

The Ideas and Proposals of Precursors of Catalan Sociolinguistics

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Abstract

This article was prepared taking the survey that wins last year the ex aequo of the I Premi Jaume Camp on Sociolinguistics. The article analyses the pre-sociolinguistic discourse of eight Catalan authors and its aim is to disseminate sociolinguistic ideas and proposals of these authors.

Summary

1. Linguistic conscience
2. The Precursors
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1. Linguistic conscience

Generally, in critical sociolinguistics, an important emphasis has been placed on linguistic conscience by all authors (Catalan or otherwise) who have attempted to use sociolinguistics as a tool for analysing and transforming reality in such a way that a language involved in a process of language shift reverses the trends of the shift and starts or consolidates a process of language standardisation.

Lacking a coherent linguistic conscience is like lacking the conscience of nationhood. In this case, the community can only walk mechanically on without direction, towards its death. As one essayist recently commented, in these cases, we could sing "ni som ni serem" (we are not now nor shall we be in the future). A linguistic community without linguistic conscience would be a phantom, a shadow without key strategic references. A community without a linguistic conscience would not know either its objectives or its arms; it would be unaware of who its people were and even its language or the name of its language.

The Catalan linguistic community has suffered each and every one of these pathologies and deficiencies: in the nineteenth century, it showed signs of not even knowing the historical name of its own language – nobles used the term *llemosí*; Catalan nobles considered the use of Catalan in formal contexts unnecessary and even absurd; Yxart, who promoted Catalan in literature, believed it inappropriate to use Catalan in journalistic or scientific writings; the leading figures of the *Renaixença* fostered the use of Catalan in poetry amidst violins and sweet-briars, but paid no attention to educating the population in Catalan and did not contemplate the need to set up schools to teach in this language. During the twentieth century, even the name of the language was denied to the south of the Catalan linguistic community and the Franja de Ponent, as many people fell into the trap of ignorance and began to call into question the linguistic unit. Assimilist linguistic ideologies and others that support subtractive bilingualism have taken root, jeopardising the future of Catalan.

The *Diccionari de Sociolingüística* (2001) defines linguistic conscience as "the series of thoughts, expressed and documented or implicit and masked, through which a linguistic community sees itself as different because of the language that it uses, and as linked or opposed (depending on the context), to the languages and communities that surround it. It therefore encompasses ways of thinking, beliefs, motivations and attitudes that make up symbolic values for a given linguistic group". The thoughts that shape linguistic conscience can be of two types: (a) expressed and documented or (b) implicit and masked. That is to say, there is a difference between the ideas

that an average person on the street without a university education has of the language that they speak and those of people who have documented their theories and proposals on their own language and neighbouring languages. Thus, although we should reject ignorance in linguistic science, we must not forget that we all have a linguistic perception and ideology which, in a minoritised community, are extremely important for the future of the language, since it is these perceptions and ideologies that will form the basis of the language attitudes adopted by speakers and, subsequently, of the language uses that they will choose and that will become hegemonic.

The aim of our research (of which this is a summary) is to study a series of Catalan thinkers who already spoke in sociolinguistic or ecolinguistic terms before sociolinguistics appeared as an autonomous discipline,¹ and who were, therefore, already making ecosociolinguistic proposals based on safeguarding the Catalan sociolinguistic sphere. The aim is that the ideas of these writers, clergymen, essayists and men of culture in general will help to shed some light on the reality of language use.

2. The Precursors

Precursors of what we could term the 'Catalan sociolinguistic discourse' include such men as Ramon Llull, Ramon Muntaner and the apologists of the Catalan language throughout the ages: Onofre Manescal, Andreu Bosc, Josep Romeguera, Josep Ullastre, Antoni Tudó, Carles Ros, Ignasi Ferreres, Lluís Galiana, Antoni de Bastero, Marc Antoni Ortí, Agustí Eura, etc, - despite the fact that anti-sociolinguistic ideas also abound in the majority of these literary-minded figures. Authors such as Cristòfor Despuig, Baldiri Reixach and even Josep Pau Ballot are of particular interest. During the *Renaixença*: Constantí Llombart, Marià Aguiló, Jaume Collell, editors of periodicals such as "El Vertader Català", etc. And in the pre-modernisme: Valentí Almirall and Josep Yxart are two figures who should be taken into consideration.

