

Phonic variation in Catalan: inventory and assessment of methodology¹

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Abstract

This paper offers a succinct presentation of studies on research into phonic variables. Following on from the inventory is a global approximation to the studies and a critical review characterizing the Catalan contribution to general sociolinguistics.

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1. Introduction

Researchers dealing with global analyses of the studies, results and conclusions of the sociolinguistic paradigm issue insofar as concerns Catalan, coincide in their observation that the majority have a clear sociological nature. Since its origins, Catalan sociolinguistics has been essentially *sociology of language*. This slant is more than understandable when we consider that it has developed in a context of language contact in which the survival of the territory's own language is under threat. The bulk of sociolinguistic research has therefore centred on the setbacks and advances in the social use of the Catalan language. Language planning has taken into account a significant amount of this labour.

However, more recent sociolinguistic research reveals a more varied approach. Obviously, the *macrosociolinguistic* approach, (quasi-) exclusive before 1985, continues to play the most important role, but it has been reduced by a series of variationist and ethnographic research, particularly between 1985 and 1995. This new horizon caused Boix and Payrató (1996) to remark that the *sociolinguistics of conflict*, insofar as concerns Catalan, had given way to *sociolinguistic diversity*.

Indeed, they were not wrong. The author of this paper came to the same conclusion in his inventory study entitled *Sociolingüística de la variación y nivel fónico de la lengua catalana (1980-1995)*, despite the fact that the study-title suggests a more restricted scope. However,

¹ This study was part of the BFF00-0075 project (Ministry of Science and Technology) *Modelos de organización articuladora y procesos de cambio fonético* (Models of articulatory organization and processes of phonetic change).

the optimism suggested by this diversification of interests will be clarified by the retrospective angle taken in the conclusion of the present article. The reason is none other than the sad fact of a single doctoral thesis (Carrera, 1999) in the phonic field of variationism and one piece of research (Montoya 2000) which opens up new methodological prospects in the analysis of *linguistic atrophy* in the process of language replacement. Two studies, by the way, which are excellent.

It would be encouraging to compensate this negligible production from 1995 onwards with a list of studies on morphological, syntactic and lexical variables. Unfortunately, we are unable to do so, since the picture is similar here. It is well known that studies on phonetic and phonological variables have overwhelmingly resorted to the use of Labovian sociolinguistics. One of the reasons for this prevalence is, without doubt, the fact that this type of study adapts better to the Labovian premise that variation involves the alternate use of semantically and pragmatically equivalent forms, which is difficult to guarantee with lexicon and, particularly, syntax (Pradilla, 2001a). A further quantitative consideration could be ethnographic research, but this would not substantially alter the marginality of less-sociological sociolinguistics.

This article hopes to offer a succinct presentation of studies researching into phonic variables. The inventory is followed by a global approximation and a critical review characterizing the Catalan contribution to general sociolinguistics.

2. Individual characterization of the various studies²

2.1. COLOMINA, J. (1985). "La diftongació de /ɛ/ i d'altres canvis vocàlics a la Canyada de Biar", in J. COLOMINA *L'alacantí. Un estudi sobre la variació lingüística*. Alacant: Institut d'Estudis Gil-Albert, pp. 94-109.

Many conclusions concerning our issue (Turell, 1988; Gimeno and Montoya, 1989) coincide in noting the pioneering contribution of the *escola alacantina* (Alacant School). In my opinion, the work of Jordi Colomina (1985)³ on geographical variety in Alacant merits being our initial reference point. This study is a clear example of the multi-dimensional consideration of linguistic fact, where variation is studied from different, yet complementary, approaches. His merit lies in having expertly combined different perspectives and methodologies, some already familiar and other more innovative ones.

Using a geolinguistics-based survey, he interviews a total of 112 informants scattered across 35 towns at the southern limit of the Catalan-speaking territory. In just a few towns, he uses a shorter survey to study sociolinguistic variation.

