The morphological expression of pragmatic values in oral and written Galician

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Abstract

In this work I analyse a situation of morphosyntactic variation: the use of *cantara*/*cantei* in Galician with the same tense-aspect value: the aoristic preterite of the indicative. I will begin by recognising contexts with different degrees of discursive grounding to investigate whether there are variations in the choice between *cantara*/*cantei* due to grounding. I will conduct this investigation using two data corpora, oral and written Galician. Finally I will compare the results and determine whether the two registers demonstrate differences in the degree to which *cantara* is selected as simple preterite over *cantei*. The main interest of this work concerns the application of methods and tools of classical variationism to the investigation of relative linguistic phenomena, measured in gradual and non-oppositional terms.
Key words: morphosyntactic variation, simple preterite, pragmatics, focalisation (grounding), Galician, redundancy.

Resumo

Neste traballo analizo unha situación de variación morfosintáctica: o uso de *cantara*/*cantei* en galego co mesmo valor tempoaspectual: pretérito aoristo de indicativo. Comezarei recoñecendo contextos con diferentes graos de focalización discursiva para comprobar se hai variacións na elección de *cantara*/*cantei* debidas ó *grounding*. Fareino utilizando dous córpora de datos, un de galego oral e outro de escrito. Finalmente, cotexaranse os resultados e comprobarase se ambos rexistros mostran diferencias no grao de acollida de *cantara* como pretérito simple fronte a *cantei*. O principal interese deste traballo refírese ó modo de aplicar métodos e ferramentas do variacionismo clásico á indagación en feitos lingüísticos relativos, medidos en termos graduais e non opositivos.
Palabras clave: variación morfosintáctica, pretérito simple, pragmática, focalización (*grounding*), galego, redundancia.

1. Introduction

The indicators with a pragmatic function do not correspond exactly between the oral and written language due to the particular characteristics of each modality. The audio-vocal nature of the oral language is not shared with the written version, resulting that writing uses as markers of orality typographic and orthographic signals: commas, parentheses, colons, etc. In turn, written discourse permits a rigor and order in the arrangement of syntactic elements often lacking in oral language: rich in interruptions, incomplete phrases, alterations of the logical order of the constituents, non-sequitors... In oral exchanges the speakers are obliged to introduce qualifications and side comments to clarify what they have just said, to question each other about the content of their messages, on the thread of notions.

Further, the suprasegmental processes are ambiguous and often vague for the addressee. The noises and distortions are greater in oral discourse because along with the possible problems associated with the channel there are also difficulties in emission and reception due to lapses of memory and attention.

All of these factors have the result that redundancy is a resource much more widely utilised in oral than in written language; redundancy becomes more necessary to the degree that the noises are potentially greater. This explains why morphological processes or expression of pragmatic content are more productive in spoken discourse. The speaker guides his addressee, indicating which predications of his discourse require full attention and which permit a certain relaxation. The use of *cantara* in contexts where *cantei* might be expected causes the listener to relegate this part of the message to a secondary informative plane, centring his interpretive efforts elsewhere.

According to the approach of Harald Weinrich (1974), narrative discourse offers the speaker more occasions for incorporating verbal forms that call for a slackening of attention on the part of the speaker-reader.

Weinrich understands that the use of verbal tenses, strongly associated with concrete communicative situations, serve for participants in the communicative act as orientators, and that this use is extremely economical (Weinrich speaks of "economía del esfuerzo psíquico", 'economy of psychic effort', 1974: 70): and it is according to which tenses predominate that one knows whether to focus concentration on the content of the discourse —tenses of the commented world— or, on the contrary, to be able to relax once in a while —tenses of the narrated world[1]. In the story the listener becomes a mere hearer, relaxing and adopting a passive attitude, waiting for the speaker to act. Of course the addressee is constantly sending signals to the speaker by means of gestures, facial expressions, sounds, looks, and other types of kinaesthetic and paralinguistic indicators; these non-verbal messages

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1 Distinction offered by Weinrich (1974).

have an effect on the verbal selections and attitudes of the speaker but, once the speaker has opted for these selections, the addressee is dependent upon what the speaker —by his own accord and assisted by his audience— has decided to select as relevant or not in his discourse.

In Weinrich's proposal, *cantei* (E) and *cantara* (R) are tenses of the narrated world. In my opinion, the narratives contain parts with variable informative interest and degree of discursive grounding[2]:

    a. the strictly narrative (or non-evaluative) parts, which require a greater effort on the part of the listener-reader to the extent that they enclose the fundamental content of the narrative and determine its coherence;

    b. the evaluative parts, which are auxiliary and allow the listener/reader to minimise his attention, thus hierarchically organising the received information.

2. Context of variation

In earlier works (Pollán, 1999, 2001) I identified a context of morphosyntactic variation in the use of verbal forms with the same temporal/modal meaning: *cantei* (to be identified from here on as E) y *cantara* (to be identified from here on as R) are used as aoristic preterite (the traditional simple preterite of the indicative) in Galician.

In referring to the aoristic preterite I am adopting the terminology and general approach of García Fernández (1996a, 1996b, 1998) concerning the verbal system. This entails assuming that the grammatical category of aspect is relevant to the characterisation of the Spanish verbal system and, in my opinion, the Galician verbal system as well (see Pollán, 1999). The differences in aspect, however, are not the object of the attention of the present study. It is sufficient for my current interests to mention that aspect is conceived as a grammatical category inseparable from the expression of temporality, which permits us to close in on events starting from a linguistically relevant grounded moment (the grounded tense) and as a function of which expresses either the occurrence of the event —aoristic aspect— or the time subsequent to or that which resulted from the occurrence of the event —perfect aspect.

    (1) Ayer ya *habían puesto* las cebollas a secar.
        'Yesterday they had set the onions out to dry'.
        Grounded time, yesterday. Focuses on a moment for which it is not the occurrence of the event *poner las cebollas a secar* that is relevant but the subsequent or resultant situation: yesterday the onions were set out to dry.

    (2) Ayer *pusieron* las cebollas a secar.
        'Yesterday they set the onions out to dry'.

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[2] To delve more deeply into the identification of narrative parts and their functions, see Labov (1972), Labov & Waletzky (1967) and Silva-Corvalán (1983, 1990, 1994).

Grounded time, yesterday. Focuses on a time for which the occurrence of the event *poner las cebollas a secar* is relevant.

(3) *He puesto* las cebollas a secar.
    'I have set the onions out to dry'.
    Grounded time, moment of speaking. Focuses on a moment for which it is not the occurrence of the event *poner las cebollas a secar* that is relevant but rather the subsequent situation, the result of the event: now the onions are set out to dry.