Which authors have we included in our research? We have chosen to study some unjustifiably forgotten such as Josep Armengou,² and some who are very frequently studied, such as Carles Riba,³ albeit from a new perspective in this latter case – that of his pre-sociolinguistic discourse. We have followed an itinerary of sociolinguistic intelligence that cannot forget an author such as Josep Yxart,⁴ studied mainly as a key figure of literary criticism in Catalonia; our research will

¹ For this and other sociolinguistic concepts used here, see the *Diccionari de Sociolingüística*, Enciclopèdia Catalana, 2001.

² Josep Armengou (Berga 1910-1976). Clergyman and writer. He wrote the essay *La Justificació de Catalunya* (1955), published clandestinely during the Franco dictatorship, which he dedicated to the youth of Catalonia. Other publications include a selection of articles called *Escrits de temps incerts* (1965) and the posthumous *Nacionalisme català. Idees i pensaments* (1977), also a clandestine publication.

³ Carles Riba (Barcelona 1893-1959). Writer. He worked with Pompeu Fabra in the preparation of the *Diccionari general de la llengua catalana* (1923-1932). He was lecturer in Greek at the Universitat Autònoma and director of the Fundació Bernat Metge. A representative of the *Noucentisme* movement, he excelled as a narrator, poet, literary critic, thinker and translator of classical Greek writers and great modern authors. When he returned from exile, he became the teacher and undisputed spokesman of the new generations of Catalan intellectuals.

⁴ Josep Yxart (Tarragona 1852-1895). One of the most important literary critics of his time and the best critic yet of Catalan theatre. He contributed to a range of periodical publications, and wrote works of poetry, essays and narrative. Important works include the five-volume *El año pasado* (1886-1890) and the collection of writings published posthumously in *Obres catalanes de Josep Yxart* (1896), *Entorn de la literatura catalana de la restauració* (1980) and *Novel·listes i narradors* (1991). His critical work evolves towards the positivism defended by authors such as Taine, and he became the most important theorist of Catalonia's Naturalist movement, influencing authors such as the critic, Joan Sardà, and the novelist, Narcís Oller.

use Yxart to illustrate the two sides of sociolinguistic thought: intelligent intuition and the heavy weight of the sociocultural and ideological context limiting those ideas; some remarkable reflections on language by Enric Prat de la Riba,⁵ father of Catalan nationalism; but above all the original, ecolinguistic hypotheses of Joaquim Casas-Carbó,⁶ with sustainable trilingualism as his standard; Alexandre Galí⁷ against diglossic bilingualism; the learned reflections of the Valencian educator, Carles Salvador,⁸ politician of language ignored by educators and Catalan sociolinguists; or the great Joan Fuster,⁹ ecolinguist who opens up new paths of sociolinguistic rationality and imagination. In short, eight authors who we can consider to be the precursors of the Catalan sociolinguistic discourse.

This is by no means an exhaustive study: we have excluded, for example, the reflections of Antoni Rovira i Virgili, who considered language to be the “mother of nationality” and stated that “the linguistic map of Europe is broadly, excluding a few exceptions, the map of nationalities”

⁵ Enric Prat de la Riba (Castellterçol 1870-1917). Politician. He drew up the manifesto of the Unió Catalanista: *La qüestió social i la política* (1891) and helped to draft the *Bases de Manresa* and other pro-Catalan manifestos. He was president of the Mancomunitat of Catalonia (1914) – which was Catalonia’s first experience of Catalan political autonomy in the twentieth century; he set up the Institut d’Estudis Catalans and officially adopted their spelling reforms. He contributed to a number of newspapers and published two very important works on Catalan nationalism: *Compendi de doctrina catalanista* (1894) and *La nacionalitat catalana* (1906), in which he presents his idea of nation.

⁶ Joaquim Casas-Carbó (Barcelona 1858-1943). Publisher and writer. He was one of the leading figures in the linguistic campaign of the journal, “L’Avenç”, which laid the foundations for the standardisation of the Catalan language. He also wrote articles on politics and translated numerous works. He was a member of the movement for Catalan autonomy, but was marginalized by the *Noucentisme* movement. His published works include: *Catalònia (Assaigs nacionalistes)* (1908), *Set Odes* (1933), *El problema peninsular* (1933), *Blancs, negres, grocs* (1935), *Del present i del pròxim avenir* (1935).

