



Galicia

The role of language in the construction of contemporary inequalities

Exploring Youth Agency and Linguistic Citizenship in Participatory Research
Gabriela Prego Vázquez USC

ESPACIOS DE TRANSFORMACIÓN SOCIOLINGÜÍSTICA EN EL CONTEXTO EDUCATIVO GALLEGO

AGENCIA DE LOS HABLANTES, REPERTORIOS
MULTILINGUES Y PRÁCTICAS (META) COMUNICATIVAS

EQUILING GALICIA

Proyecto I+D, ref.PID2019-105676RB-C44/AEI/10.13039/501100011033





This paper explores a participatory research initiative in Galicia, where secondary school students, acting as co-investigators, compared familiar linguistic repertoires with the linguistic landscape of their community and analyzed sociolinguistic inequalities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Zas & Prego, 2018). By geolocating linguistics landscapes, they identified unequal representation and recognition of Galician place names on digital platforms, despite Article 10 of the 1983 Law of Linguistic Normalization declaring Galician the only official form of Galicia's toponyms. **Complete work in:**

Prego-Vázquez, G., Zas-Varela, L. 'Contra el Arteijo de Google': political agency in secondary school adolescents within the framework of a participatory research study in Galicia. *Lang Policy* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-025-09732-y>



Objetives

Examine how secondary students develop sociolinguistic awareness and political agency through participatory research.

Investigate the identification of linguistic inequalities in the visibility of Galician toponyms on digital platforms.

Analyze students' engagement with local institutions to advocate for the official recognition of Galician place names.

Highlight how participatory research fosters youth-led “acts of linguistic citizenship” and enables action beyond initial project goals.

2. PARTICIPANTS

LINGUISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES



Participants' Linguistic and Educational Backgrounds

14 students (6 boys, 8 girls, aged 14–15) from a secondary school in Arteixo (A Coruña).

Enrolled in the *Curricular Diversification Program*, designed for students struggling to complete compulsory education.

Most students (even those of Galician origin) primarily use Spanish. Only two speak Galician dialects.

Reflects a broader intergenerational break in the transmission of Galician (Monteagudo et al., 2020).

Linguistic Diversity and Classroom Invisibility

6 students are of migrant origin; their repertoires include Río de la Plata Spanish, Cape Verdean Creole, Portuguese, Catalan, and Venezuelan Spanish.

Despite rich plurilingual backgrounds, students' family languages are largely invisible in the classroom.

The EquiLing project identified over 40 languages and varieties at this school.

Students were unaware of peers' linguistic repertoires, reflecting deeper patterns of exclusion.

Educational Policy and Linguistic Inequality

Galicia's *Decree 79/2010* promotes standardized Galician and Spanish, limiting Galician to 50% of instruction time.

Migrant students are exempt from Galician for 2 years, reinforcing marginalization.

Educational language policy ignores multilingualism and local Galician varieties.

Rooted in ideologies of globalization, linguistic commodification, and Spanish nationalism, the policy perpetuates linguistic inequality and the marginalization of Galician (López, Prego & Zas, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Methodology – Participatory Framework and Design

Research Approach: Combines *co-labor research* (Lassiter, 2005; Leyva & Speed, 2008; Unamuno, 2017) with a *multi-sited ethnography* to gather diverse data.

Context: Conducted over 5 months during Galician language classes in a secondary school in Galicia.

Participants: Pupils with diverse linguistic backgrounds acted as co-researchers.

Process: University of Santiago de Compostela researchers provided training and tools.

Epistemic Community: Knowledge was co-constructed collaboratively (Estalella & Criado, 2007; Heugh et al., 2021).

Pedagogical Lens: Guided by *Critical Language Awareness* (CLA) (García, 2016), fostering reflection on linguistic diversity and sociolinguistic inequalities.

Methodology – Data Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Analytical Lens: Based on *Sociolinguistic Ethnography* (Heller, Pietikäinen & Pujolar, 2018).

Theoretical Frameworks:

Agency Theory (Ahearn, 2001; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; De León, 2021; Ortnier, 2016).

Focuses on communicative acts as expressions of reflexive and innovative action (Rebughin, 2022).

Key Concepts:

Ahearn's definition: agency as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act."

Ortnier's refinement: "agency of projects and intentions" – the ability to pursue goals and enact change.

Objective: Identify how students' discursive practices reveal emerging political and linguistic agency.

4. ANALYSIS

Phase 1 – Starting Point

Context and Initial Motivation

Participants: 14 students in the Curricular Diversification Program (CDP), showing low academic motivation and weak engagement with the Galician language.

Initial attitudes reflected limited interest in schoolwork and Galician.

As the project progressed, students gained confidence in their skills and showed increased motivation and participation (García, 2023)

Phase 2. From Pupils to Co-Researchers

Emergence of Agency through Participatory Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) disrupted classroom hierarchies (Ortner, 2016), transforming students into co-researchers.

Traditional teacher-student power dynamics were replaced by an **epistemic community** (Estalella & Criado, 2007), where students, teachers, and university researchers collaborated equally.

Students engaged in critical metalinguistic activities based on linguistic biographies and landscape analysis.

Quote from class:

“This is like a laboratory—this is science, eh!”

Example 1: Somos investigadores/ *We are researchers*

RES1: Osea aquí vimos a traballar osea que realmente imos traballar e moito!

E ides a traballar e moito eh!

RES2: ademais que xa vemos que teñen madeira de investigadores e investigadoras

RES1: isto é como un laboratorio isto é ciencia eh!

RES1: So, we're here to work; I mean we're going to work, and really hard! And you're going to work hard too, you know!

RES2: And we can see you've got what it takes to be researchers.