From the point of view of generative dialectology, he studies vowel assimilation and the opening of the diphthongs [ow] and [ɔw] in the southern Valencian speech of Alacant and the diphthongization of [ɛ] in Canyada de Bihar, taking into account certain social factors that condition the application of the rules.

Historical sociolinguistics are used as a framework to determine the indexes of loss of intervocalic /d/ in Valencian through the study of a number of texts from *La Donsayna* (1844-1845) and Valencian lexicographical works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

² The characterization of the studies in this section will not involve analysis of results. We will focus here on a methodological review.

³ This is the revised version of his doctoral thesis presented in 1983.

L'escala d'implicació (scale of implication) enables him to observe the process of lexical and geographical diffusion of the elision of intervocalic /d/.⁴

His treatment of the elision of final /r/ and the different pronunciations of the fricative and affricate, alveolar and prepalatal phonemes, and the group *tl* is basically geolinguistic.

The most explicit sociolinguistic approach is to be found in the chapter under review.⁵ In this population of 1,100 inhabitants of the Alacant district of Alt Vinalopó, a total of 16 informants of both sexes from a broad age-range were surveyed. The variable phenomena studied are presented according to these rules:

- (1) /ɛ/ - <já>
- (2) /ó/ - <ɔ> / #(seg)____[-syllabic]₁#
- (3) /é/ - <ɛ> / #(seg)____[-syllabic]₁#
- (4) /ó/ - <ó> / #(seg)____([-syll]₁ V C₀ (CV)#

2.2. MIER, J. (1986). "Estudi sociolingüístic de certs aspectes de la llengua catalana", *Treballs de Sociolingüística Catalana* 6, pp. 33-112.⁶

This time, the study has an exclusively Labovian focus.⁷ The chosen speech community was the Gràcia neighbourhood of Barcelona. The characterization of the 43 informants is such that a real universe is not obtained from the compact sample: the only requirement is that informants are L1 Catalan and the investigator overlooks factors of utmost importance such as the origin of the informant and his or her parents, if they were born elsewhere.

The variables studied by Mier are morphological (*dos/dues*) and syntactic (*haver de/tenir de* and the prepositions *en/a* in expressions describing place). Lastly, he studies the three phonological variables revealing these rules:

- (1) /ʃ/ - <tʃ>
- (2) /ʒ/ - <dʒ>
- (3) /dʒ/ - <tʃ> / V____V

⁴ This methodological device, characteristic of the dynamic paradigm used by C.H. Bailey, is based on the hypothesis that the hierarchical order of the towns and words affected by a process of linguistic change corresponds to the real chronological process of the expansion of the change. On the map, these data are grouped in bundles of isoglosses in the form of concentric rings, representing diffusion by waves of innovation.

⁵ An earlier version can be found in Colomina (1994).

⁶ This is the Catalan translation of the doctoral thesis presented by this researcher to the Department of Romanic Languages and Literature of the University of Michigan, 1982.

⁷ On the subject of this research, I would like to refer to a series of investigations which, although digressing (in certain aspects) from the methodological and theoretical aspects of the Labovian model, they offer a social approach that draws them to the latter.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the work of Lídia Pons (1992) is the most emblematic of this type of (socio)-dialectology, where the interpretative axis is provided by the factor *age* (Labov's *apparent time*). Her research offers a model qualitative analysis of diachronic and descriptive aspects. However, it is extremely surprising that, at no time, does she mention Mier's work, particularly considering that Pons also deals with the initial affrication of prepalatals and the devoicing of the intervocalic prepalatal affricate. The study method is very well thought out and includes a very interesting section on perception. However, the results do not add much to Mier's study. I think that it is a real shame that this author's data have not been exploited because this would have allowed us to design an investigation to improve on her results in the light of the shortcomings detected.

Along the same lines of the work of Pons, there are also articles by Josefina Carrera (1993, 1995a, 1995b) and research by Espadella, Pineda and Cisqueña (1993).

2.3. MONTOYA, B. (1989). "Estratificació de la variació lingüística a Petrer", in GIMENO, F. and B. MONTOYA *Sociolingüística*. Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, pp. 67-95.