⁷ Alexandre Galí (Camprodon 1886- Barcelona 1969). Teacher and historian. He could be considered to be the twentieth century’s most important Catalan educator. A disciple of Pompeu Fabra and collaborator of Prat de la Riba, he was chairman of the Associació Protectora de l’Ensenyança Catalana (1922-69), ran a number of schools and tested methods of active learning: *Mesura objectiva del treball escolar* (1928). He took part in the First Congress of Bilingualism (Luxembourg, 1928) and the International Congress of New Education in Nice (1932). His works include *Per la llengua i per l’escola* (1931), *Lliçons de llenguatge* (1931), *Activitat i llibertat en educació* (1932). Following his exile, he published the 23 volumes of *Història de les institucions i del moviment cultural a Catalunya 1900-1936* (1978-86).

⁸ Carles Salvador Gimeno (Valencia 1893-1955). Poet, teacher and grammarian. In 1919, he published the brief treatise, *El valencià a les escoles* and in 1921, the manifesto Pro Associació Protectora de l’ensenyança Valenciana. He made contributions to the press of Castelló de la Plana, Valencia and Barcelona, and to numerous literary journals. He led the Valencian literary avantguard movement and was a pro-European and radical Catalan nationalist. He published works of poetry, theatre, narrative and essays. As signatory of the spelling norms of Castelló (1932), he enthusiastically promoted spelling standardisation in the Valencian Country. He became Director of the Centre de Cultura Valenciana with the discourse *Qüestions de llenguatge* (1935). In Lo Rat Penat (1951), he set up the *Llengua i Literatura Valenciana* courses and published a *Gramàtica valenciana* (1951).

⁹ Joan Fuster Ortells (Sueca 1922-1992) was the twentieth century’s most brilliant Catalan essayist. A humanist, committed Marxist and pro-Catalan, he was the main reference for and creator of the conscience of the unity of the Catalan-speaking territories. He began by publishing a number of collections of poetry but also devoted himself to learning, literary criticism and history. His published collections of essays include: *El descrèdit de la realitat* (1955), *Nosaltres els valencians* (1962), an authentic simplified bible of Catalan nationalism; *Qüestió de noms* (1962), *Diccionari per a ociosos* (1964), *Cansar-se d’esperar* (1965), *L’home, mesura de totes les coses* (1967) *Combustible per a falles* (1967), *La decadència al País Valencià* (1976), *Un país sense política* (1976), *Destinat sobretot a valencians* (1979), *Ara o mai* (1981), *País Valencià, per què* (1982), *Sagitari* (1982). Pursued by adversaries of culture and all things Catalan in the Community of Valencia, he was a member of the Institut d’Estudis Catalans (1978) and chairman of Acció Cultural del País Valencià (1978).

(1916). This sociolinguistic itinerary also excludes Delfí Dalmau¹⁰ with his thorough understanding of linguistic universalism and passive polyglottism (1936), because I have already dealt with this in my book, *Poliglòtisme i raó. El discurs ecoidiomàtic de Delfí Dalmau* (1998). However, his discourse is closely linked to the figures and topics that we will study in this research.

3. The ideas of the precursors

Josep Yxart makes interesting analyses on the relationship between language and intelligence, and on the role of geolinguistics in language use, etc. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, he reveals the two sides of pre-sociolinguistic discourse with his intelligent defence of the use of Catalan in literature and pointing out the incoherencies in the Spanish nationalist discourse on language. At the same time, he makes reflections that fall within a diglossic ideology – with areas in common with the opinions of Joshua A. Fishman¹¹ something that he tends to overcome in time.