RES1: This is like a laboratory, and this is science, you know

Epistemic Legitimation Devices

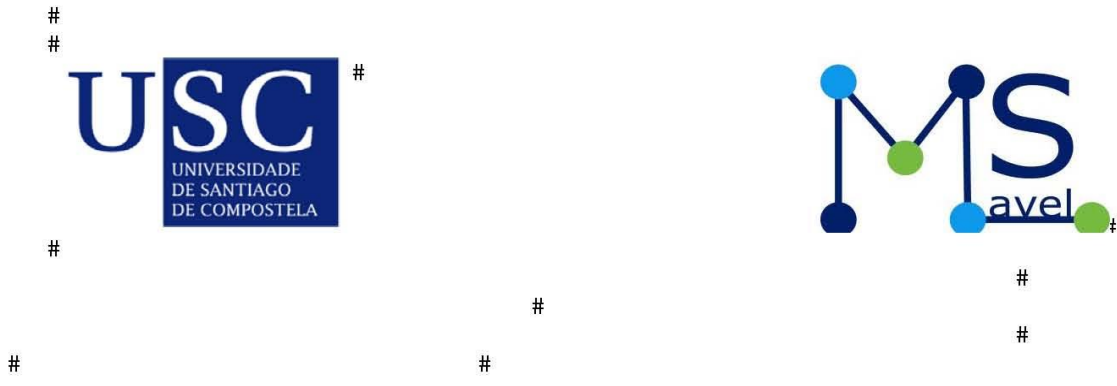
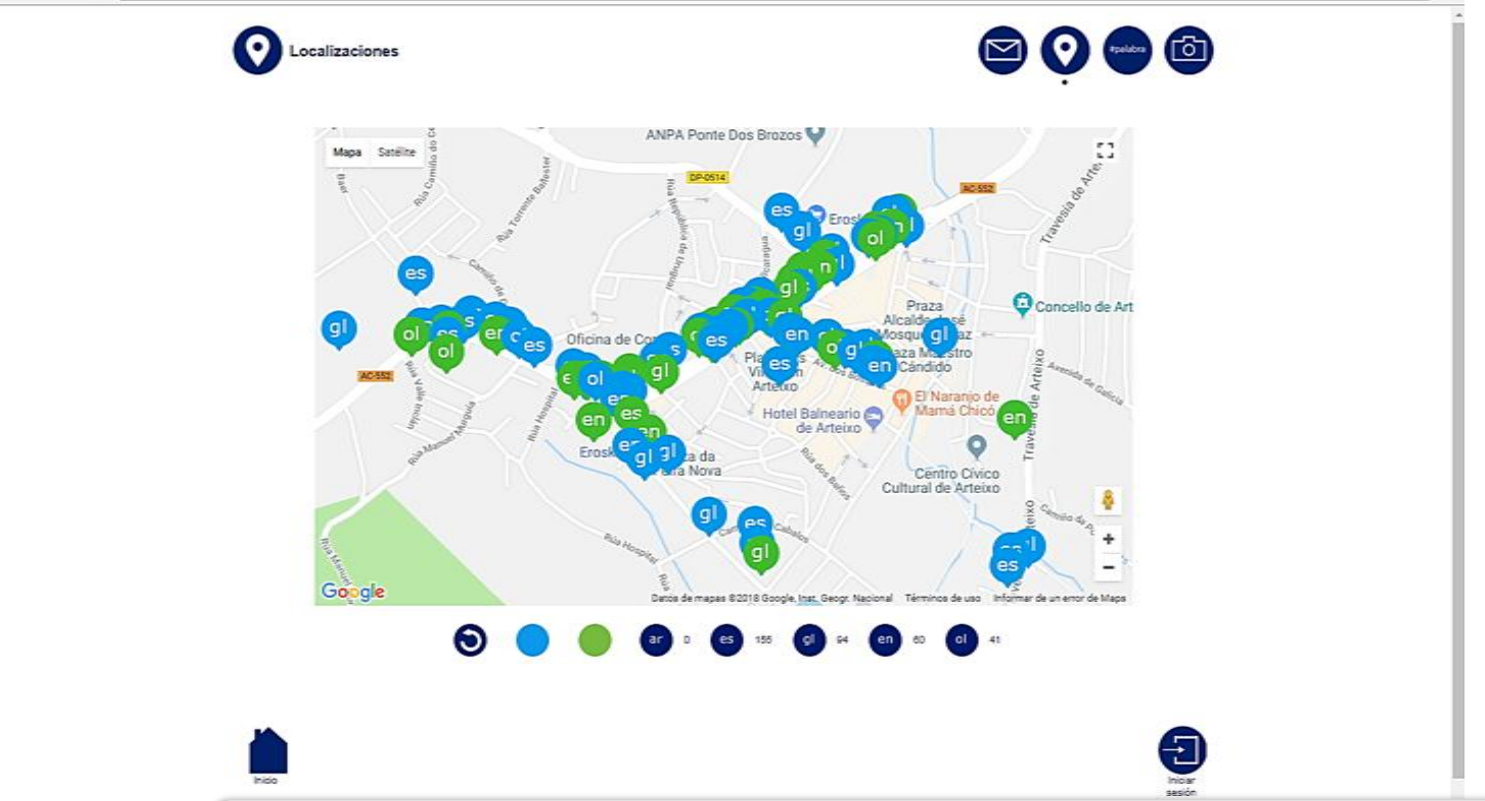
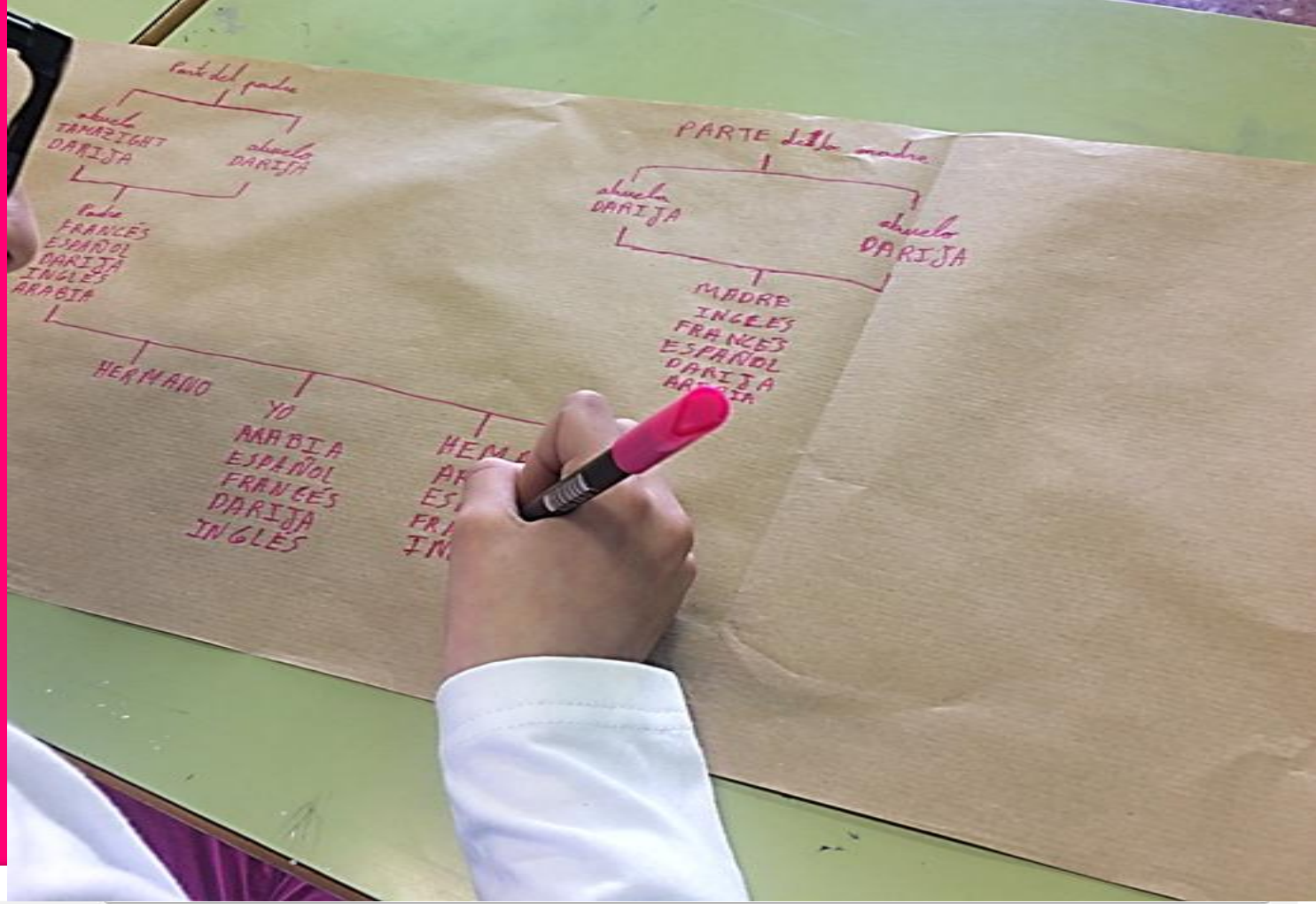
CERTIFICATION OF EXPERT CO-INVESTIGATORS AND RESEARCH TRAINING

