"To die with dignity or to be supplanted by the standard".
Empowerment and inclusive practices of urban new speakers of Aragonese

Chabier Gimeno-Monterde[1]

Natxo Sorolla[2]

Aragonese is a threatened Romance language immersed in a historical process of substitution by Spanish, the official language. The number of speakers who maintained its transmission to younger generations, mainly in rural areas, has extremely declined over the last century. In the meantime, revitalisation efforts have incorporated new speakers, especially in urban areas. Due to a weak and conflicting standardisation and institutionalisation of the language, as in other threatened languages, the new speakers are located between three poles: the supremacist position of the official language; the authenticity position highlighting the native varieties; or the legitimisation of supralocal varieties in a context with a hierarchical and conflicted management of revitalisation.

The analysis of the interviews allows us to categorise the discourses and establish profiles of new speakers, according to their ideologies and declared practices. The results show a polarisation of the urban new speakers' discourses, with disputes about the legitimacy of supralocal varieties, the contact with native speakers, or the forms of acquisition of the language. All these questions converge in the central academic debate about the Aragonese as a threatened language, and the new speakers and the proactivity not only as the future of the language, but also as its present.

Keywords: new speakers, Aragonese, ideologies, standard, authenticity, urban

Introduction

A presenter of the only television programme in Aragonese asked on Twitter: "What is better, that the Aragonese language die with dignity, or that it be supplanted by a standard Aragonese unconnected with Romance [sic]?". In the thread, another presenter of the same programme rejected the opposition between a *denatured future* or a *worthy substitution*: "It's a false dichotomy. May it live and live with dignity". And a new speaker of Aragonese pointed out that the linguistic substitution was not a worthy result either: "It's not going to have any dignity when it dies out. What's more, it has already died and not even its burial has taken place. Either the living language, the actual Aragonese, is recovered and maintained or it won't have dignity in any way. Neither dead nor replaced by something else."[3]

---

[1] Department of Sociology and Psichology, University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain

[2] Department of Business Management, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Reus, Spain; Xarxa CRUSCAT-IEC.

[3] In the original conversation (4/12/2020) interact @jorge_pueyo95 (12h29); @JPMartinez (14h27); and @rory_bellows (15h29).

This underlying debate is possibly what most concerned the Aragonese language during its weak revitalisation process since the 1970s. It refers to whether or not standard Aragonese is "authentic", and therefore, if the Aragonese spoken by (the majority of) new speakers is "authentic". But in fact, this debate encompasses and confronts two different discussions. On the one hand, the debate from the previous tweets focuses on the ideologies of linguistic authority. That is, the "authenticity" as opposed to the "anonymity" of languages and varieties, one of the key debates of new speakerism (Ramallo 2020). This dispute means that anonymity affects how new Aragonese speakers are considered, since the standard variety that they speak does not coincide with the "traditional" variety of any specific place. This seems to question the legitimacy of the new Aragonese speaking subjects facing the "native speakers", and makes their recognition difficult in different social, political, economic and cultural spheres. According to this perspective, the new speaker would stand as a representative of an *anonymous*, *unmarked* variety (Myers-Scotton 1998), associated with *plurality* (Woolard 2016). On the contrary, the "traditional" speaker would use a language considered authentic, associated with *uniqueness* and *territory*. On the other hand, there is a complementary debate related to the spelling and the standard for coding the Aragonese language that has led to the current coexistence of up to four graphic proposals. Although this does not affect the orality, when teaching adults and children, most of them new speakers, language models that sometimes have been thought of as opposed have been considered (Eito and Marcuello 2020).

In the case of the Aragonese language, far from being recognised under an "idea of anonymity" and "from no specific place", both debates have caused the standard variety to being rejected for *artificial*, *denatured* and *supplanting*. Then, the use of Aragonese is sometimes felt as delegitimated, even by some new speakers. Consequently, the variety of new speakers is *marked*, *connoted*, rather than perceived as a variety that represents a unified and plural linguistic community. Unravelling the reasons of this situation is still a work in progress.

It is necessary to highlight that, in the case of Aragonese, disputes over the legitimacy of the standard, including new speakers, occur in a context of extreme linguistic minoritisation, with weakly institutionalised linguistic policies that have little impact. While in the rural areas of Northern Aragon, where the language maintains a certain vitality, the demographic decline of native speakers is evident, in urban areas further south and in towns in Northern Aragon there is, apparently, a certain increase in new speakers. Therefore, these new speakers are not only the *future*, but they can already be considered as the *present* of the Aragonese language. The discussions about new Aragonese speakers and their varieties are, to a large extent, the discussions about (the survival of) the Aragonese language.

The study of new speakers in the Spanish State is abundant for the three minority languages with the greatest vitality: Galician, Basque and Catalan (Ramallo, Amorrortu and Puigdevall 2019). However, there is very little literature on the new speakers of extremely endangered languages, both in Spain and abroad. Research on this profile of Aragonese speakers is very recent (Fau 2019; Reyes and Sorolla in press). Accordingly, in this work we address a novel topic for this language in academic terms (Ariño and Castro 2019) and, at the same time, necessary for public policies that try to reverse its substitution process.

