

Phonetic variation and standardisation in the Valencian County¹

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Abstract

In this article we set out to show that the incipient process of language normalisation which Catalan is undergoing has its repercussions on traditional dialects such as that spoken in the county of Baix Vinalopó² and on its phonetic subsystem. In addition to analysing the degree of penetration of the standard-normative variety in the speech of the county, we shall look at the degree of acceptance or dereliction of the traditional model, both those which are normative forms (that is, coincide with standard) and those which are not, and also the penetration of the Spanish model.

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1. Introduction

Our hypothesis on this study was that the incipient process of language normalisation which Catalan was having on the phonetic forms of the traditional dialect in the county of Baix Vinalopó was considerable, and especially on the language model used by schoolchildren, the social group most exposed to the normative or standard variety of Valencian Catalan (henceforth Catalan). For that reason it was a problem to decide on the criteria by which to select the linguistic features to test the hypotheses.

Strict variationism recommends the choice of a single linguistic feature which is described and analysed in especial depth. Yet focusing exclusively on a specific feature would have caused us to lose sight of important linguistic elements participating in this change.

Therefore, an in-depth variationist analysis of an individual linguistic feature was not appropriate. What we needed rather was a more general view, therefore, with less depth,

¹ This article is a part of my doctoral thesis *Variació dialectal i estandardització al Baix Vinalopó*, [Dialectal variation and standardisation in the Baix Vinalopó] read in July 2001 at the University of Alacant, and directed by Dr. Jordi Colomina and Dr. Joan Ponsoda. For reasons of space restrictions the bibliography utilised for that work is not included here. We refer readers, therefore, to the thesis, part of which is to be published in the collection Biblioteca Sanchis Guarner published jointly by the Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana and Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat.

² The county of Baix Vinalopó, in the extreme south of the Valencian Country, has four major centres of population (Elx, Crevillent, Guardamar and Santa Pola), five smaller settlements (la Marina, l'Altet, Torrellano, la Foia and la Baia) and well populated rural areas.

but allowing us to obtain an overall view with plentiful (and representative) data. In this way, we would succeed in defining common overall tendencies, finding new patterns and new patterns of correction. Going into detail would have not allowed us to achieve this perspective.

Characterising the phonetic model of the county of Baix Vinalopó which we will now put forward takes into consideration two social variables. On the one hand, there is age, a variable forming a dimension along which there is very noticeable linguistic variation. We distinguish four groups: *a*) the elderly —over 60—; *b*) adults —aged 37-60—; *c*) young people —18-36—; and *d*) schoolchildren —9-17.

The second of these variables has to do with the degree of contact that individuals will have had with formal Catalan in the school. We look at 3 groups: *a*) individuals over 20 who had no schooling in Catalan (they are labelled *no schooling* in the graphs); *b*) individuals under 20 whose education has been mainly through the medium of Spanish, even though they have taken Valencian as a subject, and perhaps been taught one or two other subjects in Valencian Catalan (they are labelled *Lval*); and *c*) individuals under 20 whose education has been mainly through the medium of Catalan (we refer to these as *Eval*).

We interviewed a total of 138 individuals, distributed in an approximately proportional manner according to the population of the localities and the divisions of the county of Baix Vinalopó. The linguistic questionnaire contained 55 items and the conditions under which the questionnaire was carried out could be described as semiformal. In this article we only present a part of the phonetic characterisation based on the questionnaire responses.

2. Phonetic study

2.1 Three initial groups *en-*, *em-* and *es-*

We will now look solely at the word *embut* ("funnel") since it is one of the few words that have traditionally maintained the pronunciation [am]but, typical of most of Western Catalan, almost all words that have *en-*, *em-* and *es-* in initial position are pronounced [e] in large part of the county.

As we can see in figure 1, the realisation [am]but is not the only realisation amongst the elderly, but it is the predominant one. In the adult and young people groups, the frequency of the traditional form falls sharply, to an equal extent across the two groups, in favour of the innovation [em]but. Schoolchildren opt for the prestige form *embut* in some 95% of the cases. Figure 2 shows that the school curriculum creates little difference in the responses from the school children; indeed, the raising of [am]>[em] is to all intents and purposes complete and identical across the two groups.

Figure 1. Percentage by age for phonetic group initial *em-*: *embut* (funnel)

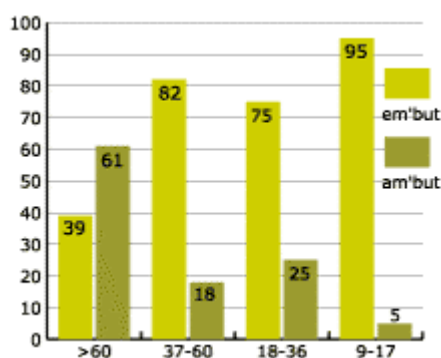
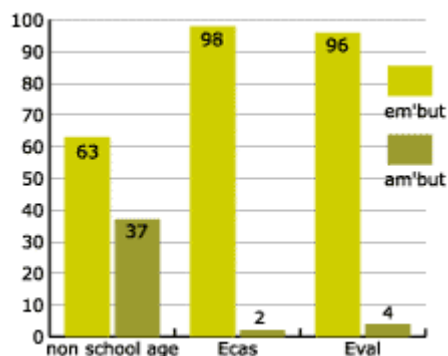


Figure 2. Percentage by school syllabus for phonetic group initial em-: embut (funnel)



There are two basic reasons that explain the swiftness of the change: *a)* the traditional form [am]but does not reflect the spelling in Catalan (or in Spanish); *b)* It is not pronounced this way in Spanish. Despite the fact that [am]but is the traditional pronunciation, the weakening of this pronunciation is intense throughout the county, and is already clearly present in the replies from the oldest generation.

In conclusion, a weakening of this traditional pronunciation occurs because neither the written Catalan model nor that of the superstrate language —Spanish— give it support.

2.2 Progressive velar vocal assimilation: corda > [kɔrda]

The county falls into three divisions according to whether the traditional model has or does not have progressive velar vocalic assimilation:

- a)* Guardamar and Crevillent show no sign of assimilation.
- b)* The north-east of the county has assimilation throughout to a generalised degree.
- c)* The rest of the county is in the process of change toward velar assimilation throughout — this includes the capital, Elx.

In area *b)*, where assimilation is traditional (see graph 3), the three adult generations show no sign of the [kɔrda] pronunciation. A process of dissimilation has begun, however, already affecting 20% of the responses of the school-age speakers.

The school children in the *Eval* category are the ones who show the greatest increase in the non-assimilated realisations, some 23%, compared to the 7% evinced by the *Lval* group (see figure 4). The pronunciation typical of traditional speech, therefore, is most vigorous in the Catalan of the group that have had least contact with the standard version of Catalan.