The I+D+I project is presented to the students, and they are tasked with carrying out these activities as a co-investigation. It is a real and effective collaboration in the project. Preliminary meetings are held with the teachers and students to prepare these activities. Their work receives a certification of researchers.

They are co-investigators in the capacity of "experts" as they are assigned tasks in which they excel: investigating which languages are spoken in their family, researching the lost toponyms of the town, observing the languages of the linguistic landscape, interviewing shop owners about the names of their establishments, etc. They receive specific training to participate in the project's citizen science applications: MAVEL and AVEL.

Their work is published in AVEL (Virtual Atlas for Linguistic Education).





Gabriela Prego Vázquez e Luz Zas Varela, docentes e investigadoras da Área de Lingüística Xeral da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, en calidade de coordinadoras do Proxecto I+D+I *EquilínGalicia: Espacios de transformación sociolingüística en el contexto educativo gallego: agencia de los hablantes, repertorios multilingües y prácticas (meta) comunicativas* ref. PID2019-105676RB-C44/AEI/10.13039/501100011033

Fan constar que participou no devandito proxecto colaborando nas tarefas de investigación de biografías lingüísticas para incluír no *Atlas Virtual para a Educación Lingüística na Superdiversidade*.

E para que así conste, asinamos o presente documento, en Santiago de Compostela, a 8 de xuño de 2021.