Methodology

The central question of our work is to reveal the dimensions of the main discourses of the urban new speakers of Aragonese about their relationship with the language and its varieties, with the

rest of the speakers, and about their role in the future of this threatened language. To achieve this goal, an analysis was conducted, based on qualitative data collected between 2017-2018 via interviews (n=15) with people from Spanish-speaking backgrounds who have had the opportunity to learn Aragonese. Some of the participants (2 male and 1 female) were living in towns in Northern Aragon, the low vitality area for Aragonese, in contact with the rural heartlands (Reyes et al. 2017). The others (6 male and 6 female) were living in Zaragoza, a monolingual Spanish-speaking city, capital of Aragon. Our analysis of linguistic profiles and the question protocols drew upon the methodology developed by Ortega et al. (2017) and investigated four dimensions of the discourses elicited: the form of acquisition, linguistic ideologies, usage, and transmission of the language.

Speakers of Aragonese in context

Historically, the Aragonese language came to occupy most of the Aragonese territory, and its development was associated with the medieval political power of the kingdom of Aragon (Tomás 2020). But at present Aragonese is one of the Europe's smallest linguistic communities, with 8,500 native speakers, and in the rural areas of Northern Aragon, where it still has a certain vitality, less than 600 young people have acquired this language through family transmission (Reyes et al. 2017). According to UNESCO, it is an extremely endangered language (Moseley 2010), due to its consistent process of language shift.

As shown in the introduction of this special issue, the Aragonese language, together with the Catalan (spoken in a group of territories of eastern Aragon bordering Catalonia called *La Franja*), is a minority and unofficial language within its own region. But unlike the former, Aragonese suffers a constant problematisation, even by the academic world, about its existence as a "language" beyond a set of dialectal varieties (Moreno 2012; Mendívil 2018; Ibarretxe et al. 2017).

The areas and populations with the greatest vitality of the Aragonese language are concentrated in a territory with a low population density around the Pyrenees, in Northern Aragon. But since the 1970s, a weak revitalisation movement has managed to create small clusters of new speakers, especially in some towns, mostly far from traditional areas (Gimeno 2019; Eito and Marcuello 2020). This has resulted in the majority of the population claiming to speak Aragonese being located in the city of Zaragoza (Reyes et al. 2017) or other northern towns.

While the school and after-school classes taught in many northern towns and rural municipalities do not provide the necessary competence to those children who have not acquired it through their families (Campos 2018), the adult classes allow some of the new speakers, who are often language activists too (Fau 2019), to reach a medium or high competence. This wide range of linguistics skills emerges from the fluency of speech found in our interviews. But their own discourse about their linguistic confidence places associations and the adult attitudes as a key factor in promoting new speakers.

The youth and urban profile, as well as the limited opportunities for interaction with native speakers, most of these ageing, is similar to that of other processes of revernacularisation of minority languages such as Breton or Francoprovençal (Hornsby 2015; Kasstan 2018). We also observe similarities among these experiences in internal conflicts about the standardisation or the legitimacy of the new varieties (Costa and Gasquet 2013).

The emergence of a new subject

The new speakers interviewed coincide in the diagnosis of the situation of the language: its substitution by Spanish is a real threat close in time. The current demographic scenario of rural areas where its use barely survives leads it to disappear in a short space of time. All coincide in observing the process of linguistic substitution of Aragonese in the areas where it used to maintain a certain vitality.

Polarisation of new speakers' profiles

In the discourses developed in the interviews we have been able to isolate up to four different tendencies or positions. Although these "profiles" help us to simplify the reality studied into categories, which are usually opposed in theoretical terms, in the discourses these categories can even concur in one single new speaker, because the nuances and gradations observed are much more complex than those proposed theoretically.

A first profile is that of new speakers who do not have Aragonese as their first language, but maintain links with the rural municipalities with greater vitality in the language, usually of a family nature, though not only of this nature. Through their regular stays in that area, and their friendship ties with other native speakers, they carry out a linguistic immersion with the local varieties, which sanctions the authenticity of their practices (see Kasstan 2018). At the same time, this allows them to adopt a specific local dialect and speak it fluently, although they also know some of the standard Aragonese models (oral and written), which they usually acquired through their studies. The relevance given in these discourses to the essential link between the new speaker and the native speakers suggests the label of *nativism*.

The second and third profiles of new speakers are characterised by having a medium-high competence, but unlike the nativist profile, they usually make use of a standard variety, and their discourses are more nuanced due to the need for the new speaker to be embedded in the networks of native speakers and the use of dialect varieties. They usually highlight the need for cooperation between native speakers and new speakers, but more in terms of the convergence of the two types of speakers than of the primacy of the speakers of the areas with greater vitality. This position suggests the label of *convergent* new speakers.