Understood in this way, the category of aspect —of which the imperfective value of the form *cantaba* also forms a part, irrelevant here— permits us to notice the significance carried by the verbal forms used in oral and written exchanges, being enough to recognise in the category Tense the values of present, preterite, and antepreterite for the expression of the non-future in Spanish and Galician. The same verbal forms can express a temporal value of present and preterite, or of preterite and antepreterite, as a function of the aspectual meaning they carry:

(1) Ayer ya *habían puesto* las cebollas a secar → perfect preterite.
    a. Grounded time: yesterday.
    b. Temporal value: preterite; event before the time of the utterance.
    c. Aspectual value: perfective; in the focal moment the situation subsequent to the occurrence of the event is relevant.
(2) Ayer *pusieron* las cebollas a secar → aoristic preterite.
    a. Grounded time: yesterday.
    b. Temporal value: preterite; event preceding the time of the utterance.
    c. Aspectual value: aoristic; in the focal moment the occurrence of the event is relevant.
(3) *He puesto* las cebollas a secar → present perfect.
    a. Grounded time: the moment of the utterance.
    b. Temporal value: present; event whose occurrence takes place in a time considered to be understood as the present.
    c. Aspectual value: perfect; in the focal moment the result subsequent to the realisation of the event is relevant.
(4) Dijo que *había recogido* a las diez y media → aoristic antepresent.
    'He said that it had been collected at ten-thirty'.
    a. Grounded time: a past moment represented by the temporal specification *a las diez y media*.
    b. Temporal value: antepreterite; event that ocurred prior to another past.
    c. Aspectual value: aoristic; in the focal moment the occurrence of the event is relevant.

The *Gramática Galega* (Álvarez, Regueira & Monteagudo, 1989) characterises the form *cantei* (E) as that which refers to a past moment in relation to the present (1989: 369). The form *cantara* (R) "indica un momento anterior a un referente anterior" ('indicates a moment prior to a prior referent' (1989: 370). The temporal meaning of each is clearly determined for each without recognising equivalent uses of both as simple past. Although these uses were indeed confirmed by Saco i Arce in his 1868 grammar, they are not accepted as such by Álvarez, Regueira & Monteagudo, who consider them to be antepreterites (traditional pluperfects) even when the reference to a past moment which the event precedes is not absolutely identifiable. For this reason, the authors, who can not avoid the fact that *cantara* (R) is employed on occasions where it is impossible to recognise the preceding moment with respect to which the event is oriented, comment that in these cases:

> No relato, ten un emprego estilístico de distanciamento psicolóxico:
> Lémbrome dunha vez que *foramos* a Montelouro...
> <div align="right">(Álvarez, Regueira & Monteagudo, 1989: 370)</div>
> 'In the story, they have a stylistic use of psychological distancing: I remember that once we *went* (R) to Montelouro...'

They are not referring explicitly to the temporal value of *cantara* (R) in this case, but we must assume that in their opinion this form is an antepreterite, as they include it in the corresponding section.

The effort of maintaining the interpretation of these forms as antepreterites has led some linguists to defend the existence of abstract or imaginary references, present in the mind of the speaker (Bassols, 1973, for Latin; Veiga, 1983, for the Galician *cantara*). They support their proposal based on the possibility of using *había cantado* without reference to a prior moment in standard Spanish, with examples such as the following:

(5) Pero, ¿no me *habías dicho* que te ibas? (example provided by Veiga in personal communication).
'But, hadn't you told me that you were going?'.
(6) ¡Pero si en este bar ya *habíamos estado* otro día![3] (Veiga, 1996: 51).
'But we had already been in this bar the other day!'.

Given that the reference to a prior moment which *habías dicho* y *habíamos estado* precede is not identifiable, it is necessary to propose a reference with abstract or mental priority in order to maintain their categorisation as antepreterites.

> Una forma de ante-pretérito, por otro lado, no deja de expresar doble anterioridad por el hecho de no estar subordinada a otro "pasado" o de no aparecer en un contexto temporalmente explícito.
> <div align="right">(Veiga, 1996: 51)</div>

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3 Utterance pronounced by the speaker upon entering the bar the second time.

'An ante-preterite form, on the other hand, never ceases to express double priority even when it is not subordinated to another "past" or that it does not appear in a temporally explicit context'.

In my opinion, it is not possible to assume that all uses of *había cantado* in Spanish are antepreterite. The contexts in which this verb form is used with a purely preterite value coincide with those of the lowest degree of grounding: use of interrogation and exclamation as evaluative expressive resources, doubtful modality, stative verb, known facts...

García Fernández (1996a, 1996b, 1998) has demonstrated that *había cantado* expresses in many cases a temporal value of preterite with perfective aspect.

(7) Juan dijo: 'María *había salido* a las diez' (García Fernández, 1996a: 307).
  'Juan said Maria had left at ten'.
  At ten Maria had already left, she was no longer there. What took place at ten, which is the grounded time, is that Maria was out. This utterance (7) is equal to the less ambiguous: *María ya había salido a las diez* ('Maria had already left at ten').

(8) *He comido* demasiado ⇢ present perfect.
  'I have eaten too much'.

(9) Ayer *he dejado* a Lucía sola ⇢ aoristic preterite.
  'Yesterday I have left Lucia alone'.

(10) María ya *había salido* a las diez ⇢ preterite perfect.
  'Maria had already left at ten'.

(11) Me contó que *se había pasado* la mañana bebiendo ⇢ aoristic antepreterite.
  'He told me that he had spent the morning drinking'.

Just as *he cantado* can be a present perfect (8) or an aoristic preterite (9) in modern Spanish, *había cantado* can be employed as preterite perfect (10) and also as aoristic antepreterite (11). We should consider the possibility that it also expresses a temporal value of preterite with aoristic aspect, which in some contexts may be ambiguous with the present perfect: that is, that *había cantado* is used in certain contexts in standard Spanish as the simple past. This is the temporal-modal value that, in my opinion, (6) has and, with more reservations, I believe may also be the case in (5)[4].

I agree with Veiga's observation that, in (6), *estuvimos* and *hemos estado* are not equal to *habíamos estado*. I do not agree that this lack of equivalence is due to the difference in temporal value between these forms in the same context. If it is not

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4 With more reservations because its value is doubtful between the simple preterite and the experiential perfect preterite.

possible to identify the necessary temporal moments in the description of a verb tense, why refer all its meaning to the tense category?

The existing differences are, from my point of view, of a pragmatic nature.

> (12) ¡Pero si en este bar ya *estuvimos* otro día! → aoristic preterite, high degree of informative focus.
> 'But we already were in this bar the other day!'.
>
> (13) ¡Pero si en este bar ya *hemos estado* otro día! → aoristic preterite, like (9), although offers as well an interpretation close to the present perfect experiential.
> 'But we have already been in this bar the other day'.
>
> (6) ¡Pero si en este bar ya *habíamos estado* otro día! → aoristic preterite, low degree of informative focus.