In 1985, Brauli Montoya, another member of the *escola alacantina*, under the guidance of Francesc Gimeno, one of the individuals responsible for the introduction of strict sociolinguistics into Spain, reads his doctoral thesis entitled *De sociolingüística històrica: canvi lingüístic en curs i desplaçament de llengües a l'extrem meridional de la llengua catalana*.⁸ One section of the study describes and explains a linguistic change consisting of the devoicing of the voiced affricative prepalatal:

(1) /dʒ/ - <tʃ>

This study rigorously and orthodoxly uses Labovian methodology. It might even be said that, by conforming so closely to this method, he sometimes distorts certain features of Valencian society in relation to the United States. The results for the stylistic factor and "socioeconomic group" social factor are evidence of this.

The speech community was Petrer and the real universe of the sample consisted of Catalan-speaking inhabitants of this town (86 informants-1.25%).

The study's approach is very comprehensive. Innovations on Colomina (1985) and Mier (1986) include acoustic analysis of variants, probabilistic data processing (until now, this had been frequential) and the experiment of subjective evaluation of informants with regard to the variable under study.

2.4. ALTURO, N. and M. T. TURELL (1990). "Linguistic Change in el Pont de Suert: The study of variation of /ʒ/", *Language Variation Change* 2, pp. 19-30.

Moving on in the chronological order of this inventory, we will now look at the research of Núria Alturo and Maria Teresa Turell (1990). This latter is another important figure in the introduction of Labovian sociolinguistics, this time in Catalonia.

It is surprising that a relatively short article can offer such an interesting analysis of a linguistic phenomenon of change. In order to understand it, we will need to refer back to the degree thesis of Núria Alturo, *Canvi sociolingüístic al Pont de Suert* (1987). In this study, the author echoes Labovian hypotheses, although she does not apply them in an orthodox manner. The study is the basis of the subsequent research by Alturo and Turell (1990). Due to the use of these recordings or the design of the group of social factors in the sociological analysis of the speech community, the same methodological instrument needs to be used to collate materials – *life history*. This interview, at least initially, does not contemplate stylistic diversification, which is a fundamental factor in the analysis of the variable under study.

The real universe of the sample is made up of individuals born in Pont de Suert before 1956 (38 informants aged over 30 years at the time of the interview – 7.3%). The conditioning of the sample to stages of social transformation in the area excludes part of the population, the younger sector.

⁸ A synthesis of this doctoral thesis can be found in the chapter on "Estratificació de la variació lingüística a Petrer" in *Sociolingüística* (work co-written with Francesc Gimeno).

The variable studied was the voiceless affricative prepalatal, characteristic of the speech of Ribagorçà, which has been progressively replaced by the voiced affricative prepalatal of standard central eastern Catalan. The variable rule is:

(1) tʃ - <ʒ>

2.5. ESCRIVÀ, V. (1993). "Aproximació sociolingüística al procés d'assimilació de la variable [ʒ] àtona final a Oliva", in *Actes del Novè Col·loqui Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes III*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, pp. 121-136.

Although this study is well thought out, the author himself warns that it is a *pre-survey*, i. e. a preliminary study providing frequential statistical data.

The speech community is the city of Oliva, in the Valencian district of Safor, and the real universe of the sample consists of Catalan-speaking inhabitants (32 informants-0.17%).

The variable is final atonic archiphoneme /A/. The use of a subjective assessment test enables him to verify the loss of prestige of the traditional variant [ʒ]:

(1) /A/ - <ʒ, a, ʝ> / ___#

2.6. MONTOYA, B. (1989). *Variabilitat i prestigi en el català de Valls i de l'Alt Camp*. Valls: Institut d'Estudis Vallencs.

The first aspect to highlight is that this research is based on group-work carried out by students of COU. This needs to be borne in mind because the study deviates substantially from the methodological requirements of data collection. Our group of researchers are inexperienced and heterogenous. As a result, the homogeneity and rigour of the interviews is more than questionable.