Gabriela Prego Vázquez Luz Zas Varela



Phase 3 – Sociolinguistic Agency and Autonomy

Fieldwork and the Google Maps Discovery

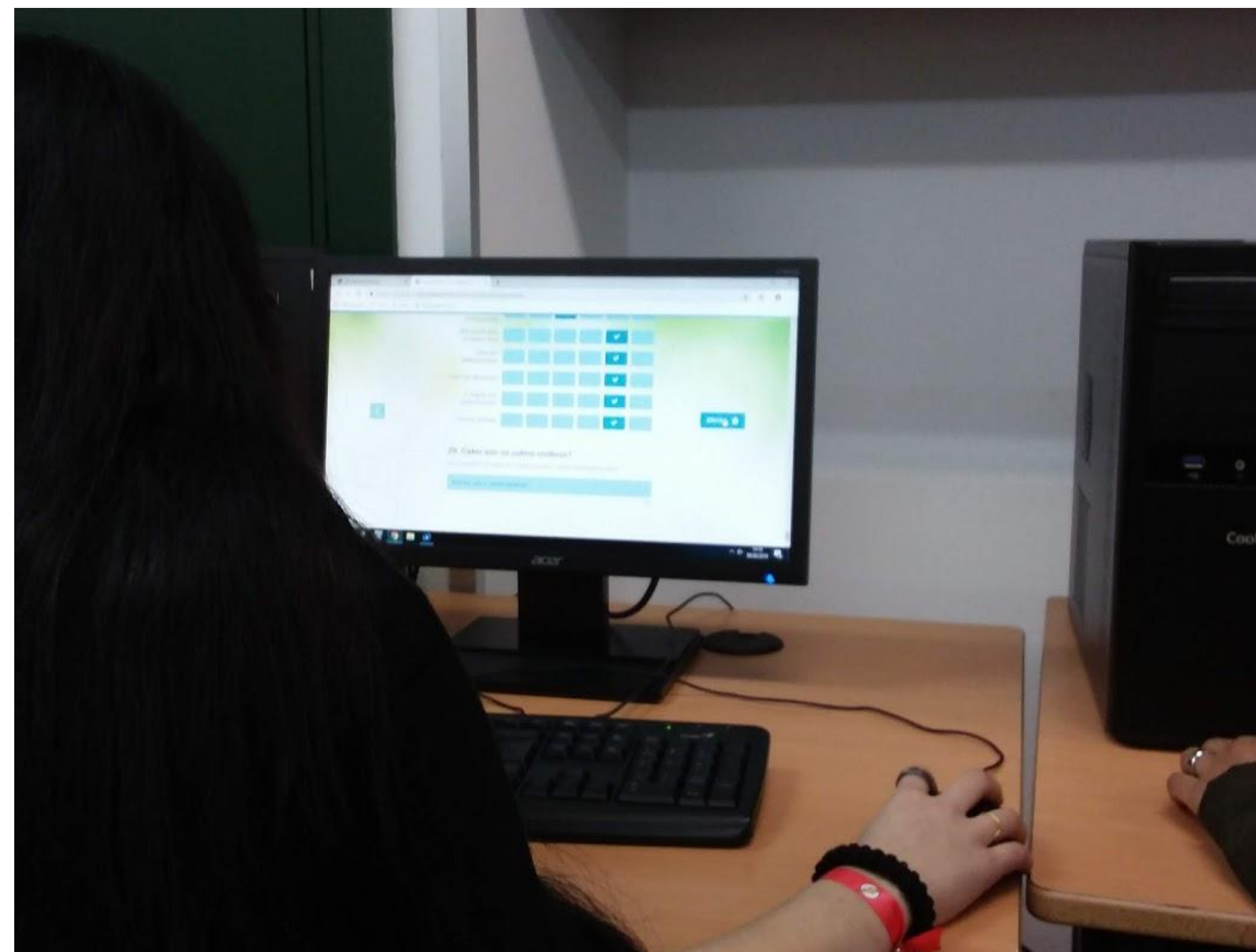
Students gained autonomy in ethnographic fieldwork: photo documentation, interviews with locals, and analysis of historical toponyms.

Learned to use **MAVEL**, a geolocation app, to map language use on Google Maps.

Discovery: their town appeared as *Arteijo* (incorrect Spanish version from Franco,s period) instead of *Arteixo* (official Galician).