Therefore, if indeed the prototypical form of the aoristic preterite (or simple past) is *canté* in Spanish, it has been losing ground in many contexts in favour of *he cantado*. I understand that in other contexts *había cantado* occupies its place. In Galician as well *cantei* (E) is replaced by *cantara* (R) in temporal situations of the past without reference to an intermediate prior moment. The cases of *había cantado* aoristic preterite in Spanish have never been analysed as such but rather —inadequately in my opinion— as antepreterites.

In this article we will not delve into the analysis of the Spanish form[5] but rather into the corresponding Galician form, *cantara* (R) aoristic preterite. We see that even when *cantei* (E) / *cantara* (R) share on some occasions the temporal/modal and aspectual value of aoristic preterite (simple past), the selection of one form or the other depends on pragmatic factors. Therefore, *cantei/cantara* are morphosyntactic variants because they correspond to the same grammatical meaning: aoristic preterite in the indicative. The variation, nevertheless, is conditioned by linguistic facts, facts of a pragmatic nature relative to the degree of informative interest of the utterance. We could form our null hypothesis declaring that *the pragmatic valuation of the utterance as a function of grounding has absolutely no effect on the selection of the forms cantei/cantara in oral and written Galician*. The possibility of rejecting the null hypothesis would permit us to reject this statement.

This circumstance has already been demonstrated in earlier works (Pollán, 2001) for an oral Galician corpus comprised of 25 interviews with a duration of 45 to 60 minutes[6]. All of these interviews were conducted with speakers of various social levels, ages, and genders, integrated into the community of speakers of A

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5 We have already done this in Pollán, 1999, 2001.

6 These interviews were conducted in the context of the project *Formación de un corpus de lengua hablada en la ciudad de A Coruña* (Development of a corpus of language spoken in the city of A Coruña), directed by Mauro Fernández, in the area of General Linguistics of the Universidade de A Coruña.

Coruña. The linguistic data analysed by means of these interviews, however, can be extrapolated to the Galician population as a whole, since they deal with the verification of a hypothesis that implicates exclusively intralinguistic factors, for which social conditionings are not relevant. These may have an impact on the speaker's greater or lesser tendency to select the verb form *cantara* in backgrounded contexts —and this would be a second variational phenomenon conditioned by external factors worthy of study—, but not on the fact that these contexts favour the presence of *cantara* in the discourse in a way different from that of foregrounded contexts.

I will contrast in the current analysis observations from my investigation in 2001 with the data obtained from a corpus of written Galician. I have selected for this corpus three books by three Galician writers:

Land Rover, by Suso de Toro

Arraianos, by Méndez Ferrín

¿Que me queres, amor?, by Manuel Rivas[7]

The first is a very interesting novel from a linguistic point of view for the interests of our study. It contains only two narratives, as the story is basically constructed by means of dialogue and exposition of past events. This differentiates this work from narration in which events described lack the distinguishing features characteristic of narrated events[8].

> Si señor, aquí estiveron. Eran as oito e dez aproximadamente.
>
> Si, señor, seguro. Eu para as horas funciono coma un reloxio. Sen mirar o reloxio dígolle a hora que é. É certo. Mire, agora sonlle pouco máis ou menos as dez e cuarto da mañá. ¿Que lle dixen? As dez e dez. Cinco minutos.
>
> Ben, pois así que eran as oito e dez ou e cuarto e entraron Gumersindo e un home así algo máis pequeno, ancho el, de cara ancha. Díxome que era seu irmán. Tomaron un viño e un coñac.
>
> Non, o coñac, Sindo, e o viño o outro, o irmán. Non parecía bebedor. Logo tomaron outra ronda.
>
> Nada, señor. Non oín nada. Estiveron así de palique todo o tempo, a min pareceume que se levaban ben, pero xa lle digo que non oín nada.
>
> Aí xa non lle sei dicir a hora xusta. Eu teño a idea de que serían as dez menos vinte.
>
> (*Land Rover*, 67)

'Yes, sir, they were here. It was ten after eight, approximately.

'Yes, sir, for sure. With the time I'm like a clock. Without looking at the clock I can tell you what time it is. It's true. Look, now it's more or less quarter past five in the morning. What did I tell you? Ten past ten. Five minutes.

'Right, so then it was ten or fifteen minutes past eight and Gumersindo and a man who was a little smaller came in, he was wide, and with a wide face. He told me that he

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7 From this point forward, we will refer to these works as *Land*, *Arra* and *Que*, respectively.

8 See Silva-Corvalán, 1994.

was his brother. They had a wine and a cognac. No, Sindo had a cognac, and the other, his brother, had a wine. He didn't seem to be a drinker. Afterward they had another round.

'Nothing, sir. I didn't hear anything. They were chatting like that the whole time, it seemed to me that they got along well, but like I already told you, I didn't hear anything.

'At that moment I can't say the exact time. I have an idea that it was ten to eight'.

In terms of Méndez Ferrín's book of stories, we encounter examples of all types of discourse, predominantly narrative (seven extensive narratives) and the exposition of past events.

Manuel Rivas' book is also a book of stories, a collection of twenty-six extraordinarily well-constructed narratives, heavily laced with dialogue.

Some examples of *cantara* (R) with past simple value —identified as (a)— and parallel examples of *cantei* (E) —the (b) cases— can be seen in the following:

Corpus of spoken Galician

(14a) Ah, bueno, pois, xa me dirás ti. E eu, eu non me enterei, despois de que fun tódolos anos a vela, ¿non?, co crío, pero este ano, xa non iba ir, porque o ano pasado, bah, *chovera* (R), e tal.
'Ah, ok, what then? And me, I wasn't aware of it, after going to see it every year, you know?, with the kid, but this year I was not going to go because last year, bah, it *rained* (R)'.

(14b) O ano pasado non fomos á Trinidad porque *choveu* (E) todo o día.
'Last year we did not go to Trinidad because it *rained* (E) all day long'.

(15a) No tempo da guerra, no tempo da guerra quedou todo barrido. E veu un ano, o ano oitenta e dous, que *helara* (R) todo: patacas, e colleita e todo.
'In the war, in the war everything was swept away. And there was a year, the year eighty-two, when everything *froze* (R): potatoes, the crops, and everything'.

(15b) Houbo un ano en que unha nevada *aplastou* (E) tódolos nabos.
'There was a year when a snowfall *squashed* (E) all the turnips'.

