

Linguistic homogeneity in Galician and Portuguese borderland communities

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Abstract

This paper discusses recent research findings within the borderland regions of southern Galicia and northern Portugal regarding the linguistic continuity and the use of language as a symbol of ethnic identity. A brief historical overview outlines the social, ethnic and cultural borders and their configuration within geographical and political frontiers. The notion of border regimes and synchronic cross-border geolinguistic diffusion is examined to determine the extent of mutual intelligibility, the distribution of contextual functions within the borderland communities and the extent of the dialectal continuum. The opinions of the borderland communities regarding the issue of ethnolinguistic identities, their emblematic and unifying characterisations and impact within cross-border cultures are then examined, taking into consideration the official language status of both Galician and Portuguese within their respective territories. Speculative conclusions indicate that because of increased cross-border contact, phonetic levelling is occurring between the varieties.

Key words: borderland communities, language contact, convergence phenomena, ethnolinguistic identity, Portuguese, Galician.

Resumo

Este artigo expón certos achádegos recentes na investigación sobre a zona da raia entre o sur de Galicia e o norte de Portugal, tendo en conta a continuidade lingüística e o uso da lingua coma símbolo de identidade étnica. Unha breve perspectiva histórica enmarca os límites sociais, étnicos e culturais e mais a súa configuración dentro das fronteiras xeográficas e políticas. A noción de réxime de fronteira e a

difusión xeolingüística sincrónica ó seu traveso examínanse para determinar a extensión da intelixibilidade mutua, a distribución das funcións contextuais dentro das comunidades transfronteirizas e a extensión do *continuum* dialectal. Examínanse entón as opinións das comunidades transfronteirizas tendo en conta as identidades etnolingüísticas, as súas caracterizacións emblemáticas e unificadoras e mais o impacto dentro das culturas transfronteirizas, tomando en consideración o status como linguas oficiais de galego e portugués en cadanseus territorios. As conclusións especulativas indican que, debido ó incremento entre o contacto transfronteirizo, estase dando unha nivelación fonética entre as variedades.

Palabras clave: comunidades fronteirizas, contacto lingüístico, fenómenos de converxencia, identidade etnolingüística, portugués, galego.

1. The notion of a border

Globalisation has become an important concept in recent times, and the concomitant pressure it exerts upon linguistic diversity and language spread has polarised theories regarding its ultimate outcome. Mar-Molinero (2004) and Crystal (2000: 70, 77-80) point out that globalisation facilitates the spread across national borders of so-called world languages such as English and Spanish, which take over intra-community linguistic domains formerly assumed by the local vernacular. Proponents of benevolent nationalisms claim that a few global collective languages would eradicate ethnic division and the marginalisation of minority groups. Cross-cultural, social and even geographical boundaries would be erased as ideas, behavioural norms and cultural practices were subjected to the presence of the global collective. However, antiassimilationists contend that a decline in linguistic diversity goes hand in hand with a decline in (multi-) cultural, (multi-) social and (multi-) intellectual diversity, thus having a profound effect on the communal, united identity of a given ethnic group.¹

Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has witnessed a resurgence and re-emergence of national and regional pride in ethnic identity, such as that surrounding ethnicity in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union. It is now acknowledged that notions of ethnic, social and cultural identity are not necessarily bound by political frontiers but are able, instead, to transcend them. This, in turn, has focused attention on the characterisation of areas surrounding such borders, traditionally considered as the focal point of contact between two distinct societies and their idiosyncratic cultures, identities and political perspectives, but now regarded as microcosms of research into language contact and ongoing processes of divergent or convergent

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the effects of globalisation, see the University of Warwick's series of working papers at: <<<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CSGR/index.html>>>.

varietal innovation.² The proposition of this paper is that the opening up of territorial frontiers may accelerate the occurrence of contact-induced linguistic change within the borderlands of Galicia and Portugal.