The article “Del uso del castellano en Cataluña” (1886) analyses the (in)convenience of abandoning a living language in a hypothetical future by inventing an opponent, a Spanish-speaking outsider and civil servant with a linguistic occupation mentality. His defence of the use of Catalan in literature stems from the observation of reality put forward by Taine. This leads him to carry out a full analysis of the Catalan sociolinguistic situation, distinguishing between the different spheres of use and the different social strata, or between the various areas of the Catalan-speaking territories and other areas of Spain, distinguishing language abandonment from complementary symbolic support in areas such as Euskadi. He makes it very clear that the presence of Spanish across Spain is marked by a political factor and not by a natural reality. As regards the maintenance of Catalan, Yxart correctly rejects an interpretation based exclusively on will and highlights the influence of nature and routine; however, he does not forget the positive factors of active linguistic conscience and language loyalty. Our critic uses concepts such as “shift” (language), “imported language”, need (for use); he identifies language and people and, using different words, he speaks of the facility of language use. He rejects arguments of cosmopolitanism and invents an empire of Europe dominated by France; in fact, French is an interesting, fictional sociolinguistic allegory that serves to question Spanish linguistic imperialism and the linguistic ideologies that it spread. To avoid lengthening further this summary, readers can consult his original texts for his interesting diglossic differentiation.

The highlight of the ideas that we can extract from the bold, coherent discourse of Josep Armengou, is perhaps his defence of the idea that Catalan is the language of the people, of the working classes. A contemporary idea that is still useful at a time when certain sectors may tempt us to disseminate a different idea: that Spanish is today the own language of the Catalan people. He also introduces the complementary idea that the reality of language use is interclassist and can never therefore be an argument for partisan struggle, since all the people and all democratic ideas should be behind Catalan. We should also point out the relationship between language and psychology as a way of expressing ourselves: “a language creates a psychology (...). A language that is not one’s own cannot translate the man that each of us

¹⁰ Delfí Dalmau Gener (Figueres 1891-Barcelona 1965). Teacher and linguist. In 1918, he founded the first Liceu Dalmau for intermediate and technical education which, in 1940, became the Institut Belpost for correspondence learning. He contributed to a range of periodical publications and edited the journal, “Clarisme”. An internationally-renowned Esperantist polyglot and ideologist, he also played an important role in the field of stenography and language teaching. He published two records for Catalan learning, psychological novels and the pre-sociolinguistic essays: *Poliglòtisme passiu* (1936) and *Aclariments lingüístics* (1962).

¹¹ See Joshua A. Fishman’s work recently-published in Catalan: *Llengua i identitat*, Edicions Bromera, 2001.

carries within". For Armengou, "To kill a language is to commit a crime against humanity. It is to kill a collective spirit, the way a human community is and thinks". This discourse shares elements with the writings of the Basque sociolinguist, J. M. Sánchez Carrión (1987).

A key point in Armengou's discourse is the radical rejection of language disloyalty of native Catalans and those who have decided to form part of the Catalan nation: "only snobs, in an attempt to act clever, could abandon our democratic language (...) the wretches who have adopted Spanish as their domestic language and educated their children in this, not the language of the parents, but of the colonisers. They have no excuse...". There is only one fitting option available to native Catalans: not to forget their language and to receive and integrate new-comers in Catalan. Thus, he proposes the badly-termed (since it is the product of a very active option) passive bilingualism: "Bilingual dialogue is dialogue *par excellence* (...) we must always presume that our interlocutor understands the language of the country...". But, at the same time: "Forbid any Catalan from addressing us in any language other than Catalan". Armengou rejects diglossic ideology and anticipates future and eternal attacks against Catalans aware of their condition: "We want Catalan to be the official language of Catalonia. Not to create a broken, provincial and exclusive Catalonia, but to ensure the survival of our national spirit...". He accuses Spain of launching a triple offensive of coercion, invasion and promoting abandonment; of trying to convert Catalan into a language of museums... For as long as we are part of Spain, this latter must defend all languages that form part of it and cease to hate diversity, thus becoming a plurilingual state.

When discussing the modernist Joaquim Casas-Carbó, we clearly need to highlight his absolutely modern, contemporary proposal of egalitarian linguistic trilingualism (Catalan-Spanish-French) relating to the sociolinguistic models of state, but by applying it to our times where French has lost the role of international language that it held until the nineteenth century. In this model, French would be the language of 'intermediation', preventing subordination to Spanish. He distinguishes between four sociolinguistic models of state and rejects the multilingual model of state whereby a single language enjoys political hegemony.