The speech communities are the towns of Valls, Alcover and Pla de Santa Maria. These are located in the subdialect of Tarragona, defined as an area of linguistic transition between western and eastern Catalan. The real universe of the sample consists of Catalan-speakers from these towns (66 informants, 55 of whom are from Valls-0.46%). The absence of the factor sex is due to the topic of the interview: "Aspects of food and cooking".

The linguistic variables studied are idiosyncratic features of the district's geolect that vary from the standardized forms:

(1) /a,e/ - <ʒ, a, ʝ> / ___#

(2) ɲ - <jn>

2.7. PRADILLA, M. À. (1993). *Variació i canvi lingüístic en curs al català de transició nord-occidental/valencià*. Doctoral thesis, University Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona).⁹

Under the supervision of M. T. Turell, the author of this paper defended his doctoral thesis in 1993. He had carried out a number of prior exploratory studies that opened the way to this wider-ranging investigation. The first (Pradilla, 1996) was a sonographic and descriptive prepalatal study of the Baix Maestrat district, in the north of the Community of Valencia. The second (Pradilla, 1993b), was a preliminary variationist approach, here on the town of Benicarló. This town was the speech community chosen in the reference study (70 informants-0.72%).

Benicarló is located in a transitional area between western Catalan and Valencian. The variable phenomena tending towards change are very frequent, but the pressure of a hypothetical Valencian standard does not seem to play a part in the direction that they are set to take, at least when the material was collected (1992), since this function was still being carried out by Spanish. One of the clearest items explaining this is the interference of the latter.

The study deals with the process of linguistic change that has been diachronically named *deaffrication*. From a linguistic point of view, this is a very complex variable with seven variants obtained through acoustic introspection:

(1) /ʒ, dʒ/ - <jʒ, ʒ, dʒ, dʒ, d:ʒ, dʒ> / V__V

It uses a subjective assessment experiment and a powerful statistical analysis programme.

2.8. PLAZA, C. (1995). "Lleialtat lingüística, edat i nivell educatiu. La e posttònica a la Conca de Barberà", in M. T. TURELL (ed.). *La sociolingüística de la variació*. Barcelona: PPU, pp. 117-138.

This study is based on the doctoral thesis of the author, presented in 1994 with the title *La parla de la Conca de Barberà*.¹⁰ The subject of this chiefly geolinguistic research is the speech of the Conca de Barberà. This district, as with the Alt Camp in Montoya's work (1993), is located in an area of linguistic transition between eastern and western Catalan, and forms a break with the variety of Tarragona. The area currently has an extensive list of phenomena of change tending towards replacement of the native variants in favour of prestigious, standard forms.

In this study, Plaza uses sociolinguistic methodology and focuses on analysis of the post-tonic variable /e/. He bases his research on the hypothesis that the native variant [i] is strongly stigmatized:

(1) (post-tonic) /e/ - <i, e, ə>

The speech community is Espuga de Francolí and the real universe of the sample consists of individuals born in this town between 1931 and 1973 (20 informants-2.3%). As a result, with no

⁹ Published works based on this thesis include:

PRADILLA, M. A. "La sociolingüística quantitativa i la fonètica experimental: per una complementarietat metodològica", in *Actes del I Congrés de Lingüística General. Panorama de la investigació lingüística a l'Estat Espanyol*. Valencia: University of Valencia, pp. 142-150, 1993.

PRADILLA, M. À. "Sociolingüística de la variació i actituds interdialectals a l'extrem nord del País Valencià", in *Diálogos Hispánicos, 19*, Amsterdam (*Las lenguas en la Europa comunitaria II: Las lenguas de minorías*), pp. 97-124, 1996.

PRADILLA, M. À. "Sociolingüística quantitativa i anàlisi qualitativa de variables foneticofonològiques: a propòsit del desafricament prepalatal", *Estudios de Fonética Experimental, VIII*, pp. 207-251, 1997.

