



Of Leonese Sociolinguistics: Recent and Present Controversies

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Astur-Leonese dialects are the remnants of one of early romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula. The varieties contained in the province of León possess unique phonetic features unknown to the rest of Hispanic lects, and are situated in the center of the axis between Castilian/Galaico-Portuguese and Astur-Leonese/Castilian continuums. First linguistic studies appeared in the beginning of the 20th century, and in 1980 the “Academia de la Llingua Asturiana” was created, the only body of authority on the language, who published its first grammar. Lately the most southern lands where these varieties are spoken have seen the rise of a nationalistic movement proclaiming their central Astur-Leonese variants as a separate language, turning its back on the Asturian Academia. In 2008 the University of León held a debate over the methodologies employed in the normalization of central Astur-Leonese or “Llionés” varieties. However, while most publications on central Astur-leonese are written from a descriptive point of view, they fail to acknowledge the rapid transformation that this group of dialects is experiencing, from being employed by mostly analphabet communities to having institutional support and an ever increasing writing corpus thanks to an extensive use of the Internet. The linguistic discourse is so intermingled with other interests that the Astur-Leonese example proposes questions about the responsibilities of linguists for their object of study.

References:

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