(16a) E por alá había verdadeiras riadas na baixada de, do Pilo para Muros e, e, ¡vamos!, bueno, un desastre, ¿ou non? Inda están arreglando as cousas das inundacións que houbo aí atrás. Si. Aínda están arreglando o puente aquel que *caera* (R) e todo iso.
'And there were real floods there, in the slope of the, of the Pilo going to Muros and, I mean, well, a disaster, wasn't it? They are still repairing that bridge that *fell down* (R) and all of that'.

(16b) Hai unhas semanas houbo un atraco no Banco Santander e aínda andan interrogando á xente que *entrou* (E) alí aquel día.
'Some weeks ago there was a robbery in the Santander Bank and they are still interrogating people who *went* (E) into the bank that day'.

Corpus of written Galician

(17a) Durante o primeiro inverno non pasou nada, pro *fora* (R) terríbel pró papai. Na primavera chegaron dous homes a Auguela. Vestían traxe e garavata, pero a súa roupa non era boa. Semellaba pasada e suxa (*Arra*: 95).

'During the first winter nothing happened, but it *was* (R) terrible for papa. In the spring two men came to Auguela. They were dressed in a suit and tie, but their clothing wasn't good. It looked worn and dirty'.

(17b) Durante a primeira misa non *dixemos* (E) nada pero estivemos mirando con atención para o novo sacerdote.

'During the first month we *didn't say* (E) anything, but we were watching our new priest attentively'.

(18a) Deus lle dea o descanso tamén, aínda que foi mala. Así son as cousas. Ser, foi mala. Mire como sería ela. Repare como son as cousas, que dunha volta, nunha romaría, paréceme que *fora* (R) pola Balbanera ou pola Gorgosa, xa non me lembro ben, saqueina a bailar, cadrou así (*Land*: 101).

'God grant her rest also, even though she was bad. That's the way things are. Really, she was bad. Look how she was. Notice how things are, that once, at a festival, it seems to me it *was* (R) around Balbanera or around Gorgosa, now I don't remember well, I took her out to dance, it turned out that way'.

(18b) Nunha ocasión, creo que *foi* (E) polo San Pedro, chamoume á casa para invitarme a saír.

'On one occasion, I think it *was* (E) around San Pedro, he called me at home to invite me out'.

(19a) Desde alí, vendo ao fondo os picoutos da raia, ireille escribindo a Vde. das pequenas cousas que vaian constituíndo o meu vivir en Lobosandaus, lugar que eu sinto agora, a penas unha hora de pór pé a terra da besta que me *trouxera* (R) desde Bande, logo da viaxe interminábel en dilixencia, coma un final do mundo coñecido, recolleito en si mesmo aínda que solloso, amábel e hospitalario (*Arra*: 16).

'From there, seeing in the background the peaks of the border, I will be writing to you about the little things that make up my life in Lobosandaus, the place that I feel now, just barely an hour left to put my feet on the ground, dismounting from the mare that *carried* (R) me from Bande, after the interminable voyage by carriage, like an end to the known world, withdrawn into itself, although sunny, friendly and hospitable'.

(19b) Paréceme, cando xa van dúas horas desde que baixei do coche que me *trouxo* (E) de Santiago, que nunca vou querer marchar deste pobo.

'It seems to me, when two hours had passed since I got out of the car that *brought* (E) me to Santiago, that I would never want to leave this village'.

3. Pragmatic conditionings

Since I have not encountered grammatical reasons to explain the selection of *cantei* (E) / *cantara* (R) in certain Galician contexts, an intuitive approach to these contexts has led me to consider the possibility that the selection is conditioned by the greater or lesser degree of focalisation of the utterance in the discourse. In earlier works (Pollán, 1999, 2001) I have demonstrated that, situating the context of occurrence of these forms on a grounding scale (that is, a scale of informative focalisation), the preference for *cantara* (R) for relatively less focalised contexts can be observed.

I assumed for this purpose the distinction established by Hopper (1979, 1982) and by Hopper & Thompson (1980) between foregrounding (high focalisation) and backgrounding (low focalisation). The parts that sustain the central informative content of the discourse are highly focalised, while the auxiliary, redundant, or evaluative elements carry less informative weight.

The distinction proposed by Hopper & Thompson is not based on dichotomous terms but rather a continuum or scale: from the contexts with the highest degree of focalisation to those with the lowest there is a variable range of contexts with intermediate focalisation.

Hopper & Thompson (1980) defend the existence of a directly proportional relation between grounding and transitivity. High transitivity implies a high grade of focalisation, and low transitivity implies little focalisation. The parameters that serve to measure transitivity (and, therefore, the informative focalisation) are the following:

	HIGH TRANSITIVITY	LOW TRANSITIVITY
PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants, *A* and *O*	1 participant
KINESIS	action	non-action
ASPECT	telic	atelic
PUNCTUALITY	punctual	non-punctual
VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
AFFIRMATION	affirmative	negative
MODE	realis	irrealis
AGENCY	*A* high in potency	*A* low in potency
AFFECTEDNESS OF *O*	*O* totally affected	*O* not affected
INDIVIDUATION OF *O*	*O* highly individuated	*O* non-individuated

Table 1. *Parameters of transitivity of Hopper & Thompson (1980): 'A' means 'agent'; 'O' means 'object'.*

Hopper & Thompson observe that particular semantic characteristics of high transitivity as perfective aspect, individualised object and agentive subject

demonstrate an elevated grammaticalisation index in the morphosyntax of a great number of languages. This tendency toward grammaticalisation is indicative of an important discursive function of the traits of transitivity: the function of focalisation. The semantic and grammatical properties that are relevant to transitivity are also relevant to foregrounding. The authors demonstrate that for languages such as English —and, in my opinion, Spanish— the addressee infers the grounding not by means of a unique morphosyntactic item but rather by means of a set of properties. These characteristics are those that, in the opinion of Hopper & Thompson, characterise transitivity. In English —and, according to my consideration, Spanish— foregrounding is not marked but is obtained and interpreted based on probability: the greater the probability that a clause receives a foregrounded interpretation, the higher the place occupied by this clause on the transitivity scale. The authors include in their work calculations and numerical correlations supporting these claims.

3.1. Focalisation scale

Since the evaluation of an utterance in terms of its informative interest does not permit a dichotomous resolution, but rather is expressed in a gradual manner, I had to develop a focalisation scale to establish the degree of informative productivity. This scale is utilised as a work method in an attempt to overcome the binary and oppositional methodologies of the structural mainstream.

The groups of factors —also called variables— are every one of the linguistic properties that we use to characterise utterances and consist of the factors and possibilities that these properties offer (see table 2): different degree of the property, presence or absence of this property in the utterance, etc. Here we have selected, of course, groups of factors relevant to a pragmatic characterisation of the utterances, and the factors comprising them represent a more or less high level of grounding, as described below (see table 3).