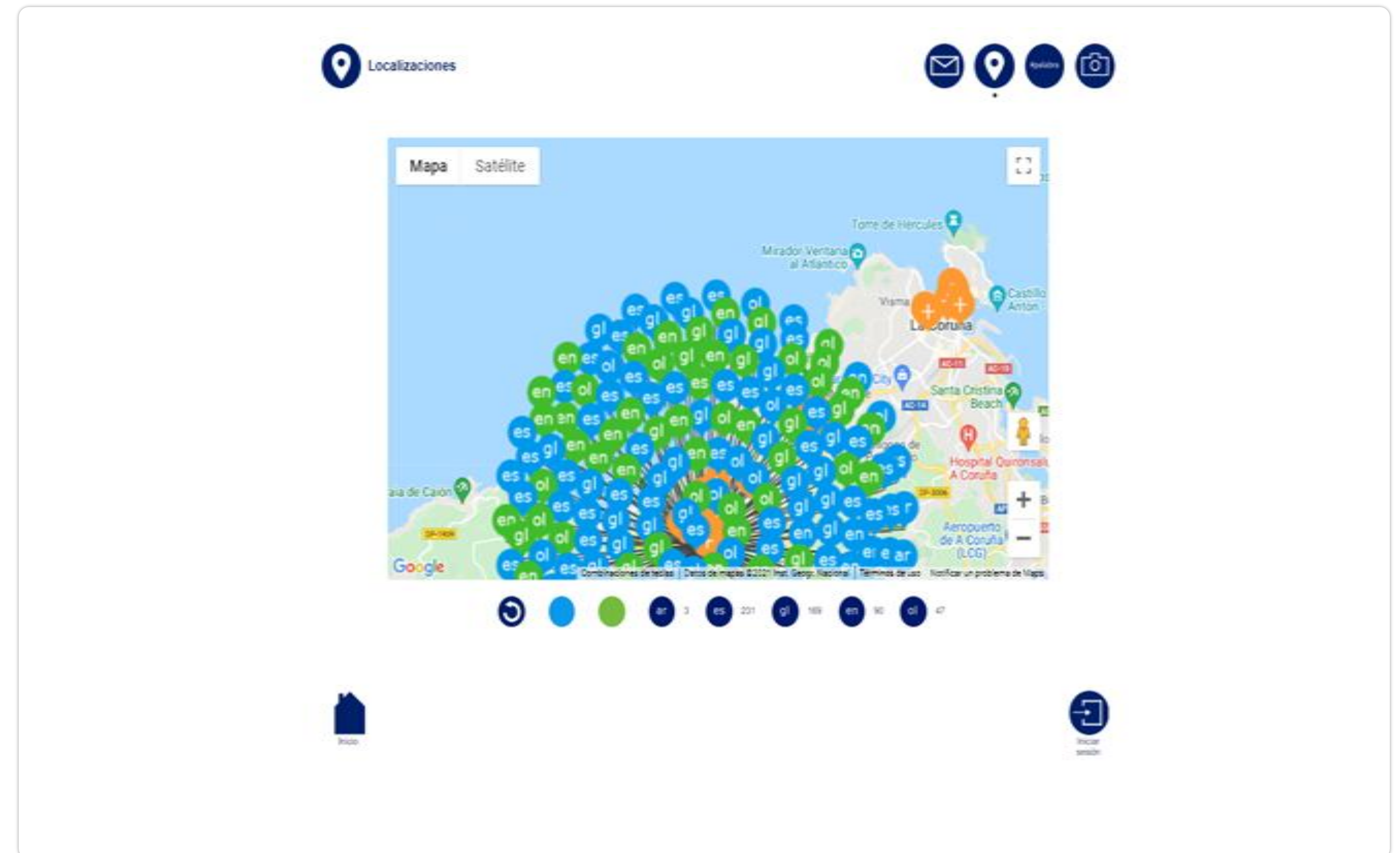
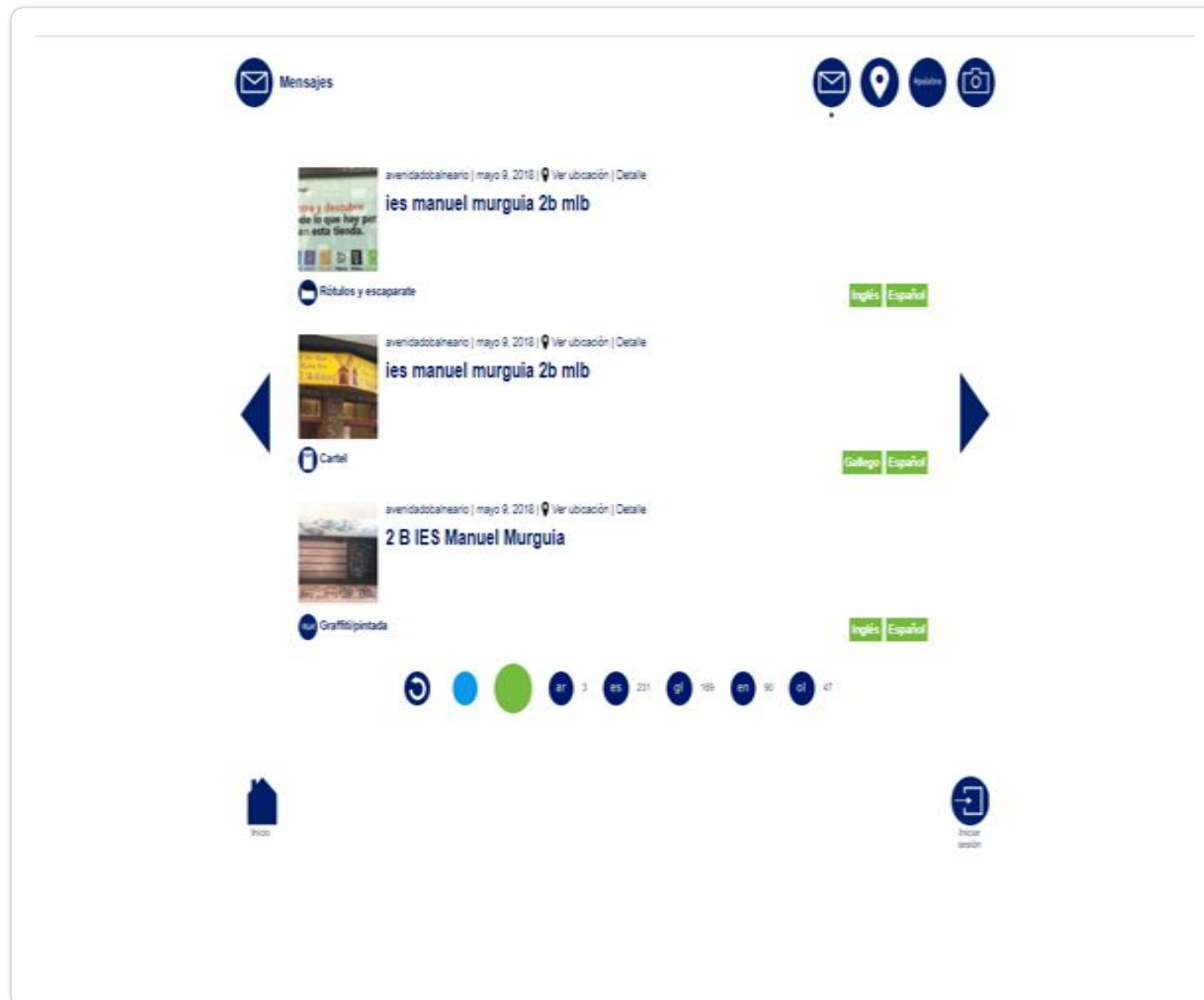
Their reaction sparked **unplanned civic action**: they launched an initiative to seek municipal support and demand correction from Google.

This marked a shift from **agency of participation** to **agency of project** (Ortner, 2016), as they redefined the research's goals and took action beyond its original scope



DATOS MAVEL: PAISAJE LINGÜÍSTICO GEOLOCALIZADO

HERRAMIENTAS TIC-TAC-TEP (440 MUESTRAS DE PL ETIQUETADAS POR LENGUAS, SOPORTE, LUGAR) 800 RECOGIDAS





Phase 4-From Sociolinguistic to Political Agency

Linguistic Citizenship as Social and Political Action

According to **Stroud (2015)**, linguistic citizenship links language practices to human rights and social transformation.

Students' initiative to correct the toponym *Arteijo* (Spanish) to *Arteixo* (Galician) on Google Maps becomes an “**act of citizenship**” (Isin, 2009): action that transforms students into rights-claiming subjects.

They collaborated with:

- USC researchers

- The Linguistic Normalization Officer

- The Mayor and local council

These steps transformed them into **legitimate political interlocutors**.

