

Representation of variation in the ambit of the Catalan language. Transfers and transactions

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Abstract

In the transition from an autonomous type of linguistics, that is, concerned exclusively on the analysis of the structure of languages, to linguistics which programmatically takes into account interaction between linguistic variables and sociopragmatic variables, a goodly number of theoretical and methodological approaches have seen the light of day. This article sets out to evaluate, from an integrative perspective, the four main priority areas in the analysis of linguistic diversity: the sociolinguistic, pragmatic, historical and geolinguistic ones. At the same time, the work has been conceived as a framework for the different articles that make up this monographic edition of *Noves SL*, coordinated by the writer.

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1. The "socialisation" of linguistics. A long road to travel

"Shutting their eyes to a large number of real complexities, has made it possible for the specialists, from the founding fathers of our science, down to the functionalists and structuralists of today, to have abstracted a certain number of basic problems, to have presented perfect solutions within the hypothetical framework. In general they have achieved, perhaps for the first time, a degree of rigour in the activity of the human psyche.

Linguists will always have to return, sporadically, to this programmatic supposition. It should be noted, however, that a linguistic community is *never* homogeneous and hardly even independent, on occasions. The dialectologists have pointed out that linguistic cells are permeable, and have shown linguistic change extends through space like a wave. But it still has to be underlined that linguistic diversity starts at our neighbour's door, or better yet, at home, right where we are." Martinet (1953 [1996]: 17)

The ever present nature of language in the life of human beings, and the fact that, as S. Serrano (1993) says, "what is beyond language is unthinkable" necessarily leads us to consider that, from a contemporary perspective, all that could refer to it cannot remain outside the area of interest of linguists. And similarly, if we take a stroll through the history of linguistics, we will come to realise that this has not exactly been the case. On the contrary, consideration of *language use* as a licit

object of study has been sadly neglected, if not actually banished, from the concerns both of traditional linguistics and its modern counterpart. At the same time, as a consequence or outcome of this neglect, the variability which language shows, has -- either for reasons of methodological operability, or theoretical positions decided by study *in abstracto*-- been presented as a sort of nuisance impossible to grapple with and, in the best of cases, of only secondary interest.

With the publication in 1916 of the *Cours de linguistique générale*, the basic principles of Saussurian linguistics were established. For the teacher from Geneva, the object of study of his choice had to be *langue* -the supra-individual and conventional sign system- to the detriment of *parole* -the latter being specific and current. This taxonomy led to the hierarchy of two linguistics: a) the *Internal linguistics associated with langue*- given priority by Saussure, who saw language as a system with its own separate structuring, and analysed the internal structure from a strictly synchronic viewpoint; and b) the *external linguistics -the linguistics of the parole-*, of secondary importance and which relegated historical linguistics and language geography to marginal status. In short, Saussurian linguistics considered languages as monolithic entities, homogeneous and, if not independent, at least essentially autonomous.

In 1933, Leonard Bloomfield, in his *Language*, restricted linguistic study even more, reducing it to a mere formalist descriptivism where the semantic content of the sign and even to an extent its function, were left out of the picture by this "anti-mentalist" approach. Later, L. Hjelmslev's *Glossematics* a linguistic theory formulated in 1943, would put linguistics into an even tighter straitjacket, reducing it to the relations between the forms that make up the linguistic system.

Lastly, we obviously have to mention Noam Chomsky: *Syntactic Structures* (1957) outlines the theoretic principles of transformational-generational grammar. As is well-known, Chomsky argued for an approach that restricts itself to study of an "ideal speaker-listener", with the consequent marginalisation or banishing of linguistic performance.

What emerges clearly, therefore, is that both the structuralist and the generative paradigms, with their considerable impact on the scientific research of the 20th century, consider language as a system that works according to grammatical rules of an internal nature. Despite the general agreement that this is so, as far as it goes, it would be quite wrong to ignore the fact that the study of language in its sociocultural context furnishes very useful, authentic material, derived from the world of sociolinguistics. The words of Martinet, an outstanding structuralist linguistics whom we quote above, will serve as the vantagepoint for us, on a change of perspective that was beginning to be discerned. In this respect, M. Cohen (1956) reviewed treatment of external linguistics in strict collaboration (in many instances) with sociology, ethnography and anthropology, and Dell Hymes (1964: 3-14) provided a very interesting overview, in which he outlined three great traditions: a) The *English* tradition, which sees the relations between language and other aspects of the culture as an interdependence of constituent factors consisting of social events and acts.