GROUP OF FACTORS	FACTORS OF THE GROUP
Aktionsart	Durative predications (dur): stative, activities and productions Non-durative predications (nondur): achievements and semelfactives
New or repeated events	New events (new) Repeated events in initial place (rep.init) Repeated events not in initial place (rep.n.init)
Negation	Affirmation (aff) Negation (neg)

(Continued from previous page)

GROUP OF FACTORS	FACTORS OF THE GROUP
Type of clause	Principal (main): includes principal and bipolar[9] Subordinate(sub): includes temporal, relative, completive and equational
Type of discourse	Dialogue (dia) Exposition of past events (exp) Narration (narr)
Narration	Evaluative parts (eval): pre-narration, evaluation, evaluative resolution, elaboration, orientation Non-evaluative parts (noneval): abstract, preface, complicating action, referential resolution

Table 2. *Groups of factors considered in the study (abbreviations in parentheses are the labels to be used from here on).*

The factors of these groups of factors are ordered in terms of degree of discursive focalisation in the following manner:

FACTORS		DEGREE OF FOCALISATION
dur		background
nondur		foreground
new		foreground
rep.init		foreground/background[10]
rep.n.init		background aff foreground
aff		foreground
neg		background
main		foreground
sub		background
Discourse Type [11]	eval	background
Discourse Type	noneval	foreground

Table 3. *Degree of focalisation of the factors considered.*

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9 See Rojo (1978).

10 Corresponds to an intermediate degree of focalisation.

11 This group of factors does not support the pragmatic distinctions treated here. They have been incorporated to allow the treatment of the group of factors "narration" without losing information relative to other discourse types. That is, the fact that an utterance in included in a dialogue, a narration or an exposition of past events, is not at all pertinent from the grounding point of view. But the items that we have identified in these types of discourse do interest us when considering them as a function of other types of factors and when channeling those corresponding to the variable "narration" that, if isolated as a variable or independent group of factors, is indeed also a factor of the variable "discourse type".

The reasons leading us to assign these pragmatic values to the factors treated here are expressed in more detail in Pollán (2001: 65-70). The literature that has dealt the most with this topic emphasises the greater informative relevance of affirmative utterances, in the main clause, when they relate durative events and in the non-evaluative parts of the narratives; non-durative events in negative utterances, in subordinate clauses and evaluative parts of the narrative are of very low informative interest. In the same way, new and unknown events, those that have not been mentioned previously, are of high informative content, while those that are repeated have a low informative interest, very low when they are repeated not for the first time.

The association of factors belonging to various groups of factors described earlier, as a function of their level or degree of focalisation, offers us a scale in which those contexts characterised by a greater number of foregrounding factors will appear at the beginning, and those contexts characterised by a greater number of backgrounding factors will appear at the end. The intermediate positions will be occupied by contexts with both foregrounding and backgrounding factors, with foregrounding reducing progressively as backgrounding increases in the following manner:

Fore + fore + fore + fore (grounding)
Fore + fore + fore + back (grounding)
Fore + fore + back + back (grounding)
Fore + back + back + back (grounding)
Back + back + back + back (grounding)

Thus, this scale allows me to recognise various contexts with greater or lesser informative relevance. The results are new groups of factors or variables that I call interactive because they are formed by means of the association of factors belonging to various groups of factors.

The possible combinations of these factors (those for which data has been recorded in the corpus) are ordered on the focalisation scale in the following manner: the contexts characterised by a greater number of backgrounding factors are contexts of a very low degree of focalisation; those characterised by a greater number of foregrounding factors are contexts with a high level of focalisation; those that bring together foregrounding and backgrounding factors are contexts with a variable degree of focalisation, depending on whether fore or backgrounding factors predominate in their characterisation.

Interactive groups		Factors of the interactive groups	
V9	+ fore	aff, new, main	affirmative predication, new event, main clause
		neg, new, main	negative predication, new event, main clause
		aff, new, sub	affirmative predication, new event, subordinate clause
		neg, new, sub	negative predication, new event, subordinate clause
		aff, rep.init., main	affirmative predication, event repeated in initial place, main clause
		neg, rep.init., main	negative predication, event repeated in initial place, main clause
		aff, rep.init., sub	affirmative predication, event repeated in initial place, subordinate clause
		neg, rep.init., sub	negative predication, event repeated in initial place, subordinate clause
		aff, rep.n.init., main	affirmative predication, event repeated not in initial place, main clause
		neg, rep.n.init., main	negative predication, event repeated not in initial place, main clause
		aff, rep.n.init, sub	affirmative predication, event repeated not in initial place, subordinate clause
	+ back	neg, rep.n.init, sub	negative predication, event repeated not in initial place, subordinate clause
V8	+ fore	narr, noneval, nondur	narrative, non-evaluative part, non-durative event
		narr, noneval, dur	narrative, non-evaluative part, durative event
		narr, eval, nondur	narrative, evaluative part, non-durative event
	+ back	narr, eval, dur	narrative, evaluative part, durative event

Table 4. *Labels corresponding to the contexts recognised by a statistically acceptable model, a model that assumes the treatment of two interactive groups (V8 and V9).*

3.2. Results of the corpus of spoken Galician

In Pollán (2001) I analyse the data offered by a corpus of spoken Galician comprised of 25 interviews. The analysis was conducted with the aid of various

127

statistics tools, all of which are contained in the information package VARBRUL 2S: multiple logistic regression, Chi-square and maximum log likelihood to check the Goodness of fit of the model[12].

The program achieves convergence in 8 iterations, offering us a model that adequately reflects the data obtained: thus, the total Chi-square result is 7.040 (9 *df*), far from the critical value of 16.9 that establishes the adequacy limit of the model ($p \leq 0.05$). The Chi-square per cell is .251.

The results obtained are reproduced in table 5:

		Interactive factors (Neg+Eve+Ty_clause)	Frequen-cies	Ratios	Means of Ratios		
					Events	Type_clause	Negation
V9	+ fore	aff, new, main	8/956	1/119.5		main:	
		neg, new, main	0/66*		1/120.67	1/127.75	
		aff, new, sub	1/63	1/63		sub: 1/64	
		neg, new, sub	0/1*				
		aff, rep.init, main	8/224	1/28		main:	1/28
		neg, rep.init, main	1/22	1/22	1/23.67	1/27.33	1/22
		aff, rep.init, sub	3/36	1/12		sub: 1/12.67	
		neg, rep.init, sub	0/2*				
		aff, rep.n.init, main	14/295	1/21.07		main: 1/21	
		neg, rep.n.init, main	1/20	1/20	1/17.6		
		aff, rep.n.init, sub	5/34	1/6.8		sub: 1/7.4	
	+ back	neg, rep.n.init, sub	0/3*				
		(Ty_disc+Narr+Akt)			Narration	Aktionsart	
V8	+ fore	narr, noneval, nondur	0/54*		1/75		
		narr, noneval, dur	4/246	1/61.5		nondur: 1/75	
		narr, eval, nondur	1/21	1/21	1/24.67	dur: 1/41.44	
	+ back	narr, eval, dur	5/127	1/25.4			

Table 5. *Results of the corpus of spoken Galician (source: Pollán, 2001: 82). The asterisk marks the knockouts.*

V9 is the interactive group resulting from the association of the factors of three groups of factors: negation, new or repeated events, and type of clause. It is a valuable considered significant by regression analysis.