Even so, as we have indicated, there are two different profiles among the convergent ones, depending on the urban space where they live. Both have in common their living in territories where the language is not taught in school, there are hardly any extracurricular voluntary classes, and their learning has occurred voluntarily, especially in courses for adults promoted by associations. Most of the new speakers are concentrated in the city of Zaragoza, the historical and administrative capital of Aragon, which groups half of the Aragonese population (Reyes et al. 2017), and others in medium-sized cities close to the areas of greatest vitality. Although the initial intention was not to segment them by their geographical areas, the results suggest that the discourses between one and other are opposed. That is why it allows us to establish a subdivision between new speakers who have their activity located in Zaragoza, and those who locate it in small and medium-sized cities, much closer to the municipalities with a certain vitality of Aragonese.

Finally, the fourth profile does not feel so comfortable with their ability to use the language, either due to a still precarious acquisition, or due to a reduced confidence because of a lesser use

and a to less use and a great distancing from the nucleus of speakers. This position within the network of speakers suggests the label of *peripherals* for this typology.

"New speaker" as a disputed concept

According to our fieldwork, as a consequence of the historical weakness of the revitalisation movement and the small size of this population, there are still no common terms that are recognised or raised to name neither this "nascent category" nor the native speakers (see Jaffe 2015). Thus, as the scant literature that addresses the social condition of speakers does (Huguet and Lapresta 2006), interviewees resort to the term "patrimonial" [speaker] to refer to native speakers. Whereas, to identify themselves, they go to "Aragonese speaker" and, less frequently, to "new Aragonese speaker".

Most of the interviewees coincide in defining the new speaker as having learned the language in secondary socialisation. Some of the *peripheral* speakers also indicate the lack of contact with the areas where the language has vitality. Among the most proactive convergents, it is considered that to be called a *new speaker*, the person must have an intermediate linguistic level, and a frequent use of the language.

For all the profiles analysed, the "new speakers" are also associated with the use of the supralocal standard variety(-ies). And, in some cases, given the conflict over the need, the viability or the appropriateness of a variety of such a type, the concept of "new speaker" (*neofablant* or *neoparlant*) refers to a tension. This tension is higher among the interviewees who are in more nativist positions. They shun the *new speaker* label to define themselves. On the one hand, all of them have learned the language as adults and use a variety that they recognise as (more) dialectal, but never define themselves as "patrimonial" speakers. And, on the other hand, they associate the *new speaker* label with a supralocal standard variety, of which they are very critical. As a result, they question their own affiliation to that label, either hesitantly using the labels "speaker" and "new speaker", or explicitly avoiding the latter, since they associate it with the use of the supralocal standard variety.

> *We understand as new speakers* [...] *the people who use the standard model. And although I am clearly not a patrimonial* [sic] *speaker, I'm not considered new speaker because I use a specific dialect variety.*[4]
> (Interviewee 11)

This proposal goes through the fact that learning the language, as a new speaker, not only entails the adoption of a linguistic competence, but also an essential communicative competence, and even the necessary immersion in networks of native speakers. For these profiles, the definition as (new) speaker goes through the definition made by the others (native speakers).

Language varieties and relations with native speakers

The conflicts about the linguistic authenticity of the new Aragonese speakers and the values associated with the varieties of the language can be framed in the polarisation between two

---

[4] All quotations reproduce the speakers' words as expressed by them and have not been corrected or changed in any way. The English translation has been reviewed by the team editor at the University of Zaragoza. Quotations include the identification of the interviewee (number).

approaches. On the one hand, the positions that understand identities as instruments that individuals manage according to context (*constructivism*), "anonymity" or "profit". On the other hand, the positions that link languages and identities with the place of origin of individuals, "essence", "authenticity" and "pride" (essentialism) (Wimmer 2013; Woolard 2016; Heller and Duchêne 2012). The opposition between these views allows us to contrast the discourses of the new speakers.

At the pole of the instrumentalist positions of "profit" we usually find the discourses of the new speakers that we label as peripheral and convergent, who consider the language as an instrument associated with an Aragonese identity under construction, much more abstract and broader than the local identity. They unfailingly use a standard variety and are usually associated with new speakers with lower competence and residents of Zaragoza, with a use focused on the associative world and between new speakers.

For these, the new speakers are the ones who are making a decisive effort in the weak preservation of the language, while the native speakers are the ones who "abandon it". The blame for linguistic substitution is accompanied by the recognition of the impossibility of interacting with these native speakers: either because they do not recognise or reject the standard model (Holton 2009), or because they reject interaction with people outside the rural environment and / or the family context (Trosset 1986). In both cases, these new speakers underline their perception of an affective distance from native speakers. They have practically no contact with native speakers, and when they do, it is sometimes carried out in Spanish.

In fact, the physical (and social) distance with respect to the areas with living varieties seems a relevant fact that keeps the most peripheral new speakers of Zaragoza away from the native speakers. This must be the factor that explains why new speakers with a convergent position living in areas close to the Pyrenees maintain a more naturalised, habitual and fluid relationship with native speakers than the more peripheral residents of Zaragoza do not.

