Sociolinguistic attitudes towards Spanish and Valencian in the town of Agost, Spain
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This article analyzes the linguistic attitudes of natives from Agost, Spain. This project is based in a cuestionary designed to investigate sociolinguistics’ attitudes of the Spanish citizens towards the use of Valencian and Spanish. The results indicate that Spanish plays a broader social function in the community, while Valencian is spoken in the familiar level. In other words, while Spanish shows open prestige towards the use at administrative and regional levels, Valencian shows covert prestige, being only used between family and friends. **Keywords:** Valencian, attitude, covert prestige, Agost, Spanish
1. Introduction

This research is based in an analysis of the linguistic preference shown by the participants towards Spanish and Valencian through their answers to the questionnaire (see the appendix), which is based on their sex, age and sociocultural level, characteristics often used in similar studies.

2. Hypothesis

2.1 Older people have a more positive attitude than the younger population.

2.2 Those in the lower sociocultural group have a more negative attitude towards Valencian than those from the higher sociocultural groups.

2.3 Men are in favor of Valencian whereas women have the tendency to be against its usage.

2.4 In general, Spanish has more prestige among the people of Agost than Valencian.

3. Methodology

According to I.N.E.\(^1\), Agost had a population of 4,791 in 2012. A total of 137 people were interviewed, which represents 2.83% of the people in the world, which in turn is higher than the 0.71% required (according to Gómez Molina) for a sample to represent actual attitudes and to produce valid results.

![Table 1: Number of participants according to age and sex](image)

\[^1\] I.N.E.: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Statistics Institute), 2012
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Sociocultural Level and sex

4. Sociolinguistic Attitudes: Global Results

4.1 What language would you like your children to be taught at school?

Table 3: What language would you like your children to be taught at school?

This chart shows that almost half of the participants (47%) prefer that their children are taught in both languages equally.

4.2 Teaching Valencian to the children is imperative.
Table 4: Teaching Valencian to the children is imperative

In this graph (47%) of the participants considers important bilingual education.

5. Sociolinguistic Attitudes according to Independent Variables

5.1 Sex

1. Speaking Valencian should be mandatory in order to work for Government Agencies.
Table 5: Speaking Valencian should be mandatory in order to work for Government Agencies

Both sex show agree that it is important to know Valencian in the public administration.

2. All children must learn Valencian
Table 6: All children must learn Valencian

5.2 Education

1. Valencian is as rich as Spanish in terms of vocabulary, expressions and syntax.

Table 7: Valencian is as rich as Spanish in terms of vocabulary, expressions and syntax
All the participants agree with the affirmation. The ones that agree less are those with lower education.

2. What language do you feel more comfortable with?

![Bar chart showing language preferences](chart.png)

Table 8: What language do you feel more comfortable with?

5.3 Age

1. I rather learn English than Valencian
Younger generation prefer learn English than Valencian. Perhaps, they see the instrumental value of the language.

2. All children must learn Valencian
### Table 10: All children must learn Valencian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Nor agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 16 to 30</td>
<td>63.63</td>
<td>20.58</td>
<td>16.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 31 to 40</td>
<td>65.21</td>
<td>19.77</td>
<td>14.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 41 to 50</td>
<td>61.11</td>
<td>26.57</td>
<td>12.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 51 or more</td>
<td>50.94</td>
<td>39.68</td>
<td>9.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10: Speaking Valencian should be mandatory in order to work for Government Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Nor agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 16 to 30</td>
<td>78.26</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 31 to 40</td>
<td>76.66</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 41 to 50</td>
<td>63.63</td>
<td>23.52</td>
<td>18.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 51 or more</td>
<td>55.88</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>39.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Speaking Valencian should be mandatory in order to work for Government Agencies.
Table 11: Speaking Valencian should be mandatory in order to work for Government Agencies

6. Conclusion

The global hypothesis achieved in this study is as follows: in general terms, Spanish has more open prestige among the people of Agost than Valencian. The answers to most of the questions don't seem to support this hypothesis. Actually, most of the participants show preference towards bilingualism in school, that children would learn Valencian, and that those who work for Governmental Agencies in Agost should speak Valencian. Also, they consider Valencian as effective as Spanish as a linguistic instrument. This said, only a minority feels as comfortable with both languages, meaning that asymmetric bilingualism is predominant in the community: 44% of the participants say that they feel more comfortable with Spanish, while 37% do so with Valencian.

The reason for this division of opinion is not clear, therefore it’s hard to decide in favor or against this first hypothesis. Only the answers to one particular question point to another direction: 49% prefer to learn English than Valencian. Though this data is not easy to interpret, it is possible that it reflects the low value Valencian enjoys in Agost. However, it doesn't say anything about the relative value of Valencian in regards of Spanish. In conclusion, there is nothing in the data collected showing than Valencian enjoys less prestige than Spanish. The other hypothesis are connected to the independent variables: sex, education, and age. Here are the results of the survey:

6.1 Sex

The hypothesis related to this variable is as follows: men favor Valencian over Spanish, while women do the opposite. In general the data collected seem to confirm this hypothesis in
that a higher proportion of men show more favorable values than women towards Valencian. Members of both sex consider that those working for Governmental Agencies must be able to manage in Valencian, but the percentage is higher among men (71%) than women (63%). Also, 66% of men think that children must learn Valencian while 60% of women support the same idea.

Regarding the effectiveness of Valencian as a linguistic instrument, the differences are stronger: 71% of men consider that Valencian doesn't have anything to envy to Spanish, while the proportion of women that agrees with this only reach 58%. However, the result is the opposite when the consideration is whether to learn English or Valencian. In this matter, 44% of women are against learning English instead of Valencian, while 52% of men support English over Valencian.

6.2 Education

The hypothesis related to this variable is as follows: people from lower socio cultural groups place a negative value on Valencian while those from higher socio cultural groups do. In general, this hypothesis is confirmed by the data. Those with High School and College level educations support the idea that those working in Governmental Agencies know Valencian in a stronger way than any other group. Also, those with higher education consider Valencian as effective as Spanish in terms of a linguistic instrument. People in Agost in general agree that Valencian is spoken generally well, but not as is supposed to. However, those with higher education are more optimistic about this fact. Surprisingly, there is another data that supports this hypothesis: those with higher education are more comfortable with Valencian than Spanish. The participants with lower education however do not show a clear pattern. Actually, they are almost equally spread between both options--whether they are more comfortable talking in Valencian or in Spanish.
Finally, there is a data that it doesn’t make sense. Participants from lower socio cultural groups think that Valencian should be taught at schools, while those in higher groups don’t favor this option.

### 6.3 Age

The hypothesis regarding age is as follows: Older people have a more positive attitude than younger towards Valencian. The majority of participants admit that they prefer to learn English than Spanish. Nevertheless, the youth, 16 to 30, (64%) shows a more positive attitude in this option. The group that follows this group is between 41 and 50 years old (56%). The data from the other two groups, 31 to 40 and 51 or more are identical (48%). The fact that 51 years old doesn’t agree with the youth needs an explanation. Knowing English doesn’t give any benefit to this group. In other words, maybe the useful approach doesn’t have any relation with the appraisal of the local language.

The rest of the data confirms this hypothesis. All age groups approve Valencian usage in the classroom. Nevertheless, older generations support Valencian, and this group also considers that Valencian should be used in the public administration. Finally, if youth says that prefer Spanish than Valencian, the elderly think the opposite. The affective language is Valencian. In summary, the participants’ data confirms, in general, higher bonding with the local language in older participants than younger participants.

### References