V8 is the interactive group comprised by the association of the factors of two groups of factors: narration and aktionsart. The model does not take into account variable type and discourse type because, upon association with the variable narration, the data relative to other discourse types do not fit in V8. These data, which refer to the occurrences of *cantei* (E) + *cantara* (R) in the dialog and exposition of past events, are considered by the model in the interactive group V9. The model does not consider the variable V8 to be significant by a narrow margin.

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12 Complete and clear information about the tools of VARBRUL can be found in Moreno Fernández (1994) and Young & Bayley (1996).

In table 5 we have situated the contexts in which cases of *cantei* (E) and *cantara* (R) have been computed, ordering them on the scale of greater to lesser degree of focalisation. These data are reflected in the frequencies column in the following manner: the numerator indicates the number of cases of *cantara* (R) and the denominator indicates the total cases of *cantei* (E) + *cantara* (R) corresponding to this context. The ratios column is a summary of the frequencies: it indicates the number of (E) + (R) cases that must be reviewed to indicate one case of *cantara* (R). We can see in this table how the ratios increase as we descend on the focalisation scale for the interactive groups, that is, the lower the informative relevance of the utterance the greater the probability of encountering *cantara* (R) or, to put it another way, the fewer the number of cases that must be analysed to encounter an occurrence of *cantara* (R).

The intermediate degrees of focalisation are difficult to situate in the exact place on the scale to which they correspond. If two contexts are characterised by possessing two foregrounding factors and one backgrounding factor, which is the highest on the scale? It all depends on which of the two foregrounding factors is "more foregrounding", that is, that which is associated with a higher informative value. This is very difficult to determine *a priori*. For example, the context "aff, rep.init, sub" has been situated above "aff, rep.n.init, main" because priority in ordering was given to the variable new or repeated event[13]. However, if we analyse the informative value of its factors, this is not so clear:

"aff, rep.init, sub" → fore + fore/back + back(grounding)
"aff, rep.n.init, main" → fore + back + fore(grounding)

The means of the ratios offer us a much more clarifying outlook. In this case the means for each group of factors has been ascertained and their notable increase as we descend the focalisation scale can be observed: the contexts with less informative relevance are much more accessible to the *cantara* (R) form, even when *cantei* (E) is always the preferred solution.

If indeed the variables narration and aktionsart clearly operate in the sense proposed by our hypothesis —greater presence of *cantara* (R) in less focalised contexts—, the association of both in the interactive group V8 will not be significant. The reduced number of total cases (21) in the "narr, eval, nondur" context and the presence of four occurrences of *cantara* (R) in a highly focalised context, in non-evaluative parts of the narrative, favour this circumstance. Curiously, as we note in Pollán (2001: 81), these 4 occurrences are found in the same narrative produced by a middle class female speaker situated in the age interval of 41 to 60 years. They involve verbal forms present in the complicating action of a narrative but

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13 It was that which, separately, turned out to be more significant (before proceeding to the interaction of factors for the delimitation of the contexts on the scale).

that had already been mentioned in the pre-narrative section; therefore, they are repeated events.

The variable negation does not demonstrate significant differences in those contexts for which comparisons can be established. This is probably due to the fact that negative contexts are not necessarily less informative than affirmative contexts[14], despite their inclusion by Hopper & Thompson in the low transitivity column in table 1 (see above).

3.3. Results of the corpus of written Galician

The analysis of the corpus of written Galician, following the same model that has proved useful and valid in the description of the corpus of spoken Galician, yield the results displayed in table 6. I chose to try the same model to carry out an optimum contrast with the data in table (concerning spoken Galician), but in this case the model did not turn out to be valid. This analysis results in total x^2 of 13.018, above the value of 11.07, the maximum acceptable for 5 degrees of freedom with $p \leq 0.05$.

As we can see, the scarcity of data in a large part of the contexts identified makes the analysis quite difficult and impedes the achievement of an adequate goodness of fit.

		Interactive factors (Neg+Eve+Ty_clause)	Frequen-cies	Ratios	Means of Ratios		
					Events	Type_clause	Negation
V9	+ fore	aff, new, main	13/1925	1/148.08		main: 1/142.71	1/148.1
		neg, new, main	1/73	1/73	1/158.21		1/73
		aff, new, sub	0/210*			sub: *	
		neg, new, sub	0/7*				
		aff, rep.init, main	0/55*			main: *	
		neg, rep.init, main	0/10*		*		
		aff, rep.init, sub	0/5*			sub: *	
		neg, rep.init, sub	no items				
		aff, rep.n.init, main	1/63	1/63		main: 1/74	
		neg, rep.n.init, main	0/11*		1/79		
		aff, rep.n.init, sub	0/4*			sub: *	
	+ back	neg, rep.n.init, sub	0/1*				
		(Ty_disc+Narr+Akt)			Narration	Aktionsart	
V8	+ fore	narr, noneval, nondur	1/215	1/215	1/244.4		
		narr, noneval, dur	4/1007	1/251.75		nondur: 1/145.5	
		narr, eval, nondur	1/76	1/76	1/25.52	dur: 1/87.33	
	+ back	narr, eval, dur	11/303	1/27.54			

Table 6. *Results of the corpus of written Galician. The asterisk marks the knockouts.*

The two variables resulting from the interaction of factors are, as in table 5, V9 and V8:

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14 See Pollán (2001: 80) with respect to this.

V9: Negation + New or repeated event + Type of clause

V8: Type of discourse + Narration + Aktionsart

Again in this case, in the frequency column the numerator indicates the number of occurrences of *cantara* (R) and the denominator indicates the total number of cases of *cantei* (E) + *cantara* (R) corresponding to each context. The most striking aspect of this table is the scarcity of total data (that is, the very low denominators) in the majority of the contexts of the variable V9. From a total of 2,364 occurrences of *cantei+cantara* computed in V9 contexts, 2,215 correspond to new event ("new") contexts. The scarcity of total data in the contexts of event repeated in initial place ("rep.init") and not in initial place ("rep.n.init") provokes constant knockouts and greatly slows down the analysis. We do not find cases of *cantara* in any context of event repeated in initial place, and there is only one case in the context of event repeated not in initial place: "aff, rep.n.init, main".