Language is seen above all as a social activity: its inclusion in an extralinguistic context as a necessary part of its characterisation or description. In terms of language use in communicative processes, it is its control or influence on the rest that is considered. Leading names in this tradition are Malinowsky, Gardiner and Firth; b) the *French* tradition, which sees language as one thing, while cultural and social aspects are another, like two parallel systems or two products of collective psychology with mutual congruence. Language is considered to be common social heritage the primary function of which is functional, in that it distinguishes or expresses *signifiés*. Names in this tradition include Meillet, Cohen, Sommerfelt, Benveniste and Levi-Strauss; and lastly c) The *North-American* tradition, characterised by the attention to fieldwork and interest in the origin and significance of linguistic categories. The doyens of this tradition are Boas, Sapir and Bloomfield -although whether the latter should be included is certainly debatable.¹

¹ J. Borrego (1981: 20) considers that Hymes' synthesis, while essentially valid, contains substantial omissions. Most obviously, there is no mention of the *german* school which, from Herder and Humboldt onwards, centres its preoccupations on the task of revealing the relationship between language-vision and world-reality. In this sense the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* can be seen to be closely related to work by Weisberger or Trier. Also conspicuous by its absence are references to Marxist-inspired Russian linguistic thought, and the hispanic tradition, with Menéndez Pidal at its head, and with his disciples of the "Madrid

It was precisely when linguists attempted to go beyond the strict limits imposed upon itself by the discipline, when they began to be interested in the study of relationships between systems, patterns of language use and social facts, that a whole series of new disciplines began to emerge such as anthropological linguistics, ethnolinguistics, social psychology, the sociology of language and sociolinguistics. According to Shuy and Fasold (1972:1-14), the peremptory need to consider social aspects of languages results from three things: a) the desire to find a solid empirical base for linguistic theory; b) the conviction that social factors influencing patterns of use constitute a legitimate topic of research within the field of linguistic research; and c) response to the increasing concern that such sociolinguistic knowledge should be applied to urgent educational problems.

It is within this framework, initially dominated by sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists with rudimentary knowledge concerning language, that little by little the first research began to appear carried by those who were purely or primarily linguists. At this point, sociolinguistics would add a new component to the linguistic tradition we have just been outlining, a new dimension: language as a manifestation of human behaviour, understood as a richer, more complex resource for communication, accumulated and controlled by the mind of Man, to be used to manage the forms of social and cultural organisation that there are in human societies (Lavandera 1984: 156).

In the field of Catalan linguistics, the impact of the general process described here in summary, is especially clearly seen in the thinking arising out of the annual colloquia at the Universitat de Barcelona (CLUB), under the auspices of the thematic network "Linguistic variation: dialectology, sociolinguistics and pragmatics". As I see it, in these forums a kind of interdisciplinary understanding has emerged, where linguistic diversity as an object of study has overcome the rigid formalist orthodoxy which blocked its path, the latter based on the theoretical dictates of the structuralists and generativists. What we have witnessed, then, is the birth of a corpus linguistics, which goes beyond introspection and acceptability judgements as methodological tools, and engages with language data in all its rawness.. In this way, the study of variation has gained new practitioners, beyond the dialectologist and sociolinguistics traditions.

2. Sociolinguistics. Towards the emergence of paradigmatic status

"Paradoxically, while sociolinguistics has arisen out of interest in interlinguistic diversity, it has become consolidated as a discipline concerned with the analysis of intralinguistic diversity, the diversity *within* a given variety. The study of bilingual communities and the coming together of diverse languages in a single community has superceded, in some cases, the study of concurrent variants in a monolingual community, and one notes the functional parallelism. It is in this second context that such key notions as "inherent variation" and "sociolinguistic variable" have been formulated –and which characterise not just the variationist approach but also the ethnographic. The paradox, however, is more formal than real, since what is invariable is the common interest for the community and for speech as a social fact." Argenter (1997: 20)

The importance accorded the social context –already clear, as we have said, in some instances in general linguistics- has since the mid sixties been steadily giving shape to an area of linguistics which shares common interests with sociology, anthropology, social psychology, ethnomethodology, pragmatics, discourse analysis, conversational analysis, text linguistics, and more. Despite opposition to the label *sociolinguistics*² expressed by William Labov, one of the central figures in this

School", who, as D. Catalán has said in *Lingüística Iberorromànica*, 27, take as their starting point "the certainty that philological facts cannot be studied in isolation, but need to be considered in relation to other cultural phenomena".