Figure 3. Percentage of velar vowel assimilation by age, where this is the traditional model (area b): corda (rope, cord)

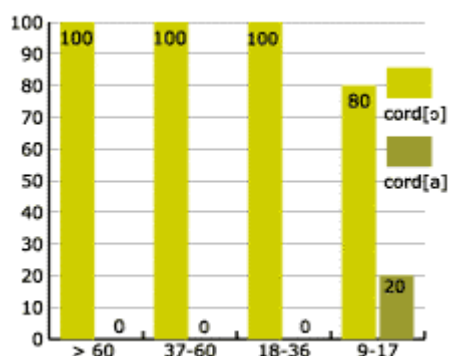
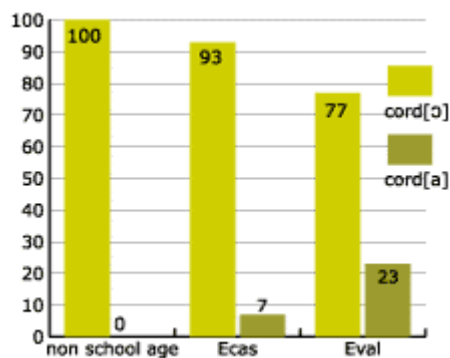


Figure 4. Percentage of velar vowel assimilation by school syllabus, where this is the traditional model (area b): corda (rope, cord)



In area c), the pronunciation *cord[a]* (see figure 5) still forms part of the traditional model, which can be seen in the preference of the elderly for this form: it is selected 75% of the time; while [kɔrdɔ] is clearly used less. In contrast, the other two adult generations are clearly moving away from the *cord[a]* pronunciation in favour of the assimilated version. As for the school children in area c), it can be seen that the non-assimilated variant is being reintroduced, even though a minority realisation, but with a percentage reaching almost 30%. Differences between the effects of one syllabus or another are once again considerable (see figure 6). The pronunciation closest to the spelling —not only in Catalan but in Spanish too— shows higher levels of reintroduction in the *Eval* group.

Figure 5. Percentage of velar vowel assimilation by age, where this is not the traditional model (area c): corda (rope, cord)

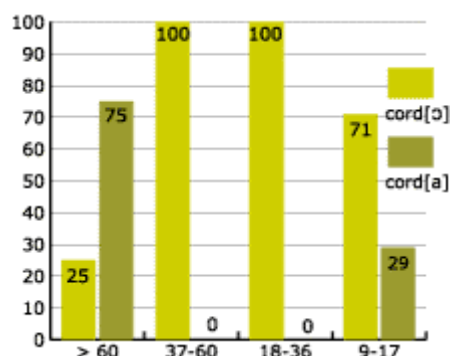
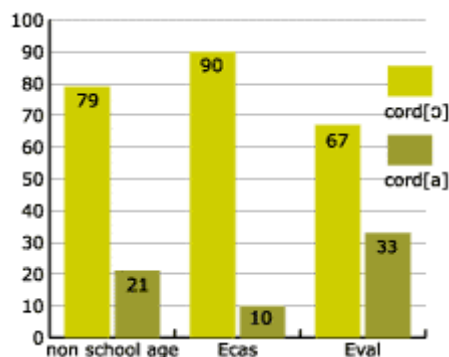


Figure 6. Percentage of velar vowel assimilation by school syllabus, where this is not the traditional model (area c): corda (rope, cord)

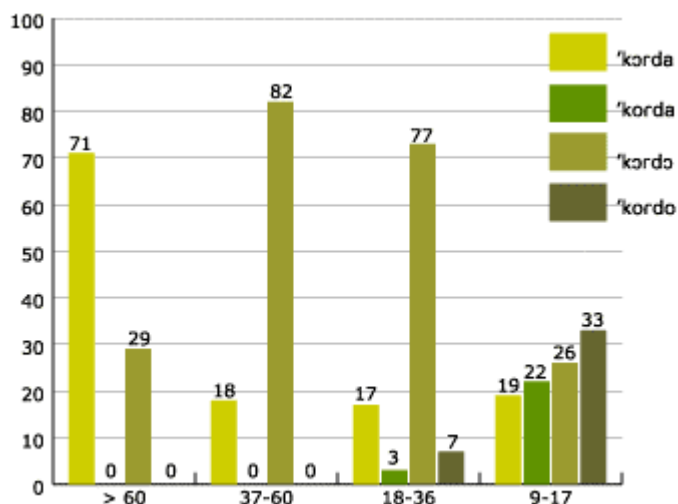


Overall, the form with *-[a]* has been recovered a little more in area c than in area b, that is to say, young people of school age will use it where the traditional variant is still alive. We could deduce that the traditional model exerts here some slight pressure toward reintroduction. Note, however, that it is the school attenders of Elx who are mainly

responsible for this linguistic behaviour, and are the ones who least produce the assimilated form.³

As can be seen in figure 7, despite the impetus of the innovation, and its overall success among the intermediate generations, the youngest generation (school-aged speakers) have reversed this sound change. It is important to note that the open (or lowered) /o/ has been closed (or raised) in precisely the area where the assimilation is most firmly established. Thus 41% of school-aged speakers do not produce the assimilated form, a little more than half of the latter pronouncing it ['korda], while of the remaining 59% who do produce the assimilation, again more than half pronounce it ['kordo].

Figure 7. Percentage velar vowel assimilation in county as a whole: corda (rope, cord)

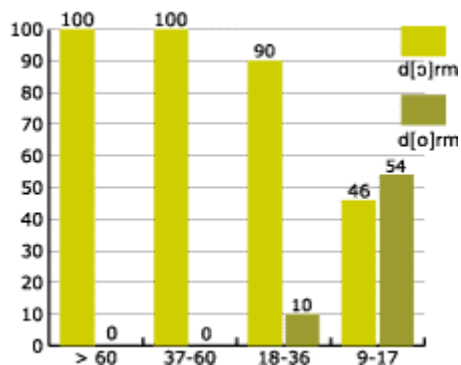


All this leads us to think that it is the non-assimilated form that is becoming the prestige form once again for school-age speakers, since it is the form reflected by the spelling, the spoken norm used by all the media in Catalan, the form used by those teachers who are not from the area, and of course, the form that coincides with Spanish.

2.3 Maintenance or otherwise of open vowels

The traditional language model of the county of Baix Vinalopó uses open /o/ and /e/ in the normal way. It is only the most recent generations that are beginning to show a change in this respect. Figure 8 shows this in the case of the open /o/ phoneme:

Figure 8. Percentage by age of open o: dorm (sleeps)

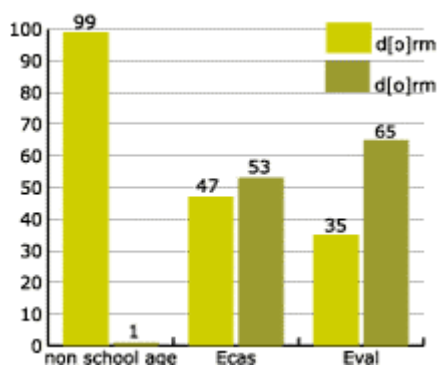


³ See 2.14, below, where we comment briefly on what is interesting in phonetic terms about this group.