Despite all of this, the few comparisons that we were able to make indicate a tendency parallel to that observed in the corpus of spoken Galician: an increase in the ratios as they descend the focalisation scale. The most backgrounded contexts appear to be, in general terms, most accessible to the form *cantara* (R). This is especially marked in the variable "narration", where a ratio of 1/244.4 is observed in non-evaluative contexts, compared with 1/25.52 in evaluative contexts.

Since the model for the corpus of spoken Galician is not adequate to describe the behaviour of the data obtained in the corpus of written Galician, I will test a new model that includes all the variables in one single interaction group. This means reducing the number of contexts considerably from that initially proposed: it is necessary to eliminate those that in V9 incorporate the factor "sub" of the variable "type of clause" and those characterised as "rep.init" in accordance with the variable new or repeated event, since there is no occurrence of *cantara* in these contexts (the result is a knockout).

CELL	TOTAL	APPLICATIONS	EXPECTED	ERROR
	2056	2022	*****	1.853
a	179	178	178.00	.000
b	819	816	816.00	.000
f	129	127	127.00	.000
g	8	7	7.00	.000
h	10	9	9.00	.000
TOTAL CHI-SQUARE = 1.853		CHI-SQUARE/CELL = .309		

Table 7. *Goodness of fit of the model with only one interactive group.*

Correspondences of the labels:

a: aff, new, main, nondur, narr, noneval

b: aff, new, main, dur, narr, noneval

c: neg, new, main, dur, narr, noneval

d: aff, rep.n.init, main, dur, narr, noneval
e: aff, new, main, nondur, narr, eval
f: aff, new, main, dur, narr, eval
g: neg, new, main, dur, narr, eval
h: aff, rep.n.init., main, dur, narr, eval

This model is optimal, offering a total x^2 of 1.853, considerably lower than the critical value 9.49 (for 4 *df*). We would expect a total x^2 value and a value of x^2 per cell of .000, since all of the possible interactions among the criteria values have been carried out. The result we obtain for x^2 coincides with that of the first cell of the column ERROR: this accounts for the cases that remain outside of the model, either because they don't apply with respect to this variable, or because knockouts have occurred in various phases of the analysis.

The results obtained with the new model are:

			Frequencies	Ratios	Probabilities
+fore	a	aff, new, main, nondur, narr, noneval	1/179	1/179	.47
	b	aff, new, main, dur, narr, noneval	3/819	1/273	.57
	c	neg, new, main, dur, narr, noneval	0/7		
	d	aff, rep.n.init, main, dur, narr, noneval	0/1		
	e	aff, new, main, nondur, narr, eval	0/36		
	f	aff, new, main, dur, narr, eval	2/129	1/64.5	.24
	g	neg, new, main, dur, narr, eval	1/8	1/8	.03
+back	h	aff, rep.n.init, main, dur, narr, eval	1/10	1/10	.04

Table 8. *Results of the corpus of written Galician for a single interactive group. The column "Probabilities" refers to the probabilities of selecting* cantei*, which is taken as application value.*

The variable resulting from this interaction group (V10) is significant with an index of .008, as can be seen from the multiple regression analysis of VARBRUL.

Again, the general tendency is an increase in the ratios as the degree of focalisation of the utterance decreases. The number of cases that must be reviewed before finding a case of *cantara* (R) keeps diminishing.

The probabilities of selecting *cantei* (E) are greater when the degree of informative interest of the utterance is greater, even if the probabilities in the two most backgrounded contexts are calculated using a very reduced number of total cases: 8 and 10.

Without a doubt it is the variable "narration" that has the most influence over the verbal form selection, and it does so in the direction predicted by my hypothesis: the evaluative parts of the narrative are those most accessible to the incorporation of *cantara* (R), with a mean ratio of 1/45.74, compared with the non-evaluative parts

(with a greater degree of discursive focalisation) with a mean ratio of 1/215.5. These ratios are the means of the ratios of the contexts with "eval" and "noneval" factors, respectively, in table 8.

Therefore, we have seen that applying to the corpus of written Galician the same model of analysis that we applied earlier to the corpus of spoken Galician did not turn out to be statistically significant for the multiple regression analysis of VARBRUL. The reason lies in the scarcity of total data in contexts of events repeated in initial place and events repeated not in initial place. When this variable is associated with others in an interactive group, the data that don't apply for it don't apply for the others, either, and the possibilities for analysis are considerably limited. In any case, when we test the model resulting from the interaction of all of the variables (V10), *cantara* (R) once again demonstrates a greater affinity for backgrounded contexts, and this statistical model is indeed significant.

Further, the differences between the corpus of spoken Galician and the corpus of written Galician analysed indicate that the morphological expression of pragmatic values is much more productive in the first. In my introduction I provided some possible explanations: redundancy is more necessary in spoken language, and therefore the pragmatic valuation of the utterance is marked in a much more unambiguous manner (by means of morphological as well as phonetic or supersegmental processes). In addition, this same necessity for redundancy explains that in spoken discourse repetitions of events are more frequent. The reduced number of repeated events in the corpus of written Galician reflects behaviour very different from that of spoken discourse, since redundancy does not have the same impact because the noises, distractions, and memory lapses do not affect the adequate reception of the message. Contrasted with 636 repeated events in the corpus of spoken Galician, there were 149 in written Galician. In written Galician this conditioned and restricted the possibilities of analysis: of twelve contexts identified for the interactive variable V9, eight contain the factor of repeated event (in initial place or not in initial place). The total occurrences of *cantei+cantara* in these contexts are very low, and nonexistent in one of them: "neg, rep.init, sub".

It is also notable that narrative, although it is the type of discourse easiest to find in written language, manifests itself sufficiently in spoken language to allow this contrast of data. The incorporation of *cantara* (R) in narrative discourse basically takes place in evaluative parts, as a morphological resource for expressing pragmatic values. The variable narration, which distinguishes the evaluative parts of the narrative from the non-evaluative parts, is that which follows our initial expectations most fully and with the greatest number of cases: the evaluative parts, less informatively relevant, are much more open to the incorporation of *cantara* (R). The data from the corpus support this interpretation: in spoken Galician, contrasted with a ratio of 1/75 for non-evaluative parts, the ratio is 1/24 in the evaluative parts. In the corpus of written Galician we obtain a ratio of 1/244 (non-evaluative parts) contrasted with 1/25

(evaluative parts)[15]. In the two corpora the situation is parallel: of every 24 or 25 forms of simple past analysed in the evaluative parts, one of these is *cantara* (R). It is necessary to analyse many more forms in the non-evaluative parts to find *cantara* (R)[16].