Within the same convergent position there is a second position, that of the more proactive new speakers, which implies a positive contact with native speakers, and mutual learning between both ways of accessing the language. Thus, they believe that the confluence between new speakers and native speakers is necessary, because the awareness that the new speaker has about the global situation of the language should be useful to native speakers, and they can access an approach of linguistic and civil rights that it is hidden from them. Even so, they emphasise that this confluence must be attentive to points of friction, since it is a point that stands out together with the discourses of a nativist profile.

Finally, at the pole of the positions based on the "essences" of the language is the nativist position, which highlights the tension around authenticity, when authenticity indexes identity and locality at the same time (Kasstan 2018). Thus, this discourse focuses on the authenticity, historicity and the nexus of the Aragonese language with its living dialect varieties, the community and the rural culture of origin. For the nativist profile, there is an opposition between a standard, considered artificial, and the local dialect, considered natural. This leads to an illegitimacy of the new speakers who are seen as those who use a *koine* and not true Aragonese speakers. For these interviewees, new speakers should learn a local variety through immersion in rural northern territories and have a high communicative and sociolinguistic competence in those environments (Bueno 2014). That is why, to define the (new) speaker, more than the subjective judgment of the *(new) speaker*, only the *objective* judgment of the *other* (the specialist, the "patrimonial" speaker) is relevant:

I will never consider myself a new speaker of Aragonese. They can call me that, but I can't consider that myself. [...] But I don't know if I am a new speaker, I think it has to be the experts who decide what a new speaker is and what is not. People who take one, two courses? How many years do you need to be one? Criteria are needed. (Interviewee 10)

We have seen in the accounts of all the profiles studied that the definition of the new speaker is associated with the use of a standard variety, not identified with any of the dialect varieties. But at the same time, the most nativist profiles hesitate in the perception of the variety they use. They clearly avoid the standard and position themselves in the use of one (or several) dialect varieties, standing out for their empathy and proactive predisposition to accommodate to the variety of the interlocutor. Even so, the (new) speakers with a nativist profile perceive that with the linguistic resources available to them, their accommodation to the living dialect variety is not complete, especially to the varieties that have not been central in their acquisition process. And possibly this perception that accommodation to living dialect varieties is not complete, leads them to also hesitate in self-identification between new speakers and speakers, and to prioritise the need for others to evaluate these categories.

So that the nativist position faces a dilemma that the rest of the new speakers also detect: how to accommodate to the local variety in each territory? A revitalisation proposal focused on the acquisition of different dialect varieties has, therefore, a complex and rather difficult scalability.

Language as conflict

Most of the speakers simultaneously express positive and negative feelings towards Aragonese. Almost all new speakers place an intrinsic positive value on the process of language discovery and learning. Beyond the capacity for use, or the possibility of establishing new relationships, the learning process itself stands out. In fact, it is very remarkable that the new speakers of Zaragoza who remain more on the fringes of the language activists' networks in Zaragoza, and the new speakers who have much of their experience in the small cities of Upper Aragon, are the only ones who practically do not report negative aspects.

On the contrary, all those with a certain connection in the fabric of new speakers in Zaragoza, accompany positive experiences with negative feelings, which they associate with the context of the language. On the one hand, the profiles closest to nativism make explicit negativity, especially in relation to the fact that the process of language substitution continues. On the contrary, the most convergent urban profiles highlight the negativity of conflicts related to spelling, associations and language policy. In fact, in some cases the conflict is so relevant that some new speakers declare that they have reduced the people with whom they use Aragonese, only to the closest new speakers.

New speakers as the future of Aragonese

The role of new speakers in the process of maintenance and recovery of the Aragonese language creates quite a consensus: almost all profiles consider them an essential actor, taking into account the limitations imposed by the monolingual regime both on the minority language and on the new speaking subject (Sabaté 2018). All of them point to the new speaker as a necessary actor for the survival of the language, given the ageing and depopulation of rural areas where it is (still) a native language and with a relevant vitality (see Hornsby and Vigers 2018).

In fact, the peripheral profile highlights that the role of the new speaker is the only relevant one for the future of Aragonese, given the substitution process in areas that still maintain some vitality for the language. On the contrary, the convergent, and part of the nativist, tend to emphasise the need to bring together new speakers and native speakers. And, finally, the most nativist positions point out the importance of new speakers in the future of Aragonese. But they warn that, given the current sociolinguistic situation and the poor adaptation of the standard models used by new speakers, these do not favour the recovery of the language. This scepticism is often manifested in the dichotomy with which we began this article:

> *And well the fact that there are new speakers is good. But if the new speakers never have any intention of going to the areas of use and reviving it there... I mean, what I feel is that if one day comes up and the Aragonese is no longer spoken […] in the Pyrenees and the Upper Aragon, but it's still being spoken in strongholds in the cities, well, the truth, that for me, it will make no sense at all. It won't make any sense because, for me, the emotional bond will have disappeared. The truth is that the neo language issue for me is hard. This thought is hard for me. (Interviewee 11)*

Proactive (new)speakers: activities, networks, policies and language transmission

A good part of the perceptions of the new speakers of Aragonese described above, as well as the conflicts around this subject, are common in other contexts of minority languages (O'Rourke and Pujolar 2013; Ramallo, 2020). But, as we have previously anticipated, the situation of Aragonese requires going beyond what has been investigated in minority languages with greater vitality, as in the other cases collected in this same monograph, except perhaps Basque in France. Speakers of Aragonese, and other extremely endangered languages, have historically had little or no political autonomy, leading to local institutions that typically do not recognise equal language rights for their citizens (Smith et al. 2018). In these political contexts, local identity, frequently fragilised centuries ago, is not always key to revitalisation.