Some 10% of the young adults between 18 and 36 throughout the county show the Spanish inspired/ tendency [ɔ] > [o] that we refer to here. Distribution is not uniform across the county: [ɔ] preservation of the distinction, generally speaking, is strongest where Catalan has most vitality.

The factor *Eval* seems not to influence this trend (see figure 9) and this is a first instance in which such a contradiction is evident in our data. Our expectation was that *Eval* (education in Catalan) would not be associated with elimination of normative or standard forms, or that this factor could cause them to be reintroduced if they had a tendency to be lost. This contradiction has to do with the fact, above all, of the particular linguistic behaviour of the school age speakers of Elx. In Crevillent, on the other hand, where Catalan has great vitality, the *Eval* factor is weakly associated with maintenance of the open v. closed distinction. Lastly, at Santa Pola the education programme there is not proving effective in recovering the distinction between open and closed, since the pronunciation has gone to ['do]; here the completion of the sound change is impeding the return to the distinction, for the moment.

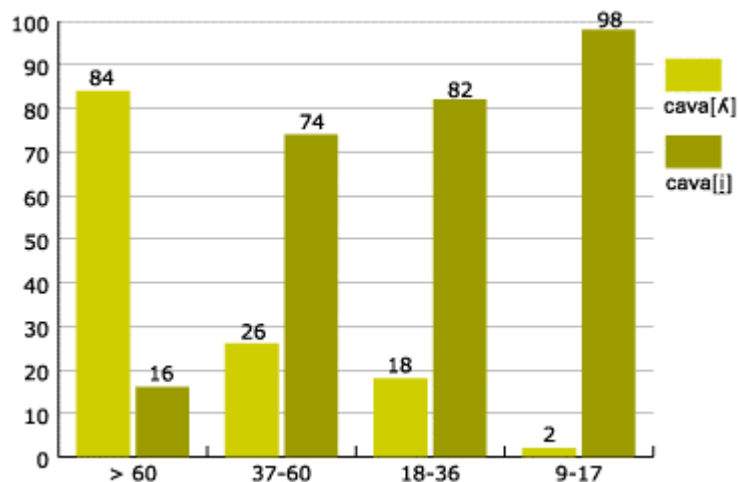
Figure 9. Percentage by school syllabus of open o: dorm (sleeps)



2.4 Yeism

Yeism is not a feature of the pronunciation in this county, yet it has made rapid progress. This is one of the most striking developments. Among the elders, only 16% of the age group across the county have *Yeism*, while among school students the sound [ʎ] scarcely exists. What is more, the gap between the elders and the adults is very marked —58 %— the transition between the two younger generations is a mere 8 %.

Figure 10. Percentage by age of realisations of ll: cavall (horse)



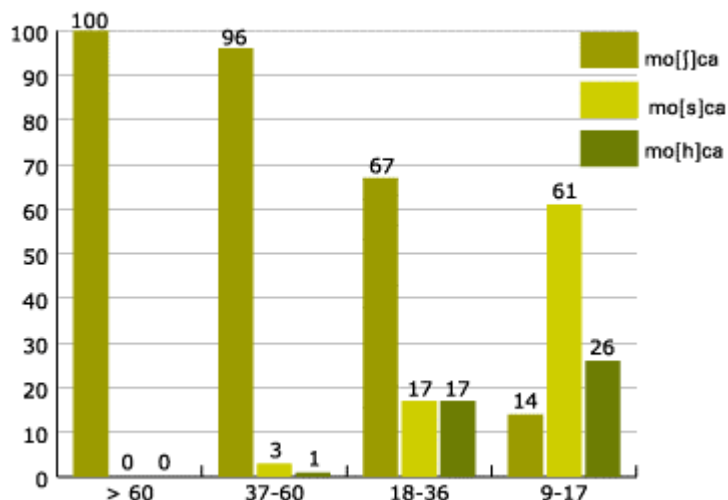
There is no notable relation between education syllabus and the preservation of the phonetic distinction under consideration here, given that *Yeism* is absolutely categorical among school

students. What we have here, then, is clearly a generational change that cannot be stopped by *Eval*.

2.5 Palatalisation of the implosive before [k]

In the Baix Vinalopó, the traditional pronunciation for palatal sibilants [moʃka] is found only among the elders and to some extent the adults (see figure 11). Selection of the form falls sharply among the young adults and is reduced to a mere 14% among the school-aged, replaced basically by the general Catalan form and coinciding with the Spanish pronunciation for *mosca* ("fly") which supplied more than 60% of the replies.

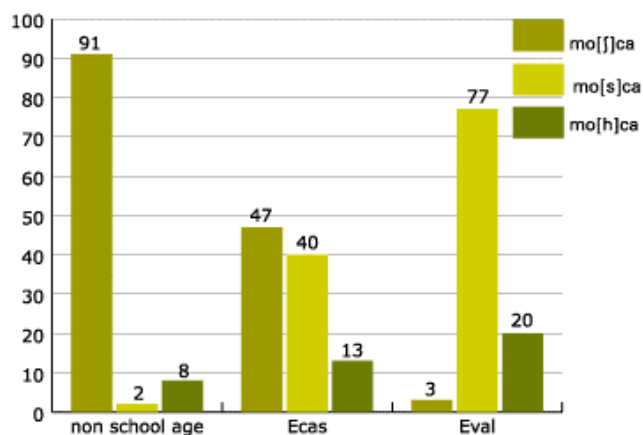
Figure 11. Percentage by age of implosive s followed by [k]: mosca (fly)



In this instance too, the traditional form is in sharp decline. The two factors most likely to be invoked here, standard Catalan and Spanish, provide support for this change. Additionally, there is a quite vigorous innovation, *mo[h]ca*, evidently having its source in Spanish, and clearly linked to the *fronterizo* Spanish of the Baix Segura and Murcia. This incipient innovation is heard occasionally among the adults but more habitual among the school-aged of Guardamar and Elx. The Spanish media are similarly a factor reinforcing this realisation.

As can be seen in figure 12, *Eval* subjects quite frequently give the Spanish-influenced reply [h]ca —around 20% of the total number of replies—a frequency which compares with the level evinced by the *Lval* group, though the latter produce slightly more. The reason for this is that the phenomenon is more usual in areas of heavy Spanish influence, and for that reason frequently elicited for the *Eval* respondents in Elx. The school-age speakers in Crevillent and Santa Pola have not advanced far with this change.

Figure 12. Percentage by syllabus of implosive s followed by [k]: mosca (fly)



On the other hand, the traditional form *mo[ʃ]ka* is still present in the speech of school children in the *Lval* category, occurring 47% of the time), while it has all but disappeared among *Eval* pupils in favour of standard *mosca*.