Finally, it is important to note that spoken language in its colloquial register fully exploits the expressive function of the language; the presence of the subjectivity of the speaker is an identifying feature of this register. The valorative (and therefore auxiliary) parts and components in this type of discourse are numerous and, as a consequence, so are the opportunities for the occurrence of *cantara* (R).

However, subjectivity is also an essential component of literary written discourse. This can be seen in dialogue when spoken discourse is reproduced, in the exposition of past events that are valued by the speaker in case (i), and in narrative by means of an indirect free style, especially in (ii), (iii) and (iv).

(i) Durante o primeiro inverno non pasou nada, pro *fora* (R) terríbel pró papai (*Arra*, 95).
'During the first winter nothing happened, but it *was* (R) terrible for papa'.

(ii) —A mamai e mais eu deixamos a casopiña de Vilar, en Lavadores. E viñémonos prá serra. Viñemos a Auguela, a nosa aldea nativa. Viñemos ao noso ser, onde o papai ordenara de facer unha casiña nova de tixolo, con mesmo pozo negro.
Auguela son dez casas e algunhas cortes e canastros. Todos os teitos son de colmo menos a casa que *fixera* (R) coas súas maos o papai da meniña (*Arra*, 94).
—'Momma and also I left the hovel in Vilar, in Lavadores. And we came to the mountains. We came to Auguela, to our native village. We came to our selves, where papa made an order to make a new little house of clay, with the same black well.
Auguela is ten houses and some stables and silos. All of the roofs are made of straw except the house that the girl's father *made* (R) with his own hands'.

(iii) Na parede, no póster máis grande e visible, estaba aquel tipo, Steven Tyler, líder de Aerosmith. (...) Por vez primeira asaltouno a sospeita de que aquel

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15 We must take into account that the variable narration is much more productive in written literary language than in spoken language. Of a total of 1,601 items analysed in terms of this variable in the written corpus, we find 448 in the spoken corpus.

16 With the peculiarity of the four examples of *cantara* (R) found in the complicating action of the same narration as mentioned earlier, that increased (in my opinion equivocally) the ratio of these contexts to 1/75.

póster estaba alí por el. Tiña a súa mesma idade. ¿Ou non? Steven Tyler era máis vello. Cando Miro llo dixo, *ficara* (R) mudo (*Que,* 66).
'On the wall, on the biggest and most visible poster, there was that guy, Steven Tyler, leader of Aerosmith. (...) For the first time he started to suspect that that poster was there for him. He was the same age. Or no? Steven Tyler was older. When Miro told him, he *went* (R) speechless'.

(iv) Antes de arrincar o coche, respirou fondo. Prendían desganados os primeiros neóns e as farolas tiñan aínda unha luz eivada. "Só e por aí", murmurou. De todo o sucedido, aquilo *fora* (R) o que máis o perturbara (*Que,* 71).
'Before starting the car, he took a deep breath. The neon lights lit up disconsolately and the street lamps still had a feeble light. "Alone and out there", he murmured. Of all that had happened, that *was* (R) what bothered him the most'.

4. Conclusion

We have seen, in the first place, that there is a context of morphosyntactical variation in the possible use of two verbal forms, *cantei* (E) and *cantara* (R), with a value of simple preterite (what we referred to earlier in section 1 as aoristic preterite) in Galician. To examine the corresponding situation in spoken Spanish in Galicia, see Pollán (2001).

We have also seen that there are linguistic reasons conditioning this selection. This confirms the reflections of Preston (1996), according to whom the factors most frequently affecting the selection of forms in apparent free variation are linguistic, followed by social and stylistic factors. Specifically, these are pragmatic factors relative to the degree of discursive focalisation; this can be measure on a scale in terms of the characterisation of discursive contexts as more or less backgrounded (section 3). The corpora analysed demonstrate a clear preference for *cantara* (R) in contexts of low intensity or informative relevance, even when *cantei* (E) is the preferred form in all contexts.

In section two I noted the possibility of interpreting some uses of *había cantado* in Spanish as uses of this form with a value of simple preterite. The results obtained from the corpora of spoken and written Galician might shed some light on the situation of this Spanish verbal form, frequently ignored in its most complex occurrences, those of tense-aspect contexts of simple preterite. It is reasonable to think that the pragmatic value of the verbal morphology demonstrated by Galician is not completely irrelevant to Spanish. Recall the examples provided by Veiga:

(5) Pero, ¿no me *habías dicho* que te ibas?
(6) ¡Pero si en este bar ya *habíamos estado* otro día![17]

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17 Utterance pronounced by the speaker upon entering the bar the second time.

The form *había cantado* is employed without reference to an intermediate prior moment in Spanish in contexts with a very low degree of focalisation: the interrogation and the exclamation are expressive resources of an evaluative nature. Further, even though the events are not repeated, they do refer to events already known by the addressee: because he was the subject-agent of this action (5) or because he was involved in the process (6). In (5) we have a verb that introduces a completive clause and the use of the adverb *no* (dispossessed of its negative meaning) reinforces the doubtful mode of the utterance. In (6) there is a durative verb, a stative. Statives are durative predications with a low transitivity index in the scheme proposed by Hopper & Thompson (1980). If we select from within these transitivity parameters those that refer to the mode of action or aktionsart —Aspect, Kinesis and Punctuality—, we can see that they are ordered in the following manner[18]:

+ transitive	$\rightarrow$	$\rightarrow$	$\rightarrow$	– transitive
semelfactives	achievements	productions	activities	statives

Given that greater or lesser transitivity maintains a directly proportional relationship with greater or lesser focalisation, as concluded by the authors of the work cited, statives are predications with a very low degree of discursive focalisation; therefore, backgrounding. Actions imply a transference not expressed by means of states: "abracé a Sally" ('I hugged Sally', action), as opposed to "me gusta Sally" ('I like Sally', state)[19].

In conclusion, our data confirm two fundamental aspects:

a. the rejection of the null hypothesis by virtue of the significance of the statistical models utilised for the two corpora; this suggests that the degree of focalisation of the utterance has an impact on verbal selection;

b. the greater productivity of the morphological processes expressing pragmatic content in spoken discourse than in written. In written discourse, the situations favouring the appearance of *cantara*, that is, backgrounded contexts, offer less productivity than in spoken language, especially due to the low incidence of repetition of events and other types of redundancies.

This second instance of variation that entails the decision of whether or not to make use of the morphological processes expressing backgrounding remains unresolved. However, other variables intervene in this decision.

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18 See Pollán, 2001: 66.

19 Examples of Hopper & Thompson (1980: 252).

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