“As citizens of Arteixo, we are entitled to recognition of the real toponym of our town.”



Dear Mr. Mayor:

We are the students of the Group Ámbito of 2 of ESO of the IES Manuel Murguía and we address you since we realized a mistake made by the company Google by unduly change Arteixo by Arteijo. We, as the citizens of Arteixo, have the right to recognize the true place name of our town and we believe that this error could cause confusion and problems in locating the city, we decided to ask Google to change it.

For this reason, we ask for your collaboration by writing a letter where the Arteixo City Council expresses its support to our cause so that Google sees that this is important not only for us but also for all Arteixáns. We hope to get Google to reflect on our proposal.

Thank you very much for reading our letter

Kind regards

Signed: the students of 2 ESO B (Ambito)

The Letter – A Performative Act of Citizenship

The Letter to the Mayor (Excerpt & Analysis)

Written collectively by the students in Galician.

Framed as a **formal political request** for institutional backing.

Serves two main purposes:

Performative: It asks the mayor to act.

Agentive: It reflects students' transformation into political actors.

They shift from being “students” to **citizens with linguistic rights**, advocating for public interest:

“This is important not just to us, but to all people from Arteixo.”

Political Agency Through Institutional Validation

Following the meeting, the council initiated **formal political actions**:

Technical Report – drafted by the Linguistic Normalization Service to support the students' request.

Mayoral Proposal – a formal petition to the town council to back the initiative and review other incorrect toponyms.

Council Agreement Certificate – issued by the Secretary General outlining adopted measures.

These **performative institutional discourses**:

Use formal registers of bureaucratic power.

Frame students as **legitimate actors within governance structures**.

Amplify their voice in public and **media outlets**, further validating their political agency.

COMUNIDADES DE ACCIÓN

(PONRIENDO CARA A CARA DATOS DE DIFERENTE TIPO)

AGENCIA POLÍTICA



Sr. D. Carlos Calvelo
Concello de Arteixo

Arteixo, 3 de abril do 2018

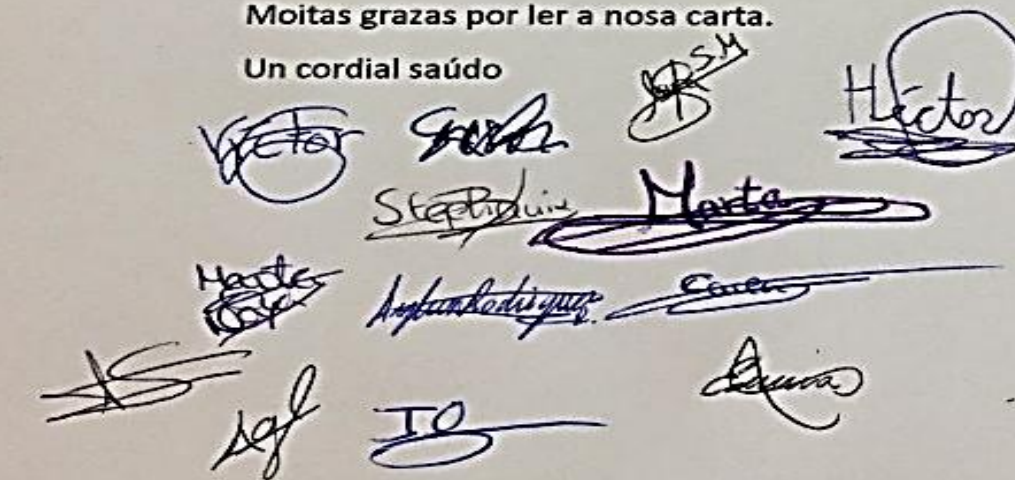
Estimado Sr. Alcalde:

Somos os alumnos do grupo do ámbito de 2º ESO B do IES Manuel Murguía e dirixímonos a vostede xa que nos demos conta dun erro que comete a empresa Google ao cambiar, indebidamente, Arteixo por "Arteijo". Como os cidadáns de Arteixo temos dereito a que se recoñeza o topónimo verdadeiro da nosa localidade e ademais cremos que ese erro podería causar confusión e problemas na localización da cidade, decidimos pedirle a Google que o cambie.

Por iso pedimoslle a súa colaboración redactando un escrito onde o Concello de Arteixo exprese o seu apoio á nosa causa para que Google vexa que isto é importante non só para nós senón para todos os arteixáns. Esperamos conseguir así que Google reflexione sobre a nosa proposta.

Moitas grazas por ler a nosa carta.

Un cordial saúdo



Asdo. Os alumnos de 2º ESO B (ámbitos)



CONCELLO DE ARTEIXO

SECRETARÍA

RELGA.N.º 2000/141

Praza Alcalde Ramón Dopico, 1
15142 ARTEIXO (A Coruña)

Tel.: 981 60 00 09

Fax: 981 60 24 17

Email: secretaria@arteixo.org

Xestión de Propostas
2018/G006/000257
Normalización Lingüística
REF.: MRV/2018

INFORME TÉCNICO

ASUNTO: Arteixo en Google
DIRIXIDO A: Xunta de Goberno Local

técnica de normalización lingüística do Concello de Arteixo,
ANTECEDENTES:

Perante a solicitude efectuada a Google polo alumnado do IES MM de Arteixo, relativa á corrección toponímica que figura nos mapas de Google respecto do nome deste municipio nos cales aparece a forma deturpada *Arteijo, no canto da forma correcta ARTEIXO,

INFORMO:

O Concello de Arteixo lembra que a Lei de Normalización Lingüística, no seu artigo 10 establece que *Os topónimos terán como única forma oficial a galega* e lembra, asemade, que *a denominación oficial das entidades de poboación está recollida, segundo o RD 1545/2007, no Nomenclátor Xeográfico Nacional, constituído este polo Nomenclátor Xeográfico Básico de España e o Nomenclátor Xeográfico de cada unha das Comunidades Autónomas* e tamén que a ONU, a través do Grupo de Expertos en Nomes Xeográficos (UNGEGN), establece o carácter de patrimonio cultural dos nomes xeográficos e recoñece a importancia dos topónimos nas linguas minoritarias como parte integrante da herdanza lingüística de cada comunidade.