2.6 The *s* in syntactic phonetics

The only traditional and current model for the county (with the single exception of Guardamar) is that which you find in practically all Catalan speech: the voicing of *-s* before a vowel (see figure 13). The advance of a voiceless variant and the retreating of the traditional voiced sibilant is generational: while there is no sign of the change from [z] > [s] in the two oldest age groups, half the young adults produce it and two thirds of the school-agers. As figure 14 shows there are no relevant differences according to the medium of education.

Figure 13. Percentage by age voiced *s* in syntactic phonetics: *dos amics* (two friends)

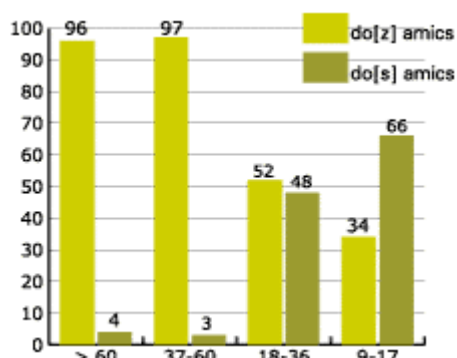
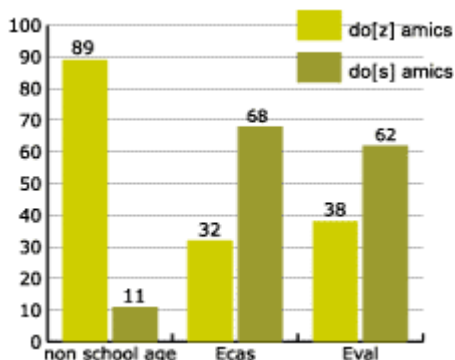


Figure 14. Percentage by syllabus of voiced *s* in syntactic phonetics: *dos amics* (two friends)



2.7 The *-ix* group

In intervocalic position the variant without the semi-vowel is overwhelmingly the preferred form ['kaʎa] throughout the county and for all the adult generations. This can be observed in figure 15. It is only among the school-age speakers that there are any appreciable occurrences—at 22%— of the semi-vowel form, occurring mostly with *Eval* subjects (see figure 16).

Figure 15. Percentage by ages of realisation of semi-vowel in group ix: caixa (box; savings bank)

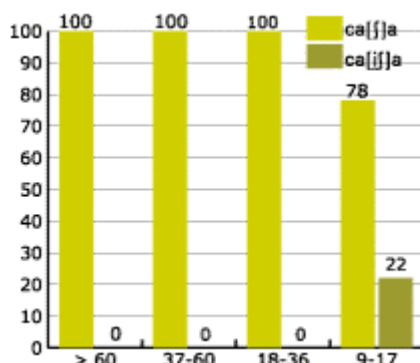
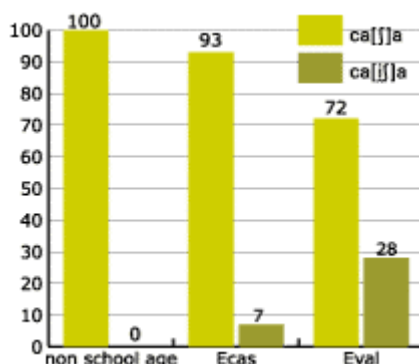


Figure 16. Percentage by school syllabus of realisation of semi-vowel in the group ix: caixa (box; savings bank)



2.8 Betacism

Betacism was something totally alien to the everyday speech of the county, until comparatively recently. The influx of Spanish, historically associated with betacism, has started to have real impact in recent years.

Our study detected more than 30% with betacism, distributed with gradual increase over the generations (see figure 17): with schoolchildren it reaches 62%. It affects all areas in a similar way, although again it is less prevalent in the conservative rural areas and more usual in the coastal areas and in Elx.

The *Eval* group (see figure 18) once again show a slightly more Spanish-affected pattern, as we have seen several times before. The *Lval* group distinguish the two sounds rather more frequently. We note that in Santa Pola, betacism has become categorical and the *Eval* factor shows no corrective influence. At Crevillent, *Eval* subjects are considerably less betacist than the rest, and this, as we have seen before, is the expected pattern. In Elx, however, betacism is more prevalent among the *Eval* group and adds to the overall effect that the *Eval* results are not the expected ones. We return to this question in section 2.14 where we attempt to explain this development.

Figure 17. Percentage by age of realisations of labiodental v: divendres (Friday)

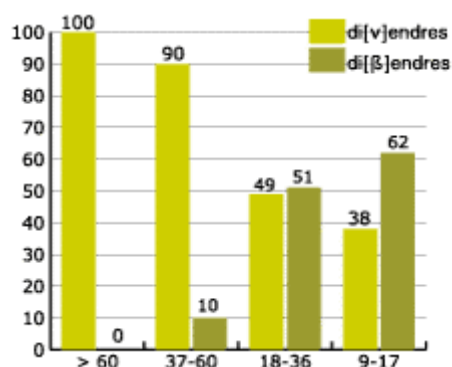
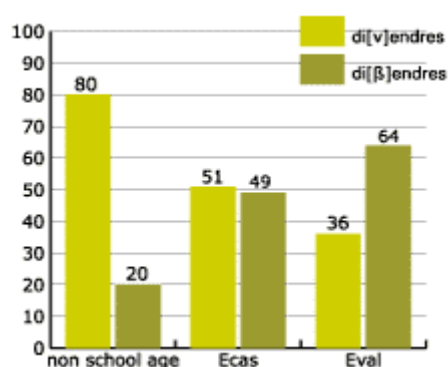


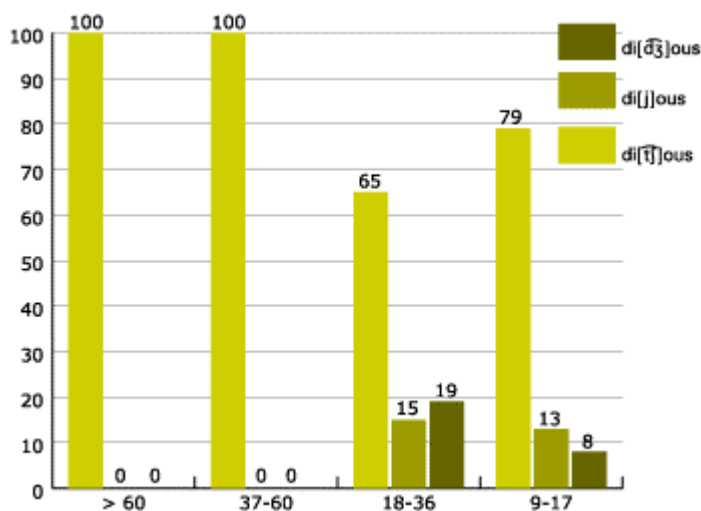
Figure 18. Percentage by type of school syllabus of the realisation of labiodental v: divendres (Friday)