For this writer, the best solution for international linguistic justice would be to promote an auxiliary, international language. Another important area of the discourse of Casas-Carbó is his modern, clairvoyant view of the mechanisms of language use, contact and change, which he defines as "the study of linguistic biology". Casas-Carbó is a true precursor of the genre of discourse that centres on the diagnosis of the Catalan situation; this 'genre' begins to take force from 1979 onwards with the publication of the article "Una nació sense estat, un poble sense llengua". Our author pre-empts this trend and uses clear and current concepts such as "languages in contact", "superimposition", "sphere" in the sense of area of use, "superimposed languages", "linguistic group", "prestige (linguistic)", "language invasion", "lack of conscience" or "linguistic disloyalty"; he points out some of the defensive or pro-standardising mechanisms: facilitation of communication between speakers; promotion of the speakers' own language; fostering of literature, self-esteem and rejection of the self-hatred that he terms "spite" and that he defines by what he terms the "law of imitation and respect of the inferior for the superior", thus pre-empting the reflections of R. L. Ninyoles (1969 and 1971). He is very aware of the role of social classes in linguistic conflict and even the factor of genre; he distinguishes between the situation of Catalan and other languages such as Greek, Norwegian, Danish, Flemish and Bulgarian, which are smaller languages than Catalan but taken into consideration 'politically-speaking'. Instead, he tends to compare Catalan with languages of a more standardised status, rather than the typical comparison with languages on the verge of extinction; hence this is a modern discourse of reference.

Prat de la Riba considered that "language forms social units above individuals" and that "it is a constitutive element of nationality", underlining that "nothing compares to this unity of spirit determined by the community of the language". He demands official status for Catalan –as Almirall did in 1880 at the First Congr s Catalanista – and defines one of the key characteristics of Catalan nationalism.

Carles Riba represents the best ideas of *Noucentisme* on the language issue, where Catalan clearly adopted the role of common language or the national language of the Catalans, as a cohesive element of nationality. Riba highlights the importance that intellectual elites have the aim of constructing a “language of culture”; elites who are “the totalists of language”, like that which directed the process of standardisation of Catalan under Pompeu Fabra.

For Riba, the concept of linguistic conscience forms part of the idea of ideology; it serves to give cohesion to the social group and enables us to give the psychological coherence required to convert it into a tool of government. Murgades and Lamuela (1984) have already explained the point to which *Noucentisme* had a clear ideology of the national language; Riba stresses this by calling for Catalan to be the defining feature *par excellence* of Catalan identity, since every language offers a certain “reality of the world” and, although language “is not an unfailing agglutinant of a nation”, it does “accompany and strengthen the aptitude of a people”.

Riba also analyses the process of shift that Catalan had suffered and continues to suffer, and tries to explain how it could have resisted the penetration of a language armed with prestige, power and glory. Riba only sees the force of sentiment – another term for ‘linguistic conscience’ – and the cultural and educational shortcomings of Spanish. The role of the intellectuals in “saving the language” is to reinforce linguistic pride and character, as Batista Roca had already explained.

Alexandre Galí’s rejection of social bilingualism is not merely the rejection of an educator: it has broad, wide-reaching effects on in current social psychology. It is an ethical attitude against *emmudiment* – linguistic muting – that favours the language of speakers of subordinated nations. Galí analyses the Catalan sociolinguistic situation, highlighting the importance of the geolinguistic, sociopolitical, and ideological and cultural context. An external context and series of conditions that influence what, at that time, was beginning to be called “bilingualism”. Galí condemns the violation of the educational and psychological rights of children who were not educated in the language of their country, and who suffered the “scourge” of the subtractive bilingualism of the “invading language”: “bilingualism only occurs when something disturbs monolingualism, that is to say, when, for a wide range of reasons, an individual or community can be influenced by two different linguistic systems (...) when linguistic phenomena (...) of change or linguistic disturbance occur”. He distinguishes this situation from the balanced bilingualism that can occur in isolated individuals. Due to the influence of Isaac Epstein, he proposes the term *polygllossia* to define his idea of conflictive social bilingualism, coinciding with the Catalan educators, Carles Salvador and Delfí Dalmau. He also uses terms such as “subdued language” and “dominating and imposed language”, and concludes that political and social factors cause two verbal disorders: verbal inhibition and impotence, the *alingualism* to which the educator Josep Estalella also refers. A bilingualism that “devours peoples”.