² Labov's reluctance to accept the term *sociolinguistics* derives from the fact that this term implies, at the same time, that it is possible to do *linguistics* without taking into consideration the social component. It scarcely need to be said, despite Labov's opposition, that this "possibility" has been taken to be (and continues to be taken to be, to an extent that should not be underestimated) "strong probability". Despite that, I consider it relevant to reproduce the words Peter. Trudgill devotes to Labov's work in the preface to Labov (1994) *Principles of Linguistic Change. Vol. I. Internal Factors*:

story, this term has gone from strength to strength when it came to putting a name to an area of knowledge which is profoundly interdisciplinary, but all set to become a paradigmatic area with its own autonomy. From this perspective, knowledge of a living language is considered more complete if it enables one to show not only the structural relations of the system, but also how it functions as a medium of social communication.

As J. Argenter has it in the quotation that forms the epigraph for this section, the emergence of sociolinguistics can be seen to be more closely linked to sociological than to linguistic focuses of interest, while as it became a fully fledged discipline the latter (the linguistic) became more important, more central than the former (the sociological). This ragbag category, which gathers in the research on linguistic phenomena in relation to social factors, that is, language in its sociocultural context, has been the object of many attempts to compartmentalise it.³ All these attempts at conceptualisation have as their common denominator the distinction made between two main blocks: one has as its object the description of linguistic aspects of societies, while the other is interested in linguistic phenomena in relation to certain social variables. The pre-eminent object of study of the first is society, while that of the second is language.

Regarding this primary segmentation of sociolinguistics, probably the dichotomies that have most prospered are those conceived by Labov and by Fishman. Labov distinguishes between the wider sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics strictly defined. The first addresses issues related to patterns of language use, its functions and the communicative situation, and would include, if only marginally, the sociology of language as an interaction of social factors languages and/or dialects. The second of these divisions is concerned with the structure and evolution of language in the social context of a speech community. Fishman proposes a separation between macrosociolinguistics and microsociolinguistics, similar in conceptual scope –but in no way equivalent– to the wider and narrower senses, respectively, of the term sociolinguistics observed by Labov (Gimeno and Montoya 1989: 24). Little by little, not without its controversial aspects, it seems that a degree of consensus has taken shape among scholars, in viewing sociolinguistics as a discipline with two or three major directions to it: a) The sociology of language; b) The ethnography of speaking; and c) sociolinguistics strictly defined. While the first would monopolise Fishman's macro perspective, the other two would together make up the micro level of inquiry⁴

Given the rigidity with which certain writers have interpreted this taxonomy, it should be remembered that it is the basis of a number of controversies, either over the cataloguing of the research areas and their implicit aim, or arising out of domestic priorities when defining the scope of the discipline as a whole. In the ambit of Catalan sociolinguistics, this second type of issue has recently provoked discussion which I would like to stop and look at in more detail. It

William Labov no sólo ha tenido una enorme influencia sobre el desarrollo de la lingüística secular; realmente él la fundó. Sin él, no habría habido ninguna tradición de investigación lingüística empírica en la comunidad de habla, lo cual, aun cuando muchos lingüistas se empeñen en referirse a ello como "sociolingüística", ha sido uno de los más importantes de entre todos los desarrollos de la lingüística teórica y descriptiva del siglo XX. Habiendo sido el creador de este modo de hacer lingüística, además, Labov ha permanecido durante treinta años en su propia vanguardia y ha seguido siendo no sólo su más antiguo y más influyente practicante, sino también el mejor.