2.9 The fricative [d̪]

The fricative sound [d̪] forms part of the repertoire of phonemes in the traditional language model of the Baix Vinalopó. The modification of this sound is numerically quite small and only found in the youngest age group:

Figure 19. Percentage by age of realisation of the volced palatal fricative: dijous (Thursday)

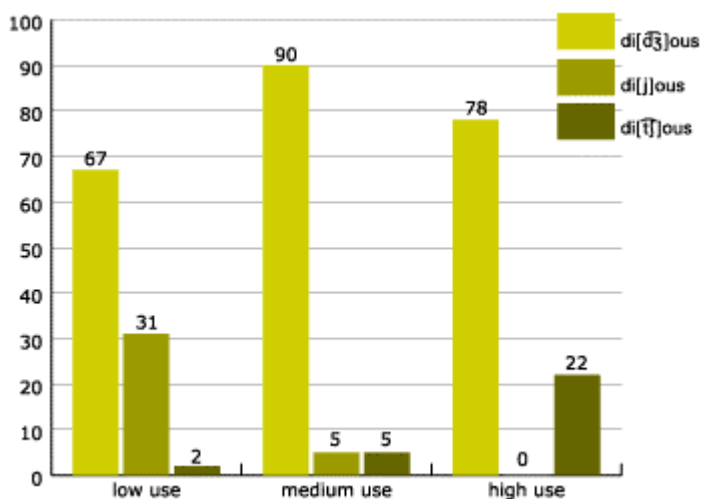


We found two different sounds replacing it. On the one hand, there is the devoicing [t̥], current for long in central Valencian and much more recently occurring in different areas in the neighbouring county of Valls del Vinalopó. Secondly, there is the de-affricativisation of the sound resulting in a sort semiconsonant [j]. This phenomenon is detectable also in the neighbouring county of Alacantí.

As can be seen in figure 19, devoicing is more habitual among the young adult group: it occurs at more than 20% in their replies. This tendency decreases sharply in the youngest age group (8%). Loss of affricativisation, in contrast, is much less habitual among this youngest or school-age group. Even so, school-agers tend to avoid both pronunciations, which together amount to 22% of the replies, while among the young adults this combined feature amounts to 34%.

Devoicing affects some of the localities in the rural areas around Elx and in the town itself; the loss of affricativisation is distributed across areas or individuals with strong Spanish influence (Elx, Santa Pola, Guardamar, la Marina). In figure 20 it can be seen that where the interviewee claims high use of own language, this favours considerably the realisation of the devoiced affricative [t̥], while low use is associated with loss of affricativization [j]:

Figure 20. Realisations according to declared own use of Catalan, of the voiced palatal affricative: dijous (Thursday)



Such a pattern could lead one to interpret the two types of phonetic replacement as the result of interference from Spanish but in different contexts: devoicing [t̥] appears in a language situation where Catalan has a degree of vitality, while loss of affricativisation [j], tends to occur in social circles more heavily affected by Spanish. And indeed, this last is a normal adaptation of the sound [ɟ̞] of Catalan or English, let us say, as made by Spanish speakers, while the other variant began in central Valencian at a moment of great linguistic vitality, in the 17th and 18th centuries.

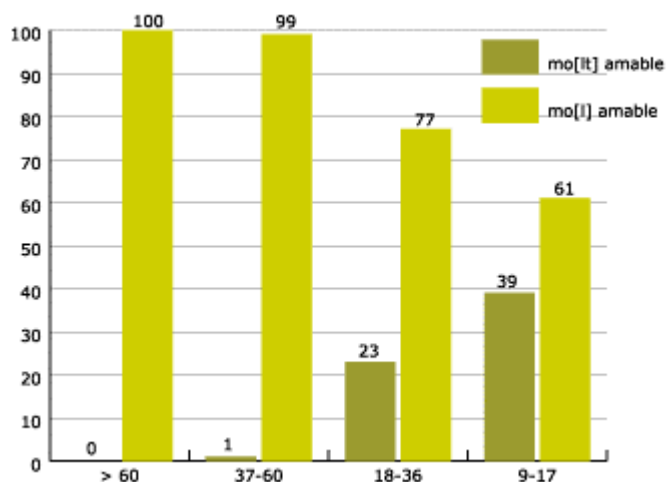
There are no notable differences depending on school syllabus. Notice, however, that devoicing is more frequent among *Eval* subjects where it affects some 16% of the responses, precisely in those who state that they make greater use of their own language. The loss of affricativisation is associated with *Lval* subjects —11%— and low use of Catalan. Both tendencies affect rural and urban localities more or less indistinctly, while the voiceless variant is more common in the country where once again linguistic vitality is greater.

2.10 The *-lt* final group before vowels

The traditional way of realising the consonant cluster *-lt* followed by a vowel in the county is *not* to delete the dental and thus to pronounce it *mo[lt a]mable* ("very kind"). We detect a degree of /t/ deletion in this position, thus coinciding with the traditional model of neighbouring counties, part of Valls del Vinalopó, the Foia de Castalla and Alcoi. In the Baix Vinalopó, deletion occurs at 19% for the overall population of the county.

As can be seen in figure 21, deletion of the dental is quite frequent among the school-aged speakers —at 39%— and reduces as one moves up the age range: it occurs in 23% of the replies from the young adults, only 1% of the replies from the adults, and occurs not at all among the elderly:

Figure 21. Percentage by age of realisations of t final clusters in syntactic phonetics: molt amable (very kind)



This feature is found regularly in all localities, without significant distinctions. Patterns of deletion are not related to school syllabus either.

Given the existence of this in the population that has not received schooling (in Catalan) and the non-effect in this case of the type of schooling received, we ascertain that deletion of the dental must be an incipient process in the colloquial model, irrespective and independent of the process of convergence with Spanish or interdialectal levelling caused by the inroads from the extension of standard.

2.11 Loss of intervocalic -d

Since the loss of *d* intervocalically is a major feature of this dialect, the questionnaire included several items in relation to it. On the one hand, there are items with closely similar equivalents with the *d* in Spanish (*esternudar, oblidar-olvidar, vida, saludar, roda, redona, cadena, madur, quedar*) and, on the other, there are those that lack such equivalents (*cadira, Nadal, neboda*).

We observed a notable difference between the two sets of words: in the group with no closely similar cognate in Spanish (see figure 22), the presence of the *d* —which will always be a reinsertion from the point of view of the traditional model— is not found at all in the elderly, and at a low level in the adults. The rate increases considerably with the young adults and with the school children it is actually present in the majority of the cases (more than 60%).

In the group with close equivalents in Spanish (see figure 23), the reintroduction reaches 20% for the combined adults and young adults, with a slight increase as one moves down the age group. School children, lastly, realise the *d* three quarters of the time.