PRADILLA, M. À. "Lingüística correlacional i fonètica experimental", in *Actas del XIV Congreso de la Asociación Española de Lingüística Aplicada - A.E.S.L.A.*, Tarragona (At press).

¹⁰ Published two years later under the same title (Plaza, 1996).

clear justification, an extremely important age range is left out of the study – the population aged over 60.

2.9. PLA, J. (1995). "L'obertura de [ə] a Barcelona: el *xava* i altres varietats", in M. T. TURELL (ed.). *La sociolingüística de la variació*. Barcelona: PPU, pp. 165-219.

This study must be assessed from a different point of view than that used thus far, since the author only aims to put forward hypotheses and perform a qualitative analysis of the vowel variable in its acoustic aspect:

(1) ə - <a>

Pla indicates that the word *xava* is now popularly applied to the whole range of varieties of Catalan spoken in Barcelona opening [ə], with relative disregard to the ethnolinguistic or social origin of the speaker. The initial hypothesis is that this phenomenon becomes rarer as the age of speakers increases and is almost categorical among those born since the 1970s. This is therefore a historically recent change, at least in terms of current social dimensions.

The author collates the data by combining the sociolinguistic and experimental methods. He works with 8 male informants aged between 17 and 25. The justification for the absence of female informants lies in the fact that acoustic data vary in terms of the frequential pitch of vowel formants and, therefore, a standardizing statistical treatment would have been required to consider them as a whole.

2.10. MONTOYA, B. (1995). "L'observació del canvi fonològic en el català balear", in M. T. TURELL (ed.). *La sociolingüística de la variació*. Barcelona: PPU, pp. 165-219.

This study, like that above, also has features distinguishing it from those before it: it needs to be catalogued under what is termed *historical sociolinguistics*.

Of the different angles adopted by this method to reconstruct linguistic changes, this study is based on processes that are still taking place and retrospectively monitors the point up to which it is possible to extract information. Montoya professes to reinterpret, using the postulates of Labovian sociolinguistics, certain phonic aspects of insular Catalan described in the first third of the twentieth century since dialectology (A. M. Alcover, A. Griera and F. de B. Moll). Thus, he tries to re-tread the path taken by a series of variables from the beginning of the century up to the present time.

The chosen variables are:

Three modifications in consonantism (dealt with succinctly due to a lack of data): 1) transient intervocalic elision of /-d-/ in Mallorca; 2) a tendency towards Menorcan *ieisme*; and 3) generalized suppression of intervocalic /-j-/ in Menorca.

The two vowel variables are given a more comprehensive treatment: 1) The change /'ə/ > /'ɛ/, a recent transformation of Balearic vocalism that centuries past had extended across the eastern half of Catalonia; 2) the other variable is /ə/ in absolute final position subject to change towards [ɛ].

2.11. CARRERA, J. (1999). *L'alternança A/E al Segrià*. Doctoral thesis, University of Barcelona.¹¹

As was mentioned in the introduction, this is the only research since 1995 that has dealt with a variable phonic phenomenon. This doctoral thesis, supervised by Dr. L. Pons and Dr. J. Julià, enhances Labovian methodology with a series of new requirements, providing very successful interpretative results.

The itinerary used by the author to establish the definitive research includes exploratory studies (Carrera 1993, 1995a, 1995b), which formed the basis of the nuclear hypotheses of the Doctoral thesis.

For the first time in the Catalan-speaking scope, a contrastive analysis is made of the conduct of two towns towards a variable phenomenon: one deemed rural, Alguaire, and the other urban, Lleida. Both speech communities form part of the strict north-western geolect, Lleidatà. The real universe of the sample are Catalan-speakers (36 informants in Alguaire – 1.6%; 36 informants in Lleida – 0.05%). An important innovation in the spectrum of ages is the study of children aged 3 to 5 years. Observation of this segment enables comparisons to be made between the pronunciation of school and pre-school children.