Trudgill (1994 [1996]: 15)

³ López Morales (1989:19-25) reviews the first four -unsuccessful- attempts to delimit sociolinguistics: 1) BRIGHT, W. (ed.) *Sociolinguistics. Proceedings of the UCLA Sociolinguistics Conference*. The Hague: Mouton, 1966; 2) FISHMAN, J. "Basic issues in the sociology of language". *Language* 43, p. 586-604, 1968; 3) MATHIOT, M. "Estado actual de la sociolingüística norteamericana". *Boletín de Sociolingüística* 1, p. 3-6, 1969; and 4) RONA, J.P. "A structural view of sociolinguistics". A: GARVIN, P.; LASTRA, Y. (eds) *Antología de estudios de Etnolingüística y Sociolingüística*. Mexico City: UNAM, p. 203-216, 1974.

⁴ One of the main discrepancies over acceptance of the proposed taxonomy is the micro-sociolinguistics of the strict interpretation of sociolinguistics. The fact that this model is predicated on the setting up of correlations between linguistic variables and variables considered to be macro-social, such as social class, ethnicity, etc, is considered by some authors to be a decisive in relocating this discipline in field of macro.sociolinguistics

has been said many times that our tradition was -and is- essentially sociological. This choice of direction is entirely understandable, given that in a situation of language contact in which the very future of the language is under debate, the majority of researchers have concentrated their intellectual efforts on guaranteeing a comfortable communicative ecosystem for the Catalan language. Nonetheless, macrosociolinguistics has also had the opportunity of making its mark, and has brought about a good list of work, which though slight in comparative terms, is far from negligible.

A. Mas and B. Montoya, in an article (in press) on the state of the question of variation sociolinguistics (that is, taking stock up until the present) in the area of Catalan, the writers express regret -in my opinion with every justification- over the carping criticisms made of variationism by adherents of the self-styled "soberania sociolingüística" (sociolinguistic sovereignty) or "sociolingüística del conflicte" (the sociolinguistics of conflict) (Ruiz, Sanz and Solé 2001: 252, 257-258). The line of argument designed to minimise the contribution of sociolinguistics centres on, on the one hand, the negation of the social implications of the phenomena that it studies, and on the other the alleged total lack of "emancipatory usefulness" of an essentially erudite scientific model. Taking quite the contrary view, Mas and Montoya conclude: "We have no doubt that the three types or tendencies we have observed in linguistic change under way in different parts of the Catalan-speaking Countries will, apart from constituting a map of speakers' language loyalty, prove useful information for centres of language planning. In synthesis, these three types of change are: genuinely Catalan changes, changes in the direction of Spanish and "atrophy"). This will be true of both the corpus and status information, in orientating work on the normalisation of the Catalan language. As I see it, what we have above is a restricted interpretation of the multifaceted interests of sociolinguistics. Interests which are constantly intertwined, with totally permeable boundaries to the disciplines, and which are striving to consolidate, by means of solid epistemological debate and a constant drip, drip of research, the much sought after paradigmatic status.

3. The study of linguistic variation

"[...] linguistics has striven to establish abstract, model units, to provide solid ground in the instability of the unvarnished facts of variation, which dialectology and sociolinguistics have brought to the fore. However, it is the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis where variation, without any doubt, takes centre stage. Indeed, the entrance on the scene of pragmatics and both discourse and conversation analysis has raised a series of new issues, arising in the main from the pressing need to incorporate factors of context and use into the proposed models - factors which it is essential to introduce. These amount to a large number of variables that need to be carefully managed to accurately reflect a particularly complex dimension, additional to the other difficulties." Salvador (1997: 204)

3.1 A multidimensional approach

The central objective of this section and its title is to take stock of the forms taken by sociolinguistic variation studies here in Catalonia. According to the scheme arrived at as if by consensus, the current within sociolinguistics most frequently adopted was that of strict sociolinguistics or, as it has come to be called in our nomenclature here, the sociolinguistics of variation.⁵ The question, then, was to evaluate the most significant "deviations" from the reference model, either through pressure from more traditional disciplines or thanks to the influx of new approaches and new issues.

The type of approach that concerns me here is to be found in Moreno (1990) and its flawless methodology. Moreno defines linguistic fact as multi-dimensional in character and places its study in the contextual framework of the linguistics of speaking/acting. Its multidimensional nature

⁵ Especially after the publication in 1995, and similarly entitled, of the compilation of research that makes up the volume edited by M.T. Turell (Turell 1995).

consists of four vertices occupied by geolinguistics, historical linguistics, pragmatics and socio-linguistics -with intermediate positions being possible. This proposal recognises that variation brings together diverse factors, but allows for the possibility of studying each of these factors separately, minimising the rest.

