Robespierre, 1790 in french Liberté, Égalité et Fraternité) and in a way this means we are equal because we are united and we are united because we are equal (C. Helot & A. Young International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism Vol. 5, No. 2. , 2002 )but always with a we can think in a different way which is idiosyncratic to France.

Bearing this in mind the global reality forced a change of perspective and three dimensions have to be taken in account nowadays: Foreign Language Bilingualism, Regional Languages Bilingualism and Bilingualism related to migration.

The case of Asturias apart from the bilingualism in a Foreign Language is more oriented to inner languages than to immigration, as there is a 3'8 % of foreign pupils from infant, primary and secondary (according to La Nueva España 09.07.2018) and the main origins are Romania and SouthAmerica (mostly spanish speakers).

## FRENCH POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND REALITY

According to C. Helot & A. Young "International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism" Vol. 5, No. 2. , 2002 there was a reluctance towards minor languages and minority language based on the French Constitution and this phenomenon created a kind of invisibility of "minor" languages and migrant minorities bilingualism in special (Martin-Jones and Romaine, 1986). Nowadays the Ministry of Culture makes the following classification:

- **Regional languages(tongues)**

The Ministry of Education in France allows public teaching of some regional languages such as Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, etc. It can be done as a subject or through immersive bilingual programs and also 50/50 bilingual programs. The approach depends in the particularities of the language.

- **Languages(Tongues) of the Overseas:**

Overseas French coexists with more than 50 languages of France such as in Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Reunion... and the right to learn to read and write in these languages is accepted. The General Delegation for The French Language and the In Languages of France published a list of orientations for the multilingualism Overseas: Marks 2017: Elements for a language policy in the Overseas.

- **Non-territorial languages(tongues):** These are languages that have no link with a particular French territory but to immigrations, such as Dialectal Arabic, Western Armenian, Berber, etc. The reality is not clear for example in the case of Arabic and a solution to the need of this section of French citizens is not given. It can be due to the risk of isolation of the Islamic individuals, the reluctance of principals and others but the Ministry of Education is asked for an answer.

#### ASTURIAN POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND REALITY

Based on the data exposed at "Informe sobre el Programa Bilingüe de los centros docentes del Principado de Asturias" published by Consejería de Educación y Cultura del Gobierno del Principado de Asturias we can draw the following points:

- There is a teaching of Foreign Language with a nearly absolute dominance of the English language in Asturias In the primary education. Exceptions such as the French project in infant education at El Parque Infantil in Oviedo have been very rare. This teaching of English can be done through regular English classes or a bilingual CLIL program , this last with a 50'8 % of the primary pupils total according to "*Asturias, a la cabeza del bilingüismo en Primaria y Secundaria*"( La Nueva España 29/08/2017). These programs are not compulsory for schools and depend on the interest of the teachers.
- A bilingual program in Asturian language is also carried in the 3 different geographical varieties: Galizian-Asturian, Center Asturian and Western Asturian with a pilot program in infant education. It is a voluntary program at parent's choice and it is understood as a subject.
- According to "*Circular sobre atención educativa al alumnado con incorporación tardía al sistema educativo español*" from Gobierno de Asturias there are some guidelines such as increasing the tutoring classes or incorporating the pupils in the level according to their age until a initial evaluation is done. Based on its results the team will propose some adaptation measures: if the difference in the level is higher than one year the pupil can be hold off one course.
- The additional immersion program for the pupils of late incorporation consists of intensive classes for the pupils in the centers that do not have resources for this linguistic lack. The program will have up to 10 hours a week from external sources.

## COMPARATION

| <b><u>BILINGUALISM IN<br/>PRIMARY EDUCATION</u></b> | <b><u>ASTURIAS</u></b>   | <b><u>FRANCE</u></b>  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>PROPORTION OF PUPILS</b>                         | THE WHOLE GROUP  | JUST A FEW, SECTION   |
| <b>LEVEL OF CHOICE</b>                              | DEPENDS ON THE SCHOOL INITIATIVE AND PARENTS AGREEMENT   | DEPENDS ON LINGUISTIC REQUIREMENTS AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRINCIPAL  |
| <b>OBJECTIVES</b>                                   | THE FLUENCY IN THE 4 SKILLS IN THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPLOYABILITY AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER | INTEGRATION, POSSIBLE RETURN TO ORIGIN AND TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE.   |
| <b>LANGUAGES</b>                                    | ENGLISH  | CHINESE, SPANISH, ENGLISH, GERMAN, DANISH, ARABIC ITALIAN, JAPANESE<br>NEERLANDS, PORTUGUESE, POLISH, RUSSIAN AND NORWEGIAN |
| <b>METHODOLOGY</b>                                  | CLIL   | CLIL  |
| <b>HOURS A WEEK</b>                                 | DEPENDS ON THE AMOUNT OF SUBJECTS TAUGHT   | 3 HOURS A WEEK APPROXIMATELY  |

## CONCLUSIONS

Although France has been traditionally reluctant to Foreign Language teaching we can say its intentions are deep and have a wide point of view as they focus in aspects such as integration, cultural awareness and other sociological aspects. The case of Asturias is more a policy of fast implementation and essay-error oriented towards work rather than culture in some cases in the real life application. The language status is also evident in Asturias while in France they do not pretend a limited scope. The possibility of choice is perhaps higher in France; however we can be in a way excluded.

In what refers to minority language the approach is quite similar although the realities may differ.

Finally In what is a regional language the incorporation to public education is quite recent but effective and living.

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