The variable rule aims to describe, explain and predict the presence of the variants [e] and [a] in:

- 1) absolute initial pretonic vowel spelt e;
- 2) non-absolute initial or medial pretonic vowel spelt e;
- 3) and non-absolute initial or medial pretonic vowel spelt e.

This is the most thorough study carried out thus far because, as well as using a very comprehensive means of statistical processing, it also involves an abundance of qualitative tests.

2.12. MONTOYA, B. (2000). *The Catalan speakers of Alacant: A lost generation*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

This work constitutes the second part of a project that focuses attention on an urban speech community, that of the city of Alacant (Alicante) where Catalan is at an advanced stage of retreat. The results of the first part appeared in print in 1996, in a book entitled *Alacant: la llengua interrompuda* (Paiporta: Denes), where the author describes the process whereby Catalan is falling into disuse in the Alacant family setting. There is no doubt that this book is an essential point of reference when it comes to studying the poignant question of intergenerational break in the transmission of the language. In this study, Montoya pays only secondary attention

¹¹ Publications based on this thesis include:

CARRERA, J. "El canvi fonètic: lèxic o gradual?", *Sintagma* 12, pp. 37-48, 2000.

"Algunes consideracions generals sobre l'anàlisi acústica de [e] i de [a] àtones", *Estudios de Fonètica Experimental*, 11, pp. 67-87, 2001a.

CARRERA, J. La normativització del català modifica els hàbits fonètics dels parlants? *Llengua i Literatura*, 12, pp. 175-199, 2001b.

CARRERA, J. "L'estadística en l'anàlisi de la variació fonètica: una aplicació del programa Goldvarb", *Noves SL*. Primavera 2002, pp. 1-5. <http://www.gencat.cat/llengua/noves>, 2002a.

CARRERA, J. "La identitat dels processos de canvi lingüístic: un cas del lleidatà", *Estudis del Valencià d'ara. Actes del IV Simposi de Filologia Valenciana*. PPU, pp. 33-43, 2002b.

CARRERA, J. "Fonètica i morfologia a la televisió lleidatana", *Llengua i Literatura*, 13, pp. 187-206, 2002c.

CARRERA, J. "Approche de la variation phonétique dans la ville de Lleida à partir de l'observation de ses habitants et des émissions télévisées locales", *Marges Linguistiques*, 3, <http://www.marges-linguistiques.com/> pp. 201-214, 2002d.

to the sociology of language and adopts a (microsociolinguistic) variationist focus to take stock of the evolution in the linguistic structure of Alicante speech within the context of language replacement. The core objective here, therefore, is to describe the phenomenon known as *linguistic atrophy* or *linguistic shrinking*, that is, the study of the wear or structural disintegration of the recessive language (Catalan), in the process of extinction or convergence with the expanding language (Spanish).

The study makes use of the oral corpus consisting of 69 of the 88 subjects who took part in the initial research. The universe of the sample are the Catalan speakers born between 1907 and 1960 (20,586-0.335 %). At the time the fieldwork was carried out, between 1993 and 1994, they represented the part of the population aged over thirty. It is important to note that the majority of those interviewed had not derived Catalan directly from their parents, but instead had acquired it subsequently, in a passive way, in the context of the family or around the town or at work. The majority were men of a certain age, from the lower class and from neighbourhoods where there were most Catalan speakers.

The data analysed comes basically from semi-structured recorded interviews on the subject of the speakers' life stories. In addition, participant and non-participant observation was also used. Quantification was carried out using the Gold Varb 2.0 programme of computer analysis of variable rules.

Apart from morphological and lexical type variables, the phonological features that were studied were the following:

- (1) /e-/ - <a->
- (2) /a/ - [ɔ] / # (seg) /' ɔ/ # / [-sil]___# (*hora*)
- (3) /a/ - [ɛ] / # (seg) /' ɛ/ # / [-sil]___# (*perla*)
- (4) ɔ - <a> / # (seg) /' ɔ/ # / [-sil]___#
- (5) ɛ - <a> / # (seg) /' ɛ/ # / [-sil]___#
- (6) /ɛ/ - [e] / [-accent] (*verd-verdura*)
- (7) / ɔ/ - [o] / [-accent] (*pot-potet*)
- (8) ɔ - [o]
- (9) ɛ - [e]
- (10) Ø - <ɿ >
- (11) ʎ - <j>
- (12) -s - <-h>

The low number of occurrences found of certain variables mean that the results have to be considered with caution.