In the subsections which follow, I shall set out to make an initial attempt to reduce to order the variationist kaleidoscope of research on variable phenomena in Catalan. Let me say at the outset that this will not be an overview of research as such, with subsequent compartmentalisation. My intention here is to provide a qualitative (and initial) evaluation of theory-cum-methodology of the writers of the articles that appear in this monographic issue of *Noves SL*. Not surprisingly, the selection reflects the multidisciplinary hypothesis.

3.2 The sociolinguistic vertex

In the ambit of sociolinguistics strictly defined, a number of different models have been developed designed to provide an explanation for systematic variation. Two of the most important are the dynamic (C. J. Bailey, D. Bickerton and D. DeCamp) and the quantitative (W. Labov). At the same time, the fact that the majority of our researchers opt for the second option -also given the name urban dialectology, social dialectology, sociolinguistics ("strict defined", "properly speaking"), quantitative research on speech, the variable rule model, correlational (socio)linguistics, variationism and the sociolinguistics of variation- explains why I will be devoting my attention exclusively to this branch. This is all the more justified if we consider that this branch, methodologically speaking is the point of departure for transferences and transactions as announced in the title of the article.

William Labov's idea of doing sociolinguistics can be seen as the most successful development to have come out of the article by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) "Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change". His work constitutes nothing less than a quantum leap in the social understanding of language.

At the beginning, Labov drew on the structuralist model defended by his teacher Uriel Weinreich. Nonetheless, at the end of the sixties he adopted aspects of the generativist approach, even as he proposed an extension which would incorporate a social component. As we have already said, Labov's approach was essentially linguistic: to study language as used by speakers in everyday communication, that is, to study its structure and evolution in the social context formed by the speech community. From this realist perspective, the object of study would be observed in all its diversity.

The vision of language as an orderly heterogeneous and dynamic system is achieved by correlating linguistic, social and stylistic variables. And the methodological instruments developed to provide an empirical model are the sociolinguistic interview and statistical quantification, first in terms of straight frequencies, and then later on with the contribution of the Canadian school (Sankoff, Cedergren and colleagues), probability values. This last development is in no wise trivial, since it is based on the epistemologically essential idea that the performance data is merely a statistical reflex of competence, which could now be quantified by the application of a multiple logistic model, the latter making it possible to convert observed frequencies into theoretical probabilities. This processing meant, in short, going from treating performance data as rigorously as possible, to developing theoretical models that take account of speakers' sociolinguistic competence.⁶

The sociolinguistics of variation arrived in Catalan speaking regions (and in Spain as a whole) for the first time thanks to the Alacant-based researcher F. Gimeno. As a teacher at the Universitat d'Alacant, the first result of his influence was Montoya (1985), a doctoral thesis that approached the study of linguistic change both from the synchronic and diachronic standpoint (historical linguistics). At the same time, Maria-Teresa Turell, first at the Universitat de Barcelona and then at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, began to bring together a group of collaborators who would focus their

⁶ For a more detailed exposition of the theoretical framework of variation sociolinguistics, see Turell (1995, 1997) and Pradilla (1998).

work essentially on the synchronic aspects of changes in progress. The publication in 1995 of her volume *La sociolingüística de la variació* (The sociolinguistics of variation) would make available a part of the research that was carried out.

Despite the interest here at home in historical sociolinguistics, quantitatively insubstantial but qualitatively of exceptional interest, enthusiastic reception of the Labovian models meant the adoption of a clearly synchronistic approach inspired by Labov. The paper read in 1972 at the XI International Linguistics Conference held in Bologna, "On the use of the present to explain the past" (Labov 1974), or the work presented in Montreal at the conference on New Ways in Analysing Variation in English (NWAWE) entitled "What can be learned about change in progress from synchronic descriptions?" constitute two good doctrinal samples. Thus centred on this approach, and with numerous small methodological differences in detail (see Pradilla 2002 for the phonic variables and Mas and Montoya –in press - for an overview of all levels of analysis), the "orthodox" variationist approach is accumulating a good long list of successful research projects carried out. And looking at the contributors to this monographic issue of *Noves SL*, it is worthwhile noting that Josefina Carrera, who read her doctoral thesis in 1999 (Carrera 2002) is also present.