Recórdase tamén que a propia Constitución Española promulga no artigo 3 que *A riqueza das distintas modalidades lingüísticas de España é un patrimonio cultural que será obxecto de especial respecto e protección.*

Dado que as administracións públicas teñen unha obriga fundamental de respecto ao ordenamento xurídico, como é evidente tamén a teñen con respecto á forma oficial dos topónimos das entidades de poboación, ao abeiro da normativa vixente como se indica nas anteditas alíneas.

Polo antedito sería conveniente que o Concello de Arteixo se dirixise aos responsables do buscador GOOGLE para que se corrixa a toponimia deste concello que figura mal recollida na súa páxina e se respecte así a toponimia galega na súa forma oficial.

Asina dixitalmente.-



CONCELLO DE ARTEIXO

RELGA.N.º 2000/141

Praza Alcalde Ramón Dopico, 1
15142 ARTEIXO (A Coruña)

Tel.: 981 60 00 09

Fax: 981 60 24 17

SECRETARÍA XERAL
Xestión de Xuntas de Goberno
2018/G007/000019

A/O SECRETARIA/O, DO CONCELLO DE ARTEIXO (A

CORUÑA) CERTIFICA:

Que pola Xunta de Goberno Local, en sesión Ordinaria celebrada o xoves 3 de maio de 2018, adoptouse, entre outros, o seguinte

ACORDO:

CORRECCIÓN DA DENOMINACIÓN DESTE MUNICIPIO EN
GOOGLE, SUBSTITUÍNDOLA POR A FORMA INCORRECTA ARTEIJO
POLA FORMA ARTEIXO.-

Asuntos de Área de Presidencia e Planificación. Asuntos de Normalización Lingüística

ASUNTO.- ARTEIXO EN GOOGLE

alcalde – presidente do Concello de Arteixo, en relación á reclamación efectuada polo alumnado do IES MM de Arteixo no tocante á incorrecta denominación toponímica do municipio de Arteixo nos mapas de Google e en base ao informe emitido pola técnica de normalización lingüística en data 23 de Abril de 2018 con CVD BRGkbseghlQQUAWDhsWZ.

Propoño que por parte da Xunta de Goberno Local se adopten os seguintes ACORDOS:

1. Solicitarlle a Google que adopte a forma correcta para denominar este municipio substituíndoa forma incorrecta *Arteijo pola forma ARTEIXO.
2. Solicitarlle asemade, que revise outra toponimia que tamén figura de forma incorrecta na súa páxina como por exemplo Encoro do *Rosadoiro (incorrecta) por Encoro do REXEDOIRO (correcta).
3. Enviarlle a Google o PDF co Proxecto Toponimia de Galicia para facilitarlle as anteditas correccións, dado que nel figuran xeorreferenciadas as formas oficiais da macrotoponimia e da microtoponimia do Concello de Arteixo, aprobadas oficialmente pola Xunta de Galicia.
4. Adherirse á reclamación do alumnado do instituto Manuel Murguía de Arteixo para que se modifique no buscador a denominación do municipio que emprega no seu servizo de mapas, xa que aparece a versión castellanizada.



CONCELLO DE ARTEIXO

SECRETARÍA

RELGA.N.º 2000/141

Praza Alcalde Ramón Dopico, 1
15142 ARTEIXO (A Coruña)

Tel.: 981 60 00 09

Fax: 981 60 24 17

Email: secretaria@arteixo.org

Proposta de Acordo

Normalización Lingüística
Exp. 2018/G006/000257

Asuntos de Área de Presidencia e Planificación. Asuntos de Normalización Lingüística

ASUNTO.- ARTEIXO EN GOOGLE

alcalde – presidente do Concello de Arteixo, en relación á reclamación efectuada polo alumnado do IES MM de Arteixo no tocante á incorrecta denominación toponímica do municipio de Arteixo nos mapas de Google e en base ao informe emitido pola técnica de normalización lingüística en data 23 de Abril de 2018 con CVD BRGkbseghlQQUAWDhsWZ.

Propoño que por parte da Xunta de Goberno Local se adopten os seguintes ACORDOS:

1. Solicitarlle a Google que adopte a forma correcta para denominar este municipio substituíndo a forma incorrecta *Arteijo pola forma ARTEIXO.
2. Solicitarlle asemade, que revise outra toponimia que tamén figura de forma incorrecta na súa páxina como por exemplo Encoro do *Rosadoiro (incorrecta) por Encoro do REXEDOIRO (correcta).
3. Enviarlle a Google o PDF co Proxecto Toponimia de Galicia para facilitarlle as anteditas correccións, dado que nel figuran xeorreferenciadas as formas oficiais da macrotoponimia e da microtoponimia do Concello de Arteixo, aprobadas oficialmente pola Xunta de Galicia.
4. Adherirse á reclamación do alumnado do instituto Manuel Murguía de Arteixo para que se modifique no buscador a denominación do municipio que emprega no seu servizo de mapas, xa que aparece a versión castellanizada.
5. Darlle traslado destes acordos á técnica de normalización lingüística para que continúe o antedito trámite.

Asina dixitalmente

Contra el 'Arteijo' de Google

Alumnos del instituto Manuel Murguía reclamarán al buscador que modifique la denominación del municipio que emplea en su servicio de mapas, ya que aparece la versión castellanizada

Iván Aguiar | Arteixo | 19.04.2018 | 15:55

Alumnos del instituto Manuel Murguía de Arteixo enviarán una carta a Google para reclamar que su servicio de mapas respete el topónimo oficial del municipio. Actualmente emplea la versión castellanizada, *Arteijo*. Los estudiantes acudieron ayer al Concello para solicitar al alcalde, Carlos Calvelo, que se sume a esta iniciativa. El regidor les explicó que apoyará esta petición que efectuarán al buscador.