Spain displays counter-globalisation linguistic diversity across internal space and borders. Although Castilian is the official state language, the existence of the regional varieties of Catalan, Basque and Galician was, until recently, considered an obstacle to the consolidation of a centralising Spanish national identity.³

Emigration rather than immigration characterises the indigenous composition of Galician society. One of the most rural regions of Spain, a high percentage of its population speak the language but with varying degrees of competence. Since the right to self-government was achieved in the 1980s, the Galician language has been upheld and promoted institutionally and is starting, at least from a socio-political and socio-linguistic perspective, to dissociate itself from its low prestige image and to be considered, potentially, as a legitimate symbol of Galician ethnic identity.

Although Portugal's deep-seated tradition of emigration migratory patterns has recently started to change,⁴ the use of the mother tongue within Portuguese diasporic communities highlights the fact that loyalty to the national language is still

² See, for example, case studies on language contact at the Romance-Germanic borders in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (Treffers-Daller & Willemys, 2002) and research into dialect convergence and divergence across European borders (*International Journal of the Sociology of Language* eg Hinskens, Kallen & Taeldeman, 2000: 1-28).

³ The case of Catalonia demonstrates how tenacious language loyalty helps achieve regionalist aspirations. Most of the indigenous population maintained their bilingualism during the Franco years and their indigenous language is employed in a range of diglossic exchanges. Catalan is associated with economic dominance, so here, the national language has not displaced the minority, intercommunity vernacular as has occurred with the low prestige Catalan variety of *valenciano* in Valencia. Woolard (1989: 62-3) and Green (1994: 167) warn that full equality for Catalan with Castilian within Catalonia itself has not yet been achieved. It is proving difficult to persuade the monolingual Castilian-speaking migrants, even long-established workers, to learn and use Catalan. During the sixties and seventies, Basque was afforded symbolic status by the nationalist movement ETA, and various educational reforms were initiated to promote the link between language and ethnic identity. However, Basque has found it difficult to shake off its association with a rural lifestyle and conservatism, and so the growing immigrant population have resisted learning it –less than 25 per cent of the community are able to speak Basque (Mar-Molinero, 1997: 135).

⁴ Improvements in the general economic situation of the country have resulted in less emigration and a concomitant influx of itinerant, immigrant workers. For further information on Portuguese migratory patterns, see Corkhill (1996), Eaton (1998, 1999) and Beswick (forthcoming).

widespread, reinforced by its high degree of linguistic uniformity. With the exception of Mirandese, confined to a small administrative division in the northeast corner of Portugal, the language is remarkably homogeneous. Although other regions do display idiosyncratic phonetic characteristics, for example, the isolated northern regions of *Tras-os-Montes*, the areas surrounding the Rivers Minho and Douro and bordering Galicia, parts of *Beira-Baixa*, the *Alto-Alentejo* and the *Algarve* (*Estremenho*) in the central-southern zone, there are no highly distinguishable dialectal varieties of Portuguese.⁵

2. Galician-Portuguese⁶

Galician and Portuguese share their origins and early development as a group of language varieties spoken in the west of the Iberian Peninsula. Although levelled to some extent under the Roman Empire, isolation of the regions from the major Roman towns meant that the assimilation of Latin forms was slow. Germanic invaders and the incipient conquest of the Moors left little mark in the northwestern regions, although the linguistic consequences for Portuguese varieties were considerable.

Between 1093-1097, the region was divided into two and by 1179, the Kingdom of Portugal completed its political scission from the rest of the Peninsula. Its power base was transferred south to Lisbon, the linguistic consequences of which would be substantial, but until the end of the *Reconquista* the popular vernacular of both territories was Galician-Portuguese.

Galicia was united definitively with the Kingdom of Castile in the thirteenth century. Until its decline in the fifteenth century, the language assumed a cultural role, becoming the vehicle of the majority of Hispanic love lyrics and poetry, the *cancioneiros* (González López, 1980: 107). The differences between Galician and Portuguese became accentuated as the River Minho became the state frontier, shutting off contact and collaboration between the regions. The phonetic and lexical systems diversified according to the specific linguistic influences exerted on them,

⁵ The principal borderland studies carried out to date have focussed upon political and linguistic planning of the language varieties denominated *as falas*. See for example: Gargallo Gil (1999), Martín Durán (1999), Martín Galindo (1999), Rey Yelmo (1999). For studies principally concerning the area of *Olivença* and the ongoing debate regarding its sovereignty, see Vicente (1992) and Luna (1994). Costas González (1992, 1996) has also carried out valuable work in the area of *Cáceres*.

⁶ More detailed historical accounts of Galicia and its language can be found in Lorenzo (1975), Azevedo Maia (1986), Monteagudo and Santamarina (1993), Cano Aguilar (1999), and Penny (2000, 2002).

Mozarabic influences in the south, Castilian influences in the north. Castilian emerged as the language of social prestige and power in Galicia, whereas Galician lost all its status and was retained solely for oral intra-group purposes.

In the mid nineteenth century, Galician experienced a brief renaissance as a literary language. The *galeguista* movement was a culture-based attempt at underlining and defending the interrelationship between ethnic and linguistic identity, established under the banner of the *Rexurdimento*. However, only after 1975 were attempts to have Galician officially recognised as the regional language successful to any degree, with the ratification of the Spanish Constitution (1978) and Galician Statute of *Autonomía* (1981) and the drafting of the *Normas ortográficas* (Real Academia Galega & Instituto da Lingua Galega, 1995). The standard Galician written form is influenced by the Castilian orthographic system, but the *Normas* prescribe morphological standards based upon the *galego iriense* dialect spoken in the Ira Flavia and Tui western regions, and phonological standards based upon the dialect of *galego lucense*, spoken in the areas of Lugo, Mondoñedo and Ourense.⁷

3. Cross-border linguistic communality

This research paper studies a Galician-Portuguese border regime in order to evaluate the impact of varietal contact and shift and the possible effect of attitudinal factors.⁸ The hypothesis formulated was to establish the overriding linguistic features shared by each community, together with the idiosyncratic identity each assigns to itself and to the other, in order to determine whether such notions of identity may be reflected in, or influenced by, code variation.

In contact situations between two communities employing differing varieties for their intragroup communications, linguistic innovations originating in one community may spread out and, ultimately, encroach on the neighbouring variety, thus reducing intersystemic (cross-code) variation. Initially, individual speakers may adjust their own linguistic behaviour to that of their interlocutors. Giles (1973: 247) defines such processes as *convergence*, an important feature of which is that varieties become more similar to one another as speakers adapt to the speech of the other community because their intention is to accommodate on sociopsychological grounds (Hinskens, Kallen & Taeldeman, 2000: 3). So the reduction of idiosyncratic

⁷ For a generally unbiased account of the resistance to this particular standard evinced by the pro-Portuguese *Reintegracionista* movement, see Henderson (1996: 161). For further information regarding standardisation in Galicia, see Cidrás Escáneo (1994), Fernández Rei (1991, 1992), Regueira Fernández (1994) and Beswick (2002).

⁸ See in this respect, Trudgill's early work on dialect geography within England (1974), and Boberg's recent research (2000) on the US-Canada border.

features in intercultural communications may be perceived as a desire to be seen as inclusive towards the other community and part of their dynamic, as well as for purely communicative reasons. Over time, societal linguistic phenomena arise from such idiosyncratic behavioural patterns, to fulfil what Garvin and Mathiot (1956) term a *unifying* function.

Alternatively, an individual's linguistic behaviour may reflect a desire to differentiate themselves from the other speaker and their social group, termed *divergence* by Giles (1973: 247-52). From a societal perspective, Garvin and Mathiot describe this behaviour as embodying a *separatist* function (1956). If the communities are separated by a political border, inter-community changes may never diffuse further than their own territorial source (Boberg, 2000: 1-2), so the varieties in question may diversify even more over time and become more dissimilar to one another: the location of isoglossic bundles at linguistic borders is the outcome. Once again, there may be a correlation with psychological processes, whereby the interlocutors feel the need to utilise their speech forms to distance and distinguish themselves from their neighbours.

Yet, at many national borders a transitional language variety exists instead, so any type of demarcation line is arbitrary, based on a political or social relationship between these communities and their respective language varieties.⁹ Although the influence of constructed borders is assumed to be minor compared to the influence of natural or geographic borders, state borders that transgress old dialect and variety continua may impact change as the linguistic varieties in question diverge, resulting in new boundaries between varieties which parallel the political or social border rather than the former linguistic border.

Although linguistically related, Galician and Portuguese are separated geographically by the River Minho, and considered from a political perspective to be two separate language varieties with their own standard languages, a viewpoint reinforced by Galicia's *comunidade autónoma* status. Indeed, there phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical variation between the two.¹⁰ However, many of the features of northern Portuguese are still shared with southern Galician varieties. Fernández Rei (1988: 100; 1990: 17) states that from a strictly linguistic point of

⁹ This is, ostensibly, the case of the Dutch-German border. Although both countries have their own standard languages, linguistically related but distinct from a sociolinguistic and political viewpoint, state and linguistic boundaries are not homogeneous: it is not feasible to categorise most of the dialects spoken within the borderland areas as either Dutch or German on purely linguistic grounds as their structural differences are fairly minor. However, recent research indicates that the varieties in question no longer maintain appreciable communicative contact with each other and are undergoing functional and structural loss (Hinskens, Kallen & Taeldeman, 2000: 17-22).

¹⁰ See Appendix 1.

view the dialects of southern Galicia are simply a continuation of those of the Minho and Tras-os-Montes regions of northern Portugal, with some degree of mutual intelligibility manifest. Hence, it is difficult to establish linguistic justification for the border.

4. The borderlands of Galicia and Portugal

The investigations presented in this paper were carried out in the summer of 1998 in the western fortified border towns of Tui in southern Galicia and Valença in northern Portugal. Contrary to the perceived notions outlined above, the Galician and Portuguese communities in question maintain long-standing cross-border alliances. Despite centuries of military and political disagreement between Spain and Portugal, such as the imposition of strict border controls and guards after World War Two, and despite the geographical boundary of the River Minho, well-established cross-border commercial trade for goods such as coffee, linen and alcohol has been a regular feature.

Before the construction of the first railway and road bridge by the Eiffel Company, the only way across the Minho was by boat. However, the incipient economic growth of the region in the 1960s and 70s resulted in a marked increase in private car ownership. The development of new railway and public transport systems, including the building of a new bridge linking the North-South European motorway, has facilitated an increase in cross-border movement and transactions. Both countries joined the European Union in 1986 and the Schengen Agreement has been introduced, doing away with the border and duty restrictions. Communities on either side of the border have banded together to create the *Eje Atlántico del Noroeste Peninsular* to serve as a regional lobby in relations with the two national governments and with the European Union.¹¹

5. Comparative research

The research described in this paper is based upon an investigation of the main linguistic characteristics of southern Galician and northern Portuguese, as well as an evaluation of attitudes regarding group membership. As a point of departure, earlier

¹¹ “El Eje Atlántico es una asociación transfronteriza constituida por las 18 principales ciudades de Galicia y de la región Norte de Portugal que promueve la cohesión económica social y cultural a través de la estructuración de un territorio común”. (The Atlantic Axis is a cross-border association comprising the 18 principal cities of Galicia and the region of Northern Portugal, which promotes economic, social and cultural unity through the creation of a common territory). (Author’s translation), <<<http://www.fundaciongaliciaeuropa.org/FGE/textos/>>>.

research carried out by Lorenzo (1975), Teyssier (1984), Fernández Rei (1988, 1990) and the *Instituto da Lingua Galega* (ILGA, 1990, 1995, 1999) on dialectal variation was subject to an analytical comparison, and it was found that where they had considered the same data, their results were broadly similar.¹² The following is a general summary of the findings relevant to the present research, bearing in mind that not all the authors necessarily evaluated the same features:

- In both Galician and northern Portuguese dialects the diphthong [ow] is retained