The line of investigation taken by B. Montoya deserves a separate mention, apart from his work on the breakdown of intergenerational transmission of the Catalan language in Alacant (Montoya 1996), where, from the variationist perspective, he describes the phenomenon known as linguistic atrophy or linguistic shrinkage. This, then, is a study of structural attrition or disintegration of the recessive language (Catalan), the latter in the process of extinction, or of convergence with the expanding language (Spanish) (Montoya 2000).

Lastly, I would like to bear witness to the growing mutual interest that is occurring in the methodologies of variation sociolinguistics and experimental phonology. At the 15th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences, held in Barcelona in August 2003, it was evident that there were a good number of studies that come under the label Sociophonetics. Since Labov (1966, 1972) established correlations between voice quality and social class of the speakers in his samples, using technical instruments, linguists working in the same tradition have produced a steady flow of work, slight at first but more prolific over the years. And, at the same time, the results obtained have obliged phoneticians to rethink some theoretical-methodological questions, having to do with socio-stylistic effects and drastically underresearched up to that point. In the area of the Catalan language, the present writer has repeatedly underlined the need to work towards a common vision of methodology shared with those working in experimental methodology (Pradilla 1997, 2001a, 2001b and 2002). From the beginnings of his work with the quantitative treatment of prepalatal intervocalic disaffricativisation, the variable looked at in his doctoral thesis – (Pradilla 1993). Also, with the prioritisation of acoustic analysis, the recent work by Planes and Pradilla (in press) and by Carrera, Planes and Pradilla (in press) also corroborate the influence of variationist postulates.

3.3 The pragmatic vertex

As we have just seen, the variables studied by sociolinguistics are not discrete, but defined in terms of statistical correlation. Note that, while language use can be discrete, and language choice is one of the most cited examples, yet what also should be born in mind are the different phenomena that emerge with contact and interference, codeswitching, or the emerging of interlanguages (pidginisation and creolisation). Pragmatics, seen as the suiting of language use to the sociocultural context, will concern itself with these questions. .

At the heart of a terminological fog, there emerges, as an alternative to variationism and with a diaphanous connection with pragmatics, the ethnography of communication (Dell.H. Hymes, and John J. Gumperz). Starting out with an anthropological orientation, it conceives the study of linguistic variation in a community of human beings, "as the analysis of how its members manage the phenomenon heteroglossia in their lives, while based on an active and dialoguing concept of human communication" (Argenter 1998: 16).

By utilising an architecture of units of analysis to form a dimension of more concrete types– the communicative act, speech event and speech act– the ethnographer's task will be to correlate

patterns of language use with the sociocultural context of a speech community. This, then, will involve the identification of current speech acts, the speech styles associated with that and the sociocommunicative contexts that they evoke.

Having completed this first round of characterisation, we turn our attention now to points of conflict with the sociolinguistics of variation: *a)* while the latter is interested primarily with spontaneous speech (the vernacular), the former the ethnography of speaking) gives priority to the formal end of the stylistic continuum; *b)* while the Labovian procedure of compartmentalising the stylistic continuum establishes a priori segmentation based on the degree of attention paid by a speaker to their speech, ethnographers on the other hand search for natural language varieties in given contexts, that is, ways and forms of speech which are often ritualised, marked and laced with aphorisms; and *c)* the gathering of data and information for studies of the ethnography of speaking are made by prioritising qualitative techniques, such as participant techniques, while variationism uses techniques which are arguably less natural such as the sociolinguistic interview.