3. Global view and criticism of methodology

3.1. Linguistic variables

In consonantism, more attention has been paid to palatals (particularly, prepalatals) and this is confirmed as being the most variable area across the linguistic domain of Catalan linguistics as well as being the most complex.

Even in vocalism, the front or palatal vowels have been the main concern of analysis. Moreover, except in Colomina's study, research is focused on the atonic position.

3.2. Speech communities

According to Veny's classification of geographical varieties (1978), a total of seven of the communities described in the studies are western Catalan: of these, four focus on Valencian speech, two on north-western transitional speech, and lastly, a contrastive analysis is made of two Lleidatà geolect communities.

Two of the eastern Catalan studies focus on the speech of Barcelona and a further two on the Xipella and Tarragona varieties, respectively.

The geographical distribution of studies reveals a preference for speech communities in areas of linguistic transition, or those distant from cities that use the standard model.

Another interesting consideration is that the tendency of sociolinguistic studies in Catalan to prioritise urban communities only occurs in four studies: two on Barcelona (Mier limits himself of the Gràcia neighbourhood and Pla carries out an essentially acoustic analysis of the variable), one on Lleida (with a contrastive analysis with the rural community of Alguaire) and one on Alacant. The remainder are not urban studies: they either deal with very small villages, such as Canyada de Bihar, el Pont de Suert, Alcover, Pla de Santa Maria and Espluga de Francolí, or large towns (with a population of between 15,000 and 30,000), such as Petrer, Oliva, Valls and Benicarló. Therefore, we can confirm that the Labovian model has been de-urbanized in Catalan studies.

Lastly, I would like to point out that all of these studies selected a specific linguistic group, Catalan speakers, as the real universe of the sample, despite the fact that these are in fact multilingual communities. In the case of Montoya (2000), the fact of language replacement meant that semibilinguals (with Catalan as L2) had to be considered along with bilingual speakers (with Catalan as L1). This makes the research in question rather specific.

3.3. Real universe of the sample and the sample itself

When linguists create a significant sample, they need to collaborate with sociologists. Despite the difficulty in determining a significance threshold, there appears to be a certain amount of improvisation in the majority of the studies. In my opinion, only the following have a high level of statistical confidence:

- a) Montoya's doctoral thesis (1989) and the study on *linguistic atrophy* (2000);
- b) the study by Alturo and Turell (1990), although it does not take into account informants aged under 30;
- c) Pradilla's doctoral thesis;
- d) the study by Plaza (1995), albeit with certain reservations: with only 20 informants it is very difficult to significantly deal with all the aspects of the factors under consideration. Moreover, the study does not take into account informants aged over 60, a population segment that would surely reveal a greater presence of the vowel variable in regression.
- e) Carrera's doctoral thesis (1989). Here, we need to be cautious about the representativeness of the sample of Lleida (0.05%).

Therefore, in my opinion, the remainder of the studies, both those that explicitly state their purpose as such and those that do not, should be considered exploratory studies.

3.4. Typology of the extralinguistic factors considered

The factor *age* appears in all studies, except for that of Pla (1995). Carrera's research (1999) has the most relevant interpretative focus; furthermore, it places the limit of the spectrum at the age of three, an entirely new approach to Labovian methodology.

The factor male sex was not considered in Montoya (1993) because of the topic of the interview, whereas female sex was not taken into account in Pla's study (1995) due to the acoustic visualization of the phonic substance.

Origin (genealogical tree) should have been observed in Colomina (1985), Mier (1986), Escrivà (1993) and Carrera (1999).