Therefore, the context for new speakers to bring a significant change in the current scenario of intense linguistic substitution is different. In the first place, because the Aragonese's own endangerment places the new speakers of Aragonese as key actors, not only in the *future* for the language, but also in the *present*. And secondly, the threatened language situation itself incorporates dynamics of its own. The low identification of the language with a strong collective or civic identity also raises questions about whether or not networks and communities of (new) speakers can replace that identitary impulse. This also collides with internal conflicts between new speakers, which, as we have seen, are especially intense among those new speakers most anchored to the networks of speakers in Zaragoza, the city where the nucleus of power for the creation of public policies in favour of the language resides. In fact, our analysis indicates that among the active community of new speakers of Aragonese, debates about the legitimacy of the use of the standard variety take much more place than about others (i. e., its role in the different areas of the Aragonese society, its presence in the educational world, the empowerment of networks of speakers, or their intergenerational transmission). That is why we will explore below what emerges from the discourses on these aspects.

In the most *peripheral convergent* positions, proactive profiles are framed from more individual trajectories, focused on carrying out activities that visualise the language, such as blogs, magazines or music in Aragonese. It is also relevant that in the case of Aragonese the apparent antagonism between native speakers and new speakers refers to a third actor: language policies. The interviewees refer here to the regionalist party that designs and implements them since 2015, within the framework of a broad centre-left government coalition. These policies also have the support of a good part of the new speakers who are located in more *peripheral* positions, and who justify that their social impact is scarce due to the current rise of Spanish nationalism and its consolidated linguistic supremacism. Still, most of those interviewed prefer a "depoliticisation" of revitalisation and consider current policies insufficient. And, furthermore, those who have regular contact with the "heartlands" argue that language planning is disconnected from native speakers and that it is oriented towards non-existent "idealised speakers".

Proactivity

As we have seen, all the profiles coincide in the perception of a sociolinguistic environment that is not very favourable to the Aragonese language. However, external factors are not always decisive. In fact, the study of the new speakers of minorised languages has highlighted, above all, the relevance of the attitudes and agency of new speakers (Ortega et al. 2017). A proactive attitude causes new speakers to look for opportunities to improve their learning and/or use experience, but it requires more effort, and a certain degree of awareness and commitment. In the case of the Aragonese, the driving force behind this attitude and this behaviour are usually internal values. This proactivity is related to agency (Urla 2012), which would translate into the option of the speaker to overcome the obstacles encountered in adverse situations for the language: the little social presence of the language in the immediate context, the remoteness of the rural territories where it is wider used, the few networks of Aragonese speakers, the pressure of the monolingual regime, or the low competition.

The different profiles show different strategies to make the language visible, used and/or improved. And they do it in different intensities. Those interviewed with less competence, who are located in the *peripheral* profile, tend to show greater affinity with the current linguistic policy of the Government of Aragon, which maintains certain recognition for Aragonese and Catalan, and nuanced but favourable public policies for their visibility and promotion. These more peripheral new speakers present a passive or even *reactive* attitude, as described by Ortega et al. (2017), being carried away by the adverse circumstances of the sociolinguistic context. Their standard variety is far from the local varieties, and they consider that it is not recognised by native speakers, who interact with them in Spanish. They claim that interactions are not possible because the language is used only in the family environment of certain rural areas and blame native speakers for the decline of the language. The absence of proactive strategies in this profile is supplemented by their motivation, based on an Aragonese and Aragonesist identity. They limit their interactions with new speakers to the closest and most delimited associative and regionalist sphere. Even so, it is the most "optimistic" profile about the future of the language, probably due to this disconnect.

On the other hand, and in contrast, above all, with this peripheral profile, appears what we have called *nativist* positioning, which considers that "non-natives" can hardly develop an affective bond with the language. These new speakers consider that their profile is the only one that connects in a *natural* and legitimate way with the living reality of the Aragonese (hierarchy) and

they hold the rest of the new speakers responsible for supporting a "neolanguage" that *supplants* the *authentic Aragonese,* that of dialect varieties.

The network: breathing spaces and familiar transmission

The activities of new speakers of all profiles produce what have been called sites of resistance, breathing or safe spaces, communities of speakers… for the threatened language (Lantto 2014). But its intensity, its configuration, and its impact on the biography of the new speakers varies, in large part, by their position or profile. Most are based on attitudes that avoid verticality and promote universality.