As I see it, there are a number of points where the ethnography of speaking could bring some interesting improvements to variationist methodology. The securing of a greater balance between qualitative and quantitative analysis is a potential instance. On this point, I should like to point out, that while it is obvious that Labovian methodology places special emphasis on quantification, it is no less true that from its beginnings Labov employed various different methods of observation. The other major issue where the ethnography of speaking has much to tell us is in the subcategorisation of functional variation. Since stylistic variation occupies pride of place in pragmatics, variationism could profit from the accumulated experience in a host of different research. Despite the fact that segmentation of the stylistic continuum continues to generate many discussions, if any of the disciplines succeeded in approaching it in a reasonably acceptable way, it is surely pragmatics. Here at home, the research gathered together in the 1998 volume *Oralmènt. Estudis de variació funcional*, (*Orally. Studies of functional variation*) edited by L. Payrató, has to be considered as the most complete reference text.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that one of the participants, S. Romero should orientate her doctoral thesis (Romero, 2001) along the precise lines mentioned here. This work, taking pragmatics as its basis, shows how the use of the quantitative methods of sociolinguistics could play a successful role in the analysis of a communicative situation as fixed as are the council plenary sessions (general meetings). This linguistic manifestation of the local government was characterised based on the table of components speech events put forward by Hymes (1962/1968: 110.124) and situational parameters for variation put forward by Biber (1994: 40-41). The article of this author has contributed to this monographic issue is a sample.

3.4 *The historical vertex*

The lack of interest in the historical perspective in the different paradigms of modern linguistics has been partially offset by the emergence of historical sociolinguistics. Ever since Labov correlated language variation and language change, in the sense that change presupposed prior variation, but not vice versa, interest in the description and explanation of language change in progress has once again found a place on research agendas.

As already mentioned in section 3.2, the bias to synchronism that variation studies took on from their outset was decisive in relegating historical sociolinguistics to second place. At this moment in time, here at home we have only B. Montoya and A. Mas working on historical aspects, with admirable perseverance, but the methodological approach that they adopt, centred on the study of the language of written texts, according to the now familiar parameters of linguistic and social variation, still tends to have relatively little impact. Notwithstanding, as A. Mas argues in the excellent synthesis which he offers us in this issue of *Noves SL*, "...historical sociolinguistics, with all its drawbacks, enables to understand contemporary language through the diachronic study of

the language of earlier times. Also, it enables to reconstruct earlier stages of the language by drawing on analysis of the spoken language of today".⁷

Synchronic study of linguistic change, in contrast, has occupied pride of place in variation studies. The concept of "apparent time" has flourished, constituting as it does, a notable epistemological novelty in an area where the diachronic perspective has traditionally ruled the day. It consists in giving maximum priority to one of the social variables through which variation shows its systematic nature: study the pattern of change that defines the different age groups in a speech community.

One proof of the success this approach has had here, is the presence of the age variable in the majority of research studies on variable phenomena in Catalan. Indeed, in some of them (e.g. Carrera 2002) it has become the most relevant interpretive dimension. It can also be seen that this factor is becoming ever more present in the field of dialectology. Probably the largest-scale project of this sort has been L. Pons (1992) on yodisation (replacement of palatal / l / by /j /) and *apitxament* (substitution of voiceless fricatives) in Barberà del Vallès, Catalonia (Pradilla 2002).

In view of all this, the time has probably come to undertake studies of language change in real time, that is, by contrasting methodologically comparable speech data gathered at different points in time. This will mean going back to studying speech communities first explored in the eighties and above all at the beginning of the nineties. Such studies would be of vital importance in validating, or otherwise, the predictions made by research dating from that time, and in particular, setting the seal of approval, paradigmatically speaking, on the theoretical and methodological underpinning of variation sociolinguistics. To this end, the group co-ordinated by M. T. Turell in her 1995 publication putting the finishing touches to the methodological design of a new research project, develops this approach, an approach lacking until then.

4.4 The geolinguistic vertex

When we analyse the positions taken up by linguists with respect to the relationship between dialectology and the sociolinguistics of variation, we find a range of opinions that go from asserting they are identical to arguing for separate taxonomies//. In the middle of this range, there are a whole series of proposals with a common denominator: the reinforcing or underlining of ties between these two perspectives and a wish to reconcile differences. F. Moreno's approach, in section 3, above, recognises, as we have seen, the concerted variation of a whole series of different factors, but accepts the possibility of studying each factor separately to the detriment of the rest. In this respect, he warns that the indiscriminate criticism levelled at dialectology only had a degree of justification in the case of local monographs. In the case of geolinguistics, the upscaled methodology means that its inherent diatopic interest compensates the partial sacrifice of other aspects. What no one has questioned, however, is that dialectology and sociolinguistics focus research interest on speech, on performance, and assume therefore the heterogeneous nature of language. The sociolinguistics of variation can therefore be considered heir to a tradition.

