

## REVIEW<sup>1</sup>

of the monograph by Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova

*The Galician Language: History and Current State*

(edited by Doctor of Philology, Professor N. V. Ivanov).

Moscow: MGIMO University Publishing House, 2022. 234 p.

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Regional European languages, typically minority languages by default, have always attracted the attention of philologists due to their mystery, origin, history, area in which they are spoken, and even the very fact that they exist. One such language, Galician, has become a subject of study at the Spanish Language Department of MGIMO, and the peer-monograph that is being reviewed here is the sixth such work in the past ten years.

The monograph *The Galician Language: History and Current State* is a result of the long-standing interest that its authors, Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova, have in the Galician linguistic space. The work fills a gap in the scholarly literature of Russian and foreign Romance language experts on the Galician language. The peer-reviewed scientific opus is a serious examination of one of the four co-official languages of the Kingdom of Spain from the perspective of sociolinguistics and classical philology.<sup>2</sup>

Galician is a Romance language that is spoken by 2.7 million people in the autonomous community of Galicia in the far northwest of Spain. Galicians figuratively call their region the “balcony above Portugal” (*balcón sobre Portugal*), a reference to the

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<sup>1</sup> English translation from the Russian text: Iovenko V. A. 2023. Review of the monograph by Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova *The Galician Language: History and Current State* (edited by Doctor of Philology, Professor N. V. Ivanov). Moscow: MGIMO University Publishing House, 2022. 234 p. *Linguistics & Polyglot Studies*. 9(1). P. 113–117. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24833/2410-2423-2023-1-34-113-117>

<sup>2</sup> The other three co-official languages (*lenguas cooficiales*) in addition to Galician (*gallego*), according to Article 6 of the Spanish Constitution, are Spanish (*castellano*), Catalan (*catalán*), and Basque (*euskera*).

region's unique geographical position, "hanging" over northern Portugal. And geography has naturally left a mark on the special nature of the Galician language, in which features of Spanish, and more so Portuguese, are strangely evident.<sup>3</sup>

Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova have an in-depth knowledge of the complex process of the emergence, normalization, and codification of the Galician language. Its recognition as an independent language, which the authors describe in their monograph, was the culmination of a lengthy journey. This is why Grinina and Evdokimova's assertion that it is impossible to understand the current state of the Galician language, its language situation, and the specifics of the process of language normalization in Galicia without taking the historical development of the language into account seems justified. The authors successfully describe the arduous journey that the language has taken over the years, the ups and downs it has experienced, and how it is forced to respond to new challenges today.

In the preamble of their monograph, Grinina and Evdokimova offer a brief but content-rich and useful rundown of Galicia's location, population, administrative structure, history, and economic situation, as well as some words about the national character and psychology of the Galician people. The latter, together with knowledge of the manifestations of the Galician national and cultural worldview, is particularly valuable for understanding the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the Galician language.

Citing the works of Galician linguists, and through their own thorough linguistic and historical analysis, Grinina and Evdokimova identify six main stages in the history of the Galician language in their monograph: the formation of the language during the Romanization of the Iberian Peninsula (in the late 8th and early 9th centuries); the flourishing of the language (from the late 12th century to the 15th century); the period of stagnation (from the 16th to the late 18th centuries); the period of the Galician Renaissance (in the 19th century); the period of dictatorship (1939–1975); and, finally, the period of democracy (starting with the adoption of the new Spanish constitution in 1978). It is only in the last 45 years, since the Galician language received the status of co-official language in Spain, that it has begun to restore its lost functions as part of the process of its normalization and formalization.

The history of the Galician language, according to the monograph's authors, is closely connected with the following factors: its common past with the Portuguese language; the view of some linguists that Galician is a dialect of either Portuguese or Spanish; social, political, and linguistic aspects of Galicia's integration into the Spanish state; the situation of diglossia; and the isolated development of Galicia on the periphery of the Spanish kingdom.

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<sup>3</sup> Some philologists and historians have tried to link the Galician language and culture not with the Romance linguistic and cultural space, but with ancient Celtic (Irish) civilization, although Grinina and Evdokimova demonstrate the inconsistency of these arguments.

These factors, which interacted and complemented each other, form a complex picture that in many ways exemplifies the attitude that prevailed in Europe towards the languages of national minorities.

Much of the monograph we are reviewing is taken up by a description of the emergence of the Galician language as a variety of Romance speech with the linguistic status of a dialect formed based on Vulgar Latin. The *Reconquista* was an extra-linguistic factor that played a key role in the further fate of the Galician dialect. It was during the *Reconquista*, which lasted almost eight centuries and ended with the expulsion of the Arab conquerors from Spain in 1492, that the Galician and Portuguese dialects started to slowly splinter off and embark on their own paths.

The authors of the monograph demonstrate profound philological erudition, citing various sources in different languages to highlight the genesis of the Galician language and the initial linguistic situation in the territory of modern Galicia. In this sense, the monograph continues and develops the general traditions of the Russian school of sociolinguistics, in particular the study of linguistic situations and states in Romance-speaking countries and the formation of national and regional Romance languages laid down in the works of the prominent Russian Romanists G. Stepanov, E. Volf, V. Gak, and B. Narumov.

The pages of the monograph contain meticulous descriptions of various phonetic, grammatical, and lexical features of Galician speech at the latter stages of its origin. Moreover, while Galician grammar acquired distinctive features that were common to all Romance languages, its vocabulary was either mainly of Latin origin or supplemented by borrowings from other languages, such as Ibero-Celtic, Visigothic, and Arabic.