Figure 22. Percentage by age for intervocalic d in words with no similar cognate in Spanish (Nadal (Sp. Navidad) , neboda (Sp. sobrina), cadira (Sp. silla))

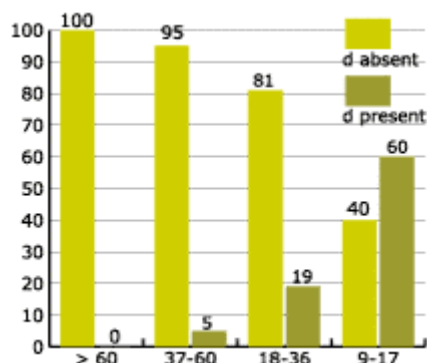
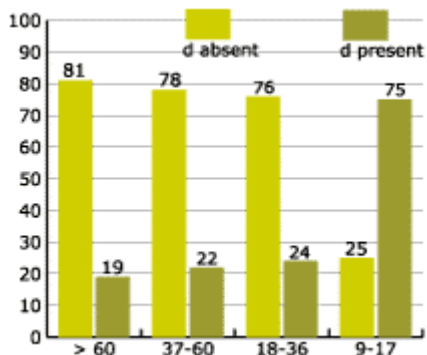


Figure 23. Percentage by age for intervocalic d in words with similar cognate in Spanish (esternudar, olvidar-oblidir, vida, roda, saludar, redona, cadena, madur, quedar)



Reintroduction of the dental is closely related to schooling in Catalan (*Eva*), above all for individuals in Elx, who (as a result of heavy Spanish inroads) use less Catalan both in the family and socially. We see that with *Eva* subjects frequency of use of the innovation is three times greater than their own local traditional model without *d*, both in the words that have no close Spanish equivalent and those that have. Even so, the dilution of the traditional model is more patent than in this second group of words:

Figure 24. Percentage by type of school syllabus for intervocalic d in words with no similar cognate in Spanish (Nadal (Sp. Navidad) , neboda (Sp. sobrina), cadira (Sp. silla))

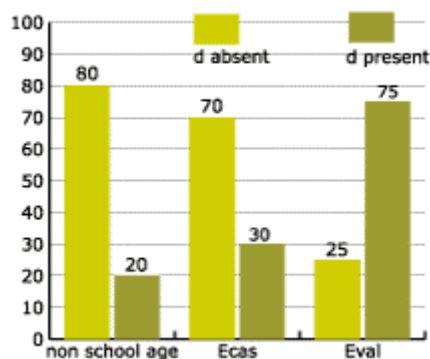
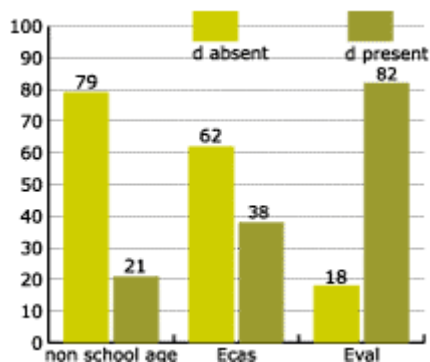


Figure 25. Percentage by type of school syllabus for intervocalic *d* in words with similar cognate in Spanish (esternudar, olvidar- oblidar, vida, roda, saludar, redona, cadena, madur, quedar)



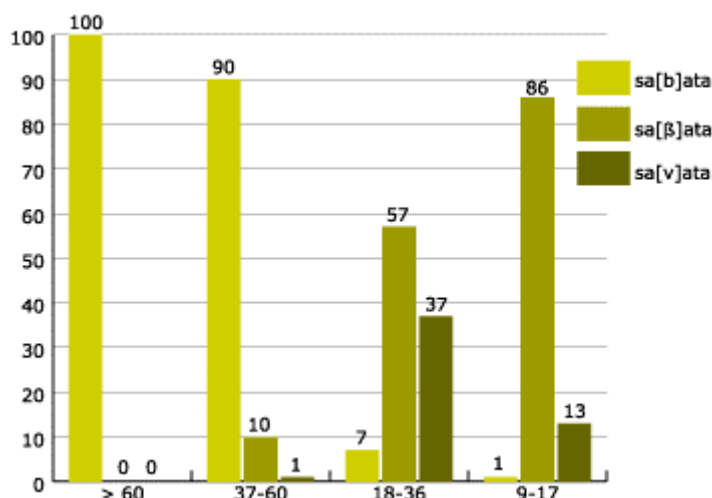
Generalisation of the disappearance of the intervocalic *d* is a very much established feature of the speech of the county. At the same time, however, it has carried low prestige for some time, and is stigmatised even, for the lack of correspondence with the Spanish standard and the varieties of Valencian Catalan spoken in neighbouring counties. This explains the reintroduction of the *d* after being absent traditionally for a long time, because both the factors in question encourage the reintroduction of the *d*. In this case, Spanish is not the sole determining factor, as it has been in the other cases. Rather, it has joined forces with the pressure of neighbouring dialects —and thus with a trend that was already colloquial —and, more recently, with normative Catalan.

At all events, it should not be overlooked that it is precisely those school children who find themselves in a more heavily Spanish influenced environment that are the most disposed towards this reintroduction. In this group the colloquial tendency to replace the dental has been enhanced both by pressure from Spanish, breaking with the traditional model and the influx of the normative model of Catalan.

2.12 Intervocalic -b-

All of Southern Valencian, from el Xúquer to Guardamar, pronounces *b* in any position as a stop. Figure 26 shows that this plosive *b* is typical of the oldest generation and the only variant they use, and is similarly general in the speech of the adults; its use drops sharply among young adults and more so in the speech of the school children:

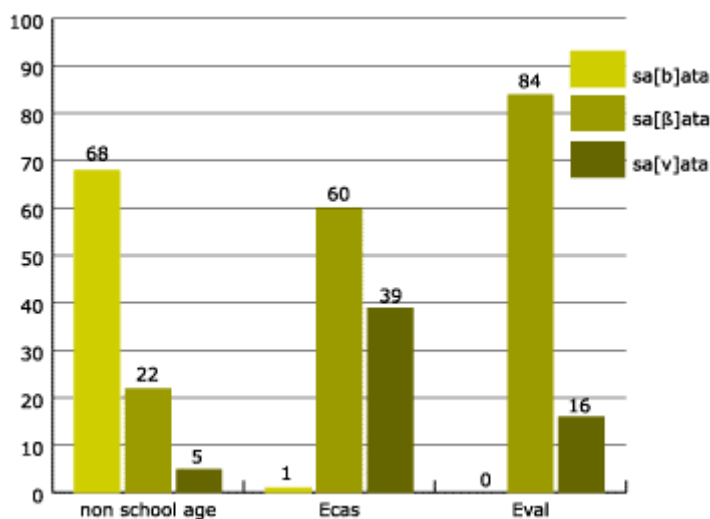
Figure 26. Percentages by age of realisations of intervocalic *b*: sabata (shoe)



This variant is on the way out. It is not reflected in the spelling, is not found in Spanish in intervocalic position, and does not occur in most varieties of Catalan, the standard included. More surprising is the occasional realisation from scattered individuals in the southern Valencian counties of a labiodental *v* instead of *b*. This is not simply anecdotal. We are aware, however, that the semiformal interview setting could have increased its use, since it would seem to be a hypercorrection. The influence of neighbouring Murcia cannot be ruled out, where the change [b] > [v] is well known.