Carles Salvador, politician of language and avantguard educator along the lines of Alexandre Galí and Delfí Dalmau, is the personification of the humanist intellectual, fierce defender of the unity of Catalan in the Community of Valencia, and defender of the Catalan Republic. He theorises on language shift and proposes linguistic conscience and the self-centring of the Catalan nation, from Salses to Guardamar... against Spanish imperialist political interference. He demands that official status be bestowed upon Valencian and supports the theory of passive polyglottism and international linguistic egalitarianism of Dalmau and the Esperantists.

Salvador refers to Catalan as a “national language” and always speaks in terms of the speaking community, making a more society-centred, rather than language-centred, hypothesis; he uses the definition of the great humanist, Lluís Vives, on the importance of language as the basic principle of all human societies and considers that “To conserve a language, then, is to maintain the reality of the existence of a nation”. This hypothesis is wholly modern, since it highlights the idea of language that is linked to existence, rather than simply the essence, as authors in Jocs Florals competitions had done; he is aware of the reality of “language change” and refers to

language shift: "A language dies when nobody speaks it". As early as in 1936, he makes use of the terms "invading language" and "languages in contact", and is perfectly aware of the start of the diglossic era in the Valencian Country, referring to the theme illustrated by Lluís Millan in *El Cortesano* (1561) of placing Valencian into the mouths of morons and Spanish on the lips of lords, and of hiding the people's own language: "conceal the Valencian language". He also refers to self-hatred, prestige/stigma, and to the conscience and need for language use. He suggests as a model for language policy that of the Helvetic Confederation

Joan Fuster, who we deal with last because, in a way, he is very much a synthesis of the above authors, opens up the path to sociolinguistic science with his explicit hypotheses on the need for study and critical development. He ironically warns that if things in the Principality go unharnessed, we will end up "speaking Valencian", and the metaphor is not a phonetics- or morphology-related issue. He correctly and ironically condemns shift ideologies of a colonial mentality and considers that languages, within a context of conflict, become tools or forms of domination; he stresses the importance of linguistic facilitation as a means of absorbing languages; he does not dismiss the self-hatred factor that he calls "bad conscience" or "alienation"; he explains that the language issue is a political issue; he looks for internal responsibilities in the process of language shift and makes a proposal for sociolinguistic sovereignty which, at the beginning of the twenty-first century is still wholly current: linguistic activism and language planning, a return to Catalan monolingualism, self-centring and defence of the common language of the Catalan people in the north and south of the same nation. To live in Catalan.

4. Factors influencing language use

The last section of this research (a) will comment on some basic factors influencing language use and (b) put forward some proposals: (a) motivation and perception of use, action and offer of use, linguistic competence, importance of macrospheres of administration, teaching and mass media and the changes that have taken place in these areas, attitudes and standards of language use... (b) We need to change the standards of current use, intervene in the perception of use of language, convince second and third-generation immigrants of the need to become the new Catalan-speakers, welcome new immigrants in Catalan, neutralise the cultural shock and invite them to use Catalan; we need to promote associations among young people and make them aware that will is more important than ability, that action (positive models) is more decisive than reflection; we need to increase the number of hours of Catalan and reinforce Catalan as a subject (more resources, smaller groups...), create a Catalan culture subject at secondary level and carry out linguistic immersion, also at secondary level; we need to promote awareness of the usefulness of Catalan and eliminate the perverse connotations of Catalan; we should refrain from Latinising the language; we should conduct pilot-schemes and promote research on the reasons for the continued negative standards of use; we must associate Catalan with modernity through popular and mass mobilisations such as *Acampallengua*; we should introduce new measures to promote reading, not pay too much attention to issues of correction, but avoid the use of Spanish barbarisms; we should make people aware that Catalan is not incompatible with any other culture and that standardisation also means bilingualisation; we must create a need for use of Catalan and supraregional bodies and language policy associations common to the whole of the Catalan territory; we should promote an interlanguage for Catalans that is not Spanish or any other imperial language; we need to promote and aid linguistic activism and ensure that existing organisations are effectively unified or coordinated.

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