In the first place, focusing on the actions deployed to interact with native speakers, we find three proactive attitudes. From nativist positions, many personal resources are invested in accommodating to a local dialect variety which, when possible, is that of the interlocutor.

> […] *Learn a language and not only the forms of the language, but also learn*
> *to interact with the people who speak hat language in their areas of use* […]
> [I] *can't say that I'm a speaker until I have made the absolute immersion.*
> (interviewee 11)

On the contrary, from the convergent profiles the use of the standard tends to be maintained, but with differences between them. Thus, in the cases of small cities close to the "heartlands" identification as an inhabitant of the same geographical area stands out. While from the convergent profile of Zaragoza, the difficulty in speaking the local variety with precision tends to be made explicit, and the interlocutor's linguistic awareness is appealed to, if this is conducive to maintaining the language. The misgivings of native speakers about the urban origin of the new speaker, or the fact of having a position outside their native local network, are usually overcome, according to the interviewees. All these profiles also reintroduce Aragonese in interactions with people they have met in urban contexts and who come from rural areas of traditional use, with whom they previously related to in Spanish.

The four urban profiles studied are aware of the weakness of the new speakers' community, which has a very small volume, both of members and opportunities for interaction. Only the nativist profile, more proactive in regularly moving to municipalities with native speakers, and some people from the convergent profiles, include, among those opportunities, contact with native speakers. This contact facilitates their insertion into networks of speakers, in contexts with relative ethnolinguistic vitality, or even with a certain sense of community of practice, as has traditionally been treated in sociolinguistics. Reyes, Capdevila and Gimeno (in press) have recently showed that periodical cultural meetings between native and new speakers (e. g. "Trobada") have been self-organised in northern villages. Adopting the same community-based approach, these activists create new safe spaces in which Aragonese can be used.

Otherwise, the linguistic uses of Aragonese by the most peripheral speakers are concentrated in time (leisure) and space (associations, alternative bars, social centres), especially in the case of the most peripheral profile, with people who identify as "conscientious speakers" or "militants" (O'Rourke and Ramallo 2015). When they leave that community of practice, constituted as a "site of resistance", and try to interact with native speakers, their experiences differ, as we have already seen.

In relation to the intergenerational transmission of Aragonese by native speakers, all profiles coincide in evaluating its interruption as negative, but in some cases, there is some

understanding and empathy towards the global sociolinguistic situation of "patrimonial" speakers. Even though, the adoption that the new speakers themselves make of the language in their family environment, and especially, in its intergenerational transmission, is highly variable. In the *peripheral* profile there have been attempts to introduce the language with the partner, and first and foremost, with the children. But in all these interviews, the intergenerational transmission of Aragonese is less, or very sporadic. It is, above all, between the nativist positions, and the more proactive convergent ones, that the transmission of Aragonese to their children occupies a centrality. These have achieved, in some cases, the use of Aragonese also by the children of the couple, although in non-symmetrical interactions (Aragonese-Spanish). This process has sometimes been accompanied by an effort to adapt children's vocabulary and by the doubt about whether the children will continue to speak it.

> *And in fact, the last push was when my daughter was born […] I decided to talk to her in Aragonese, I also decided that I had to make an effort to do it well and it was even a greater effort to look at all the doubts... both to search for vocabulary and to find a way to provide myself with all the tools I needed in order to be functional in Aragonese. [...] I know that I don't know if my children will speak Aragonese or not, I don't know if in ten years they will want to continue speaking it… that doesn't matter for me because I will have been very happy talking to them in Aragonese but, well, you always have those little things, you have made that decision but you never know what they'll do. I'm happy to have transmitted it to them but I would also be a bit frustrated if they didn't do it but that is also part of life and of their way of course.* (Interviewee 7)

Even so, it is also noteworthy that from nativist positions it is pointed out that new speakers run additional risks when transmitting Aragonese, which may affect the language model of future generations, and that this carries a certain risk.

Conclusions, implications and pending research

Initially, we raised the dilemma that the Aragonese case brought to the context of the new speakers in the Spanish State, within the framework of a highly threatened language: "What is better, that the Aragonese language die with dignity, or that it be supplanted by a standard Aragonese unconnected with Romance [sic]?". In light of the new speakers' discourses that we have analysed, the dilemma exists. On the one hand, Aragonese is a language that suffers extreme erosion in its traditional areas. But, on the other hand, there is a growth of new speakers in urban areas, who, with different levels of competence, adopt standard varieties. Some of these varieties do not have a complete consensus in the community of new speakers. The reality is that the process of high minorisation of the Aragonese language itself has weakened its social base and has had a practically deinstitutionalised revitalisation process until very recently, including from an academic perspective. This has kept the language in a continuous debate on the spellings and the standard, instead of a debate centred on the social role that language should occupy in the different spheres of the Aragonese society.

There are several conclusions and implications that follow from the preceding analysis and discussions. First, the need for a certain consensus for the recognition of a standard variety by (new) speakers, so that it can produce supradialectal content for the entire linguistic community, as well as the adoption of this variety by new speakers not located in traditional communities.