Alumnos del instituto Manuel Murguía que participan en el proyecto para estudiar el paisaje lingüístico de Arteixo, que en



La batalla por conseguir cambiar los nombres de los mapas de Google tiene su recorrido. No es nueva. Pero cada vez suma más adeptos. Los últimos en tratar de captar la atención de Google son los alumnos del IES Manuel Murguía de Arteixo. Capitaneados por su profesora de Lingua Galega e Literatura Teresa Seara y por Gabriela Prego y Luz Zaz (dos docentes e investigadoras de la USC) han comenzado su peculiar pelea desde un pupitre para conseguir que el gigante de Internet normalicen el topónimo de Arteixo (en lugar de *Arteijo*). «Este grupo de rapaces está aprendiendo con esta iniciativa que a pesares de ser un

Phase 5: The point of arrival. “ *Ghracias por facer esto con nós* ” (Thank you for doing this with us)

Student Action

Sent an email to Google Galicia with legal & council documents

Google replied: working on standardizing Galician place names

Now 'Arteixo' appears on Google Maps (although 'Arteijo' still does too)

Real Impact

More significant than Google's response:

Students convinced local authorities to act

They addressed the mayor as **citizens with linguistic rights**

Political Agency & Linguistic Citizenship

Students became **active citizens**

Demonstrated awareness of their **rights and identity**

Created their own project and **exceeded expectations**

RES2: aprendestes algo?

ST2: Eu por exemplo, cando fun sacar as fotos, pois non me eh...as palabras, non miraba tanto os carteis o que poñían e o que era pasaba e non me quedaba mirando

RES1: e agora fíxaste non?

ST2: o sea vin un cartel e íbame fijando

RES1: o sea que agora eres máis consciente do que está escrito?

ST2: si

RES7: o te interesas máis por qué pues le pusieron el nombre

(...)

ST10:eh a ver o que si o do alcalde estuvo ben aí que eu pen sinceramente non pensaba que nos iba a deixar que foramos alí.

(...)

ST13: ¡ah! Bueno eh umm lo que aprendí de esto que todas las lenguas son importantes y que ninguna tiene por qué desaparecer. Lo otro, lo que más me gustó fue lo de lo de ¿cómo era? lo de las entrevistas que a mí me gustó mucho. Me sentí me sentí importante. Y lo que menos me gustó fue que cuando visitamos al alcalde. No me tomé ni una Coca-Cola para calmar la sed y me sentó fatal. Pero bueno. Eso es eh fue lo que menos.

(...)

ST14: pues la verdad me gustó todo porque conoser al alcalde (...)

ST6: lo que más me gustó fue que pudiéramos salir en el periódico.

ST7: a mí lo que más me gustó fue lo de eh darle más importancia a en plan reflex y reflexionar sobre la lengua que hablamos para darle más importancia a nuestras lenguas y a las otras lenguas. Lo que menos me gustó... pues me gustó todo

ST2: que **ghracias por facer esto con nós.**

RES2: Did you learn anything?

ST2: Well, like, when I went to take the photos, well I didn't um...the words, I didn't really look at what the posters said and the thing is I never really looked.

RES1: And now you do look, do you?

ST2: Like I saw a poster and I noticed what it said.

RES1: So you mean that know you're more aware of what they say?

ST2: Yes

ST7: Or you're more interested in why they were called that
(...)

ST10: Uh, like, the mayor thing was good, even though to be honest I didn't think we would be allowed to go there.

ST13: Hah! Well, um, what I learnt from this is that all languages are important and none of them should disappear. As for the other thing, what I liked best was – what do you call it – the interviews, I really liked that. It made me feel, feel important. The part I liked least was when we visited the mayor. I didn't even drink a Coca-Cola to calm my thirst and I felt awful. But there you go. That didn't really matter.

ST14: Well, the truth is I liked it all, because meeting the mayor(...)

ST6: What I liked best was that we were in the newspaper.

ST7: What I liked best was like the fact that we focused on like thinking and reflecting on the language we speak to make our languages and other languages more important. What I like the least...well actually I liked everything.

ST2: Thank you for doing this with us.

Transformation into Researchers

ST2: "Pay close attention" to language on signs

ST13: Felt "important" during interviews

External Impact Recognized

ST10 & ST14: Meeting the mayor was meaningful

ST6: Valued seeing their work published in the press

From Observers → Active Citizens

Developed a sense of **political agency**

Reflected on **language equality** (ST13)

Use of Galician

Written use acknowledged as important

Limited spoken use: only E2 & E10 used it in final discussion

Majority Spanish-speaking group (86%)

High migrant background (43.5%)

Key Progress

Increased **critical awareness**

Took **initiative** to defend Galician place names



CONCLUSIONS

REFLECTIVE PROCESS & AUTONOMY

Critical Awareness

- Participatory ethnography boosted student agency
- Bourdieu: “awakening of consciousness”
- From pupils to language activists

Growing Autonomy

- Developed research skills & sociolinguistic awareness
- Mobilized 'acts of linguistic citizenship'

CONCLUSIONS

INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT & RECOGNITION

Engagement with Institutions

- Negotiation with peers, community & officials
- Recognized as legitimate actors by local authorities

Recognition of Agency

- Official reports & decisions validate student efforts
- Council actions mirror student requests

Power Dynamics

- Some asymmetry, but agency affirmed

CONCLUSIONS

POLITICAL AGENCY , & IMPACT

Emergence of Political Agency

- Social commitment
- Navigated tensions: language policy, identity, globalisation
- Acted to correct Google toponym with local support

Lasting Impact

- Created change beyond original project goals
- Developed autonomy & enacted collective agency

MOITAS GRAZAS

GHRACIAS

OBRIGADAS

شكر

THANK YOU

GRASIAS