The veritable point of conflict is to be found in the consideration of social and stylistic factors. Looking through the vast literature on dialectological research, one can hardly fail to see the central interest in geography. And, at the same time, we find fascinating indications of social approaches that constitute unmistakable precedents for sociolinguistics: Gauchat, the A.I.S of Jud and Jaberg, Rohlf's, the A.L.E.I.C of Bottiglioni, and so forth. The very emergence of the labels social dialectology, urban dialectology, socio-dialectology, the new dialectology, etc. can be seen as a kind of bridge between the two. As a consequence of this profusion of terminology and lack of precision in delimiting the conceptual scope of the different labels, we not infrequently see differences in cataloguing within the same work.⁸

⁷ The interested reader can learn about the specific turns which historical linguistics has taken in our tradition in the article by A. Mas "Historical sociolinguistics (an alternative to the analysis of linguistic change)", in this issue of *Noves SL*.

⁸ Gimeno and Montoya (1989: 47-48) express their disagreement with the cataloguing of Veny (1986), whom they consider the authors of genuinely sociolinguistic works *and* those who are sociologists of the language to be social dialectologists. Logically, attempt to make sociolinguistics subservant to dialectology also come in for criticism by the authors.

Even though variationism incorporates some of the theoretical pillars of dialectology and shares certain specific fundamental interests, the latter former constitutes, in my opinion, a discipline that responds to overall principles and methodological orientations which are distinctly different. Silva-Corvalán (1989:15) pin-points some of these differences: the obtaining of linguistic data by recording spontaneous conversation, the use of quantitative methods of analysis, the recognition that the linguistic homogeneity of even the smallest place is a myth; consideration of the subjective attitudes toward the different dialectal variants; the techniques for the obtaining and identification of different language styles and the assumption that all individuals are capable of communication in more than one style, of which the spontaneous style is the most difficult for the researcher to obtain.

In the regions where Catalan is spoken in the Spanish State, the coming of democracy (after Franco) has meant a new ordination of the power structure which has allowed the language native to the area to be used in formal areas of communication. Education and the media are the two most emblematic ambits from which the standard model of the language has been transmitted with greater or lesser intensity, depending on the territory. The emergence of this new referential variety has created a certain dynamic of change in relation to the colloquial geographically based varieties. It was in view of such developments that J. Ponsoda at the Universitat d'Alacant has set in motion a project designed to evaluate the impact of the model language of the school on traditional geographical dialects. In this framework, J.M. Baldaquí and C. Segura wrote their doctoral theses on this same topic. Representing the group, Segura has offered us a sample of her doctoral thesis (Segura 2001), which presents a very useful methodological hybrid on a solidly geolectal base. Thus, the variables age and contact with the normative variety have enabled Segura determine the direction of change taken by variable phenomena in the county of Baix Vinalopó (Valencia).

4. Corollary

The sociolinguistics of variation, within the wider sociolinguistics framework, has continued to advance along the difficult road towards consolidation of its paradigmatic status. The theoretical reticence expressed by modern linguistics (in the structuralist and generativist traditions) as well as the unbending attitude of traditional linguistics in its dialectologist and historical variants, has not smoothed the way. Even so, having overcome a period of manifestly hostile dialectic, the interdisciplinary debate has had some patently favourable consequences for all concerned.

In the area of Catalan language research, alongside the ubiquitous sociology of language, variationism has participated in a similar way in achieving the consensus that makes possible the study of the multilevel phenomenon of language, depending on the primary interests of the researchers in question.

The multidimensional approach I have presented here, has witnessed how the theoretical and methodology transactions have, thanks to self-criticism and mutual dialogue, contributed to upping the quality of research. Transferences too, both the incoming ones, and those export, can and do have beneficial influence on language science. In short, as I see it, the dogmatism that emanates from doctrinaire orthodox has a paralysing effect which needs to be combated. In an area of knowledge with boundaries as diffuse as sociolinguistics has, we need to promote mechanisms of understanding that will enable us to make advances in a general explicative theory of language in which all of us working on it will a suitable niche will find where we can fit in with ease.

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