This [v] is variably produced by the adults, but only 37% of the time among young adults. Its use drops among school students to a discrete 13%. It is heard more from the *Lva/* group, where there is a conscious tendency to correction—in the semiformal questionnaire situation—but perhaps they are not as aware as the *Eval/* group as to when there is a *v* or a *b*, thus leading to hypercorrection:

Figure 27. Percentages by type of syllabus, of the realization of intervocalic b: sabata (shoe)



2.13 Final -r

Here we need to distinguish two situations with relation to the state of final *-r* in Baix Vinalopó: a) in the infinitives in absolute final position; and b) and *córrer* ("to run").

a) In infinitives in absolute final position we find systematic loss of *-r* in Crevillent, where it occurs in responses at 95%. There is a slight recovery of the trill among schoolchildren who produced it 25% of the time (see figure 28). The *Eval* group (see figure 29) shows this tendency to a much greater degree than the other group—90% as against 32%.

Figure 28. Percentage by age of non-deletion of final r in Crevillent: tancar (shut)

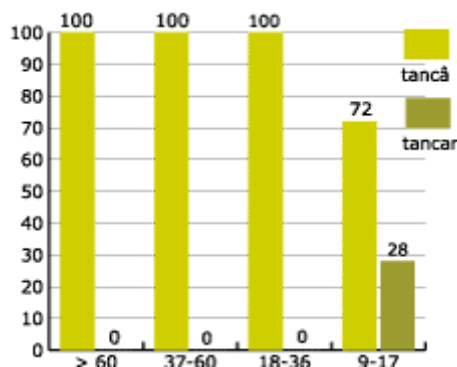
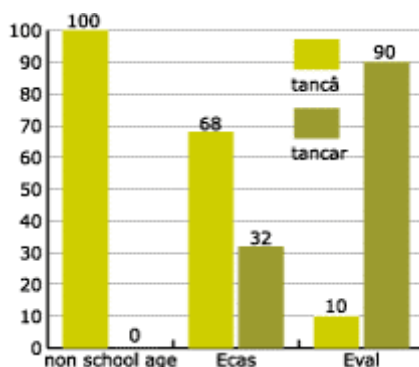


Figure 29. Percentage by school syllabus of non-deletion of final r in Crevillent: tancar (shut)

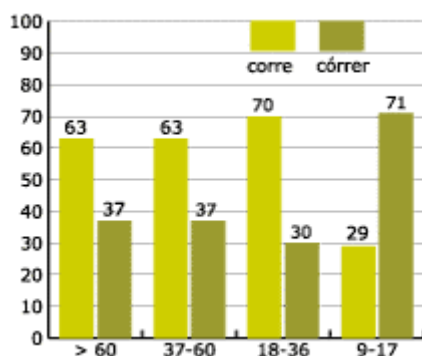


The presence of this phoneme in Spanish, in most of the spoken varieties current in the Valencian Country —whether colloquial or standard— and in the spelling of both languages strongly supports recovery of the *r* at Crevillent, at least —let us remember— in a questionnaire situation.

Trends in general Valencian do not support this pronunciation. It is not even clearly acceptable in different manuals of pronunciation, so that most teachers are unlikely encourage the preservation of this feature of Crevillent speech.

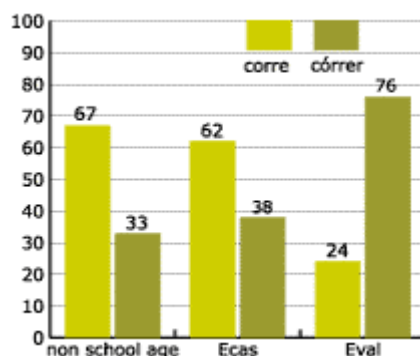
b) We need to comment separately on a verb that shows generalised loss of final *-r* in the traditional model throughout the county, Guardamar excepted; the verb in question is *córrer* which is pronounced *corre* by 64% of respondents overall —with the exception of Guardamar:

Figure 30. Percentage by age of non deletion of final r: córrer (run)



Maintenance of the variant with deletion of the trill is solid across the three adult generations. Indeed, the young adults actually show a slight increase in *r*-less responses. A factor here must be dissimilation, after the preceding *-r-*. School pupils, however, reverse this trend quite dramatically and reintroduce the sound *-r* 71% of the time (see figure 31). So once again it is the school agers, and with similar results to the preceding instance discussed above, who reintroduce the feature in a decided way, above all in the case of the *Eval* group.

Figure 31. Percentage by type of school syllabus of non deletion of final r: córrer (run)



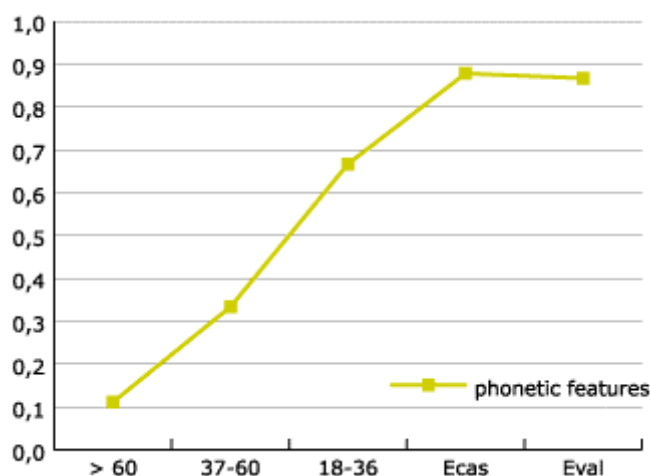
In short, reintroduction of the final *-r* final where the traditional model had lost it is substantial, and especially so in the case of the *Eval* group. At the same time the preceding generations also show some reintroduction.