The *socioeconomic* factor (Labov's *social class*) deserves special mention. Montoya (1989), Escrivà (1993), Carrera (1999) and Montoya (2000) all dealt with this aspect: although the results of the first two studies, in the eyes of the authors themselves, were not satisfactory, they were evaluated positively in the latter. Mier (1986) and Alturo and Turell (1990) offered *professional level* as an alternative. Pradilla, however, considered *professional level*, *scope of relations* (when dealing with retired individuals, housewives or students) and *level of education* separately. The remaining studies did not take these factors into consideration.

Lastly, it is logical that the factor *knowledge of the standard language*, in the Community of Valencia was not taken into account during the 1980s. In Pradilla's study (1993), carried out between 1990 and 1993, however, it is a determining factor. In Carrera's research (1999), in addition to a general evaluation of this factor, the contrast of the data from school informants with pre-school informants is one of the defining elements of the initial hypothesis of her doctoral thesis.

As regards the planning of the *sociolinguistic interview*, understood as being a methodological device allowing segmentation of the stylistic continuum according to the level of attention of speakers to their own speech, each author has created his or her own version. The study that best adapts to the contexts of Labov is that of Montoya (1989), and the results did not match his initial expectations. Escrivà (1993) adapted his along the same typology of styles but did not obtain sufficiently satisfactory data either. Plaza (1995) and Pradilla (1993) created individual versions that reduced the continuum but were more operative. The remaining studies carried out a very basic treatment (Mier and Montoya in Valls) or did not assess this factor. In the case of Alturo and Turell (1989), Carrera (1999) and Montoya (2000), this lack is the most obvious shortcoming.

3.5. Subjective evaluation test

The aim of this is to obtain information about the sociolinguistic conscience of informants as to the variable under study. It is an extremely important analytical tool that also evaluates the future direction of change.

The work of Montoya (1989), Escrivà (1993), Pradilla (1993) and Carrera (1999) have included this type of experiment. The scope of the tests performed by Carrera (1999) deserves special mention in this section: *a*) perception test; *b*) evaluational test (linguistic insecurity test); and *c*) analysis of speaker subjectivity.

3.6. Quantitative analysis

By definition, this treatment is fundamental in variationist methodology. Colomina (1985), Mier (1986) and Escrivà (1993) use very basic frequential statistical programmes.

The three studies by Montoya (1989, 1993 and 2000) and those of Alturo and Turell (1990) and Carrera (1999) use the multivariant analysis statistical programme VARBRUL II.S or GOLD.VARB (Macintosh version). This quantitative treatment does not only provide frequential data on the linguistic *action* of informant samples, it also transforms them into theoretical probabilities, on the basis of the idea that the data on *action* are a statistical reflection of language *competence*. The interpretative aspect is clearly very important.

Finally, Pradilla used VARBRUL III in his research (1993). This new version is not subject to binary variant analysis, so it can provide probabilities for at least nine variants. It would have been very useful in the work of Escrivà (1993), Montoya (1993) and Plaza (1995), who present ternary variables.

3.7. Qualitative analysis

Although this analysis is most commonly evaluated according to the presence of non-quantitative evaluational experiments (see 3.5.), here, we shall consider it in terms of the presence of empirical validations of the phonic data obtained.

In my opinion, sociolinguistic methodology is highly favoured by the incorporation of certain strategies of the experimental method in phonetics. Essential points are: *a*) the qualitative analysis of certain variables will be enhanced by delimiting allophones fixed with instrumental procedures; and, *b*) the empirical validation of data is ensured.

Acoustic analysis is used in the work of Montoya (1989 and 1993), Pradilla (1993) and Carrera (1999). However, only Pradilla instrumentally evaluates the set of occurrences, whereas Montoya and Carrera analyze a sample of data and the remainder are subject to impressionistic interpretation using auditive criteria. In the case of Carrera, all questionable pronunciations were sonographically validated.¹²

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¹² Pla's study (1995) is a good example of acoustic examination prior to the establishment of variants in the definitive research design.

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