The adoption of various dialect varieties, in a process of biographical immersion in traditional communities, is a process that is difficult to scale outside the circles of linguistic activism, and it will become increasingly complex if the community of native speakers continues to shrink and age. The two premises that have been raised since the beginning of the work seem true without this legitimacy of the new speakers for the acquisition and use of a standard variety. If there is no variety recognised as shared by speakers and new speakers, in the terms of *anonymity* that are usually associated with standard varieties, the trade-off between a linguistic substitution or an impersonation by an unrecognised standard becomes real. In our study, this position before the debate fits into the discourses that we have labeled as *nativist*.

Another profile of the new speakers studied, the one we have labeled as *peripheral*, seems to be the one that experiences this dilemma with the least conflict, and, in fact, is the most optimistic. But in part we attribute this view to the fact that it is a profile with little contact with native speakers. Despite the optimism of the discourse, the peripheral position is also associated with more passive attitudes and behaviours towards the language. In other words, there is a lack of activism that could promote the creation of breathing spaces and networks that would favour relatively dense communities of speakers. And this is far from leading to the complete incorporation of Aragonese in intergenerational transmission which would produce future urban native speakers. Therefore, through this positioning, positions of conflict are avoided, but one of the premises is not fulfilled, because the substitution process does not seem to be remedied.

Finally, we observe that the two *convergent* profiles live this dilemma in different ways. In the first place, new speakers from small cities far from Zaragoza's network of speakers seem to live the dilemma more calmly and manage the use of standard varieties relatively adapted to their daily contacts with native speakers. That is why, apparently, the convergent new speakers who are located on the periphery of the capital's networks do not experience the proposal as a dilemma, but instead feedback the community of native speakers with their standard Aragonese. On the contrary, the *convergent* profiles most inserted in the networks of Zaragoza speakers live and explicit the conflict, because they try to overcome the dichotomy, but they live in an environment that accepts the dichotomy. And they try to reach a consensus in order to avoid the substitution by accepting an anonymous standard. Somehow, their solution of recognition of the standard variety does not coincide with the proposal of the nativist profile, which passes through the adoption of local varieties. Some of these same convergent speakers activate proactive processes such as those described above, create denser networks of speakers, or make the decision to transmit the language to their children. But at the same time, in contrast to the convergence of small cities, the capital's own dense network makes them live with more conflict the adoption of a standard variety.

Our investigation into the context and perspectives of new speakers of Aragonese leads us to the conclusion that the incorporation of speakers and the overcoming of conflicts is essential for the revitalisation process. The strategies that we saw between the proactive and convergent profiles will be effective in a scenario in which it is recognised that without new speakers there is no future for this language. The "breathing (or safe) spaces", as "Trobada", that these speakers implement allow, in turn, to substitute identity motivations (nationalist or regionalist), to incorporate native speakers, more ideologically plural (Pujolar 2020). Finally, the impact of these activities and spaces created through participation and in an inclusive way, offer public policies opportunities for greater success in their language planning. Our results reinforce the research that warns about the global inability of historical linguistic and educational policies during last the decades to stop the loss of this language (Campos 2018).

Based on the analysed discourses, actions should be reoriented towards evidence-based strategies and tools evaluated as successful due to their social impact (Reale et al. 2017; Reyes, Capdevila and Gimeno in press). Firstly, given what we have seen about the high value and importance that many new speakers give to traditional speakers and their speech forms, they should facilitate the confluence of the urban with the rural, surpassing the discourses on the "heartlands" (Hornsby and Vigers 2018). And secondly, they must support existing urban "breathing spaces" and collaborate in the creation of new ones. For this, given the sociodemographic characteristics of the new speakers (youth and urban, high school and university students), this profile must be an explicit target: going beyond the geographical limits of rural communities of practice.

References

Ariño, A., and Bernad, J. (2018). Actitud e identidad lingüística en Aragón: Datos sociolingüísticos de Huesca y Alcañiz (Teruel). *Archivo de Filología Aragonesa*, 74: 187-218.

Bueno, C. C. (2014). Pertenéncia i sentimiento; un(posiblle) futuro pa l'aragonés? In C. Gimeno and N. Sorolla (Ed.), *II Jornadas Aragonesas de Sociología. Grupo de trabajo "Lenguas e identidades"*, 139-145. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, Gara d'Edizions.

Campos, I. O. (2018). *Lengua minorizada y enseñanza : actitudes, metodologías y resultados de aprendizaje en el caso del aragonés*. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Costa, James and Gasquet, Médéric. (2013). What is Language Revitalization Really About? Competing Language Revitalization Movements in Provence. In M. Jones & S. Ogilvie (Eds.) *Keeping Languages Alive*, 212-224. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eito, A., and Marcuello, C. (2020). *El futuro del aragonés. Un análisis prospectivo y social*. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Fau, E. (2019). *The Aragonese resistance: A qualitative study on the attitudes and motivations of new speakers of an endangered language in Zaragoza*. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1328894&dswid=-6205>

Gimeno, C. (2019). Neohablantes de aragonés: retrato de un colectivo estratégico en la revitalización. In F. Ramallo, E. Amorrortu, and M. Puigdevall (Ed.), *Neohablantes de lenguas minorizadas en el Estado español*, 89-109. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana-Vervuert.