Grinina and Evdokimova conclude that the development of the Galician language, which was the same for Galicia and Portugal until the 11th century, was greatly influenced by numerous external factors, including Romanization, the invasion of Germanic tribes, the *Reconquista*, and the separation of Portugal. The presence of certain linguistic features allows us to assert that Galician emerged as a distinct Romance language in the Middle Ages which, according to Spanish and Portuguese linguists, is more archaic than Spanish or Portuguese, and less malleable to later influences.

The most important circumstance in the history of Romance languages is their development as written languages. The period from the 13th to the 15th century is considered their heyday in this regard. In the monograph, Grinina and Evdokimova draw the conclusion, based on sound data, that a literary Galician language already existed at that time, a response to the demand in all spheres of life in Galician society. But the real gem of Galician literature was the style of poetry that was later dubbed “Galician–Portuguese lyricism,” since it was Galician that would become the language of poetry of the Castilian and Portuguese royal courts. The proliferation of love poems, no doubt influenced by the poetry of the Provençal troubadours, is associated with the

name of the enlightened King Alfonso X of Castile, nicknamed the Wise (who reigned from 1252 to 1284), who not only watched over the publication of collections of *cantigas* (works of poetry in the Galician language), but also composed several of them himself.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, as the authors of the monograph note, the dynamic development of the Galician language started to slow to a halt from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century due to numerous external factors. This period of development of the Galician language and literature was followed by a period of stagnation, called the “dark ages.” The linguistic situation that existed in Galicia until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a sharp decline as Castilian (Spanish) took over, displacing Galician from all spheres of public and official life, pushed to the status of a colloquial language.

In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a range of economic, political, and cultural factors conspired to bring about the phenomenon that would later be called the Galician Resurgence (*Rexurdimento*). One of the aims of the *Rexurdimento* movement, started by students and professors at the University of Santiago de Compostela, was to awaken interest in Galician culture and restore the Galician literary language. Thanks to their efforts, the Galician language had regained its literary standard by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1906, the Royal Galician Academy was created. The Galician language was no longer confined to everyday communication; it was now the language of public oral and written communication. The written tradition was restored, and the process of establishing a single standard of the Galician language was initiated.

A separate chapter of the monograph is devoted to language policy in Galicia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the survival of the Galician language during the Francoist period; the transformation of the Argentine capital Buenos Aires into a cultural centre of Galician studies; the educational reform; the adoption in 1975 of a law on the study of the languages of national minorities in Spain; and the publication of standardized spelling for the Galician language by the Royal Galician Academy.

Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova dedicate a great deal of space to the Law of Linguistic Normalisation of Galician and the General Plan for Normalisation of Galician Language, adopted in the early 1980s. The need to protect the Galician language led to the emergence of institutions and organizations that helped it regain its lost functions.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the normalization and codification on the Galician language continued in full force, although not without certain difficulties. According to Grinina and Evdokimova, the process of establishing a norm, which is greatly influenced by extralinguistic factors, has become an integral part of the political struggle

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<sup>4</sup> King Alfonso X the Wise is also known as the founder of the famous Toledo School of Translators. He supervised the work of translators, selected works of literature to be translated from Arabic and Latin into the Spanish language, which was still emerging at that time, developed principles and methods of translating, and performed numerous translations himself (for more on the Toledo School of Translators, see: Iovenko V. A. 2008. The Toledo School of Translators, or Where Are the Roots of Our Profession? *Bridges Journal of Translation*. 4.

in Galicia today, with a pronounced ideological overtone. In 2003, the Royal Galician Academy and the Instituto da Lingua Galega (the Galician Language Institute) approved the norma of the Galician language, which regulate the basic rules of spelling and grammar. The officially recognized norms represented an important step forward in the codification of the Galician language. Despite the historical difficulties, the authors of the monography conclude, the process of codifying the Galician language can be considered complete. And this despite the fact that the analysis of the process of language normalization in Galicia carried out by the authors of the monograph shows that attempts to avoid normative contamination encounter numerous extra-linguistic difficulties.

In our opinion, the authors' observations of the Galician language as an object of sociolinguistic research are interesting. Having analysed the data, Grinina and Evdokimova identify areas of use of the Galician language, including the system of secondary and tertiary education.

The monograph closes with an excursion into those places – both in Galicia and beyond the Spanish borders – where the Galician language is studied. Several pages are given over to the study of Galician in Russia:

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University, Moscow State Linguistic University, the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

To conclude the monograph, the authors summarize their research by stating that Galician is a language with a complex historical and cultural destiny. They ask what the future of the Galician language is: Will its functions be fully revealed at all levels of communication? Will it only be of interest to philologists and linguists as a rare Romance language? The answers to these questions depend, as the authors assert, on the external circumstances that develop in the region. If Galician society recognizes its linguistic identity and wants to preserve it, the future of the Galician language will be assured.

But whatever happens, we can claim today, as Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova believe, that the Galician language made it through those times when it was being actively pushed out of public life, and it continues to function, possessing all the elements that make up the system of any language.

The monograph *The Galician Language: History and Current State* by Elena Grinina and Anna Evdokimova is theoretically sound, marked by its academic novelty, deep analysis of the subject matter, and convincing conclusions. The work is of undoubted interest to philologists of various specializations, specialists in the Romance languages, and experts on the history of languages and sociolinguistics.

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***Conflicts of interest.***

The author declares no conflicts of interest.