2.14 General trends observed on the phonetic level

The grouping of data as done above provides as with an overview of the combined phonological trends and tendencies in the county of Baix Vinalopó. Recall that we have considered two fundamental axes: the maintenance or otherwise of the traditional model as against the degree of progress made by innovations. Working with these two axes, we set out to consider the following factors: firstly, the degree of incidence of the majority language —Spanish— on the local language model in the county; secondly, the extent of incorporation of innovations stemming from the standard models of the Catalan language; and, finally, the degree of diversification of the language of the county owing to internal factors (coming neither from Spanish nor standard Catalan).

a) As can be seen in figure 32, the phonetics of Spanish progressively effect the local model of language in a perceptible way over apparent time. The school-aged group show this to the greatest extent. The *Eval* factor (education through the medium of Catalan/Valencian) has not succeeded in putting a brake on this trend, since this group produce "Spanish-isms" to the same degree as the *Lval* group. The very slight change of direction that can be seen in the language model of the *Eval* group does not reach significance, although it needs to be borne in mind and valued positively:

Figure 32. Innovations coming from Spanish (non normative)



b) The repercussions in phonetic terms of the standard models of language can be seen to be related systematically to the age variable (logically enough with the factors in play here, including longer contact with schooling and with the mass communication media). The number of innovations introduced from standard is growing, as we can see in figure 33. Furthermore, school in general, and above all the *Eval* curriculum, is of key importance in this instance. Even so, the traditional phonetic model coinciding with the standard one shows quite a sharp retreat, as figure 34 shows. It can be seen that, in this case, *Eval* does not seem capable of reversing the trend.

Figure 33. Normative innovations

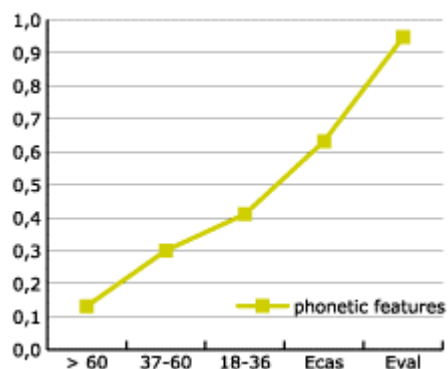
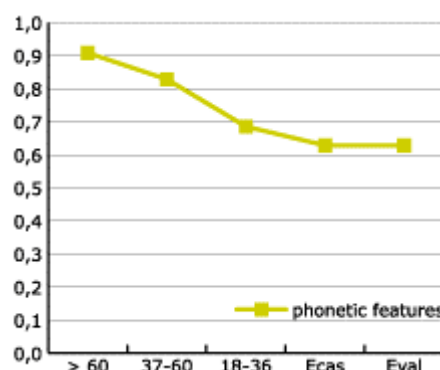


Figure 34. Genuinely traditional, normative forms



c) Lastly, features belonging to the traditional model which are genuine but not features of the standard language, are destined to disappear. Their days are numbered, as can be seen in figure 35. On the other hand, innovations not due to any external factor (see figure 36) show substantial growth in the generation aged between 37 and 60. Growth slows down in the case of the young adults, and in the case of school children, especially those in the *Eval* category, features of this sort are avoided.

Figure 35. Genuinely traditional non-normative forms

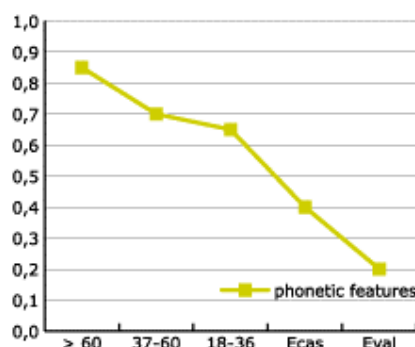
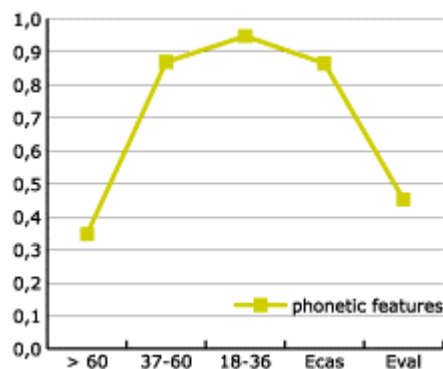


Figure 36. Genuine, non-normative innovations

Much of the phonetic detail looked at in this article remain below the threshold of consciousness for the speakers concerned, and are therefore far from easy to modify. These ongoing changes are not in general the result of conscious decisions or corrections but rather result from quite involuntary imitation of prestigious pronunciation, where there is Spanish influence. Typical instances are the raising (or closing) of *o* and *e*, *Yeism*, betacism, devoicing of voiced *s* and, above, the syntactic phonetics, aspiration of *s* before [k] or plosive *b* stops going to fricatives. As can be seen, these are standard features that belong to the traditional model, which, as we have seen, is in decline. Another factor to be noted is that most of these features are not indicated by the spelling.

It is clear that *Eval* —schooling in Catalan— in the city of Elx, has not succeeded in redressing phonetic features of this sort. As we mentioned above, this fact disproves of our initial hypotheses in the sense that we expected all *Eval* students to show less Spanish influence in their phonology and make greater use of standard Catalan features where these coincide with the traditional model.

The sociolinguistic situation of the Elx schoolchildren who are following an *Eval* curriculum results in more heavily Spanish-influenced phonology than found in the other group. This context stops conscious correction of the school sort from being very efficient if carried out on these phonetic traits, given that in general the latter have been heavily influenced by Spanish. In localities where Catalan is more present in the social life of the lads and lasses, *Eval* is more effective in the conserving (and restoring) of traits of this sort.

But there is a second group of features that are more identifiable and, while they fall within the scope of phonetics, can be modified and restored —and even commented upon by the speakers themselves. Such features include the disappearance of intervocalic *d* or of final *-r*, to give two paradigmatic examples. There are others, however, such as halting the trend of deletion of *-t* in *molt*, the eliminating of the palatal in *moixca*, the reintroduction of the semivowel in *caixa*, the reintroduction of the *a* for *e* in *embut*. In some of these instances, these are elisions, which tends to make them more perceptible than the sounded phonemes. As such, they are more easy to restore, consciously. Moreover, support from spelling is more obvious than in the previous set of cases, and there is, finally, some overlap or parallelism with the phonetic forms of Spanish.

This second group of phonetic features —mostly innovations— are more under the conscious control of the speaker —largely because of the spelling— and, therefore, are corrected by all individuals who have been educated in Catalan, whether in Elx or elsewhere. In such cases, *Eval* (schooling in Catalan) is after all more efficient in introducing them into the language model of the schoolchildren.

3. End note

In sum, our initial hypothesis has been only partly corroborated. The phonetic level is undergoing profound changes. In general, the normative or standard model would seem to be having little effect on this. There is a clear trend towards dilution of the traditional model, aided and abetted by intense influence from Spanish, at least in the formal register, as in the context created by administering of the questionnaires. The phonetic features, then, are

undergoing a seemingly unstoppable degradation affecting particularly features below conscious level.

One can only be relatively hopeful about the corrective influence provided by *Eval* for two reasons. In the first place because the percentage of school pupils following an *Eval* curriculum is very small, in all the Valencian Country, compared to *Lval*; secondly, if the environment of the individual is very heavily Spanish-influenced, the latter exercises excessive pressure on many features of the phonetic subsystem which *Eval* is not capable of redressing. *Eval* is relatively efficient only in the case of students who make frequent or high use of their own language. These latter also retain the traditional phonology better, closer to the standard model.

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