Heller, M., and Duchêne, A. (2012). Pride and Profit: Changing Discourses of Language, Capital and Nation-State. In A. Duchêne and M. Heller (Eds.) *Language in Late Capitalism*, 11–31. New York: Routledge.

Holton, G. (2009). Relearning Athabascan Languages in Alaska: Creating Sustainable Language Communities through Creolization. In A. M. Goodfellow (Ed.) *Speaking of endangered languages: issues in revitalization*, 238–265. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hornsby, M. (2015). The "new" and "traditional" speaker dichotomy : bridging the gap. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231: 107–125.

Hornsby, M., and Vigers, D. (2018). "New" speakers in the heartlands: struggles for speaker legitimacy in Wales. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 5: 419-430.

Huguet, A. and Lapresta, C. (2006). Linguistic attitudes in Aragon. A school view. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 7(2): 265-288.

Jaffe, A. (2015). Defining the new speaker: theoretical perspectives and learner trajectories, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231, 21-44.

Ibarretxe, I., Hijazo, A. and Moret, M.T. (2017). The importance of minority languages in semantic typology: the case of Aragonese and Catalan. In I. Ibarretxe (Ed.) *Motion and space across languages and applications*, 123-150. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Kasstan, J. R. (2018). Exploring contested authenticity among speakers of a contested language: the case of 'Francoprovençal'. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39 (5): 382-393.

Lantto, H. (2014). Code-switching, swearing and slang: the colloquial register of Basque in Greater Bilbao. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 18(6): 633-648.

Mendívil., J. L. (2018). Lenguas, lingüistas y el problema de la lengua aragonesa. Una perspectiva biolingüística. *Archivo de Filología Aragonesa*, 74: 219-243.

Moreno, J. C. (2012). El aragonés, la lingüística y el imperialismo filológico. *Alazet*, 24, 59–76.

Moseley, C., (2010). Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. Paris: UNESCO. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas>.

Myers., C. (1998). *Codes and consequences: choosing linguistic varieties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

O'Rourke, B. and Ramallo, F. (2015). Neofalantes as an Active Minority: Understanding Language Practices and Motivations for Change Amongst New Speakers of Galician. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231: 147–165.

O'Rourke, B., Pujolar Joan (2013). From native speakers to "new speakers" – problematizing nativeness in language revitalization contexts. *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, 35 (2): 47-67.

Ortega, A., Amorrortu, E., Goirigolzarri, J. and Urla, J. (2017). *Los nuevos hablantes de euskera: experiencias, actitudes e identidades*. Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto.

Pujolar, J. (2020). Nous parlants: llengua i subjectivitat. *Treballs de Sociolingüística Catalana*, 30: 17-38.

Ramallo, F. (2020). Neofalantismo y el sujeto neohablante. En L. Martín and J. Pujolar (Eds.) *Claves para entender el multilingüismo contemporáneo*. Pp. 229-265. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Ramallo, F., Amorrortu, E., and Puigdevall, M. (2019). *Neohablantes de lenguas minorizadas en el Estado español*. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana-Vervuert.

Reale, E., Avramov, D., Canhial, K., Donovan, C., Flecha, R., Holm, P., … Van Horik, R. (2018). A review of literature on evaluating the scientific, social and political impact of social sciences and humanities research. *Research Evaluation*, 27 (4): 298–308.

Reyes, A. & Sorolla, N. (in press). L'aragonés en a Chacetania. Estudio sociolingüistico. Zaragoza: Seminario Aragonés de Sociolingüistica.

Reyes, A., Gimeno, C., Montañés, M., Sorolla, N., Esgluga, J. and Martínez, J. P. (2017). L'aragonés y lo catalán en l'actualidat. Analisi d'o Censo de Población y Viviendas de 2011. Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza.

Reyes, A., Capdevila, C. and Gimeno, C. (in press): *Buenas prácticas en aragonés y catalán*. Zaragoza: Seminario Aragonés de Sociolingüística.

Sabaté-Dalmau, M. (2018). Migrants' minority-language newspeakerism: The pervasiveness of nation-state monolingual regimes in transnational contexts. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 22: 5-28.

Smith-Christmas, C., Ó, Murchadha, N. P., Hornsby, M., and Moriarty, M. (2018). *New speakers of minority languages: linguistic ideologies and practices*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tomás, G. (2020). *El aragonés medieval. Lengua y Estado en el reino de Aragón*. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Trosset, C. S. (1986). The Social Identity of Welsh Learners. *Language in Society* 15 (2): 165–191.

Urla, J. (2012). Reclaiming Basque: language, nation, and cultural activism. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Wimmer, A. (2013). *Ethnic boundary making: institutions, power, networks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Woolard, K. A. (2016). *Singular and plural: ideologies of linguistic authority in 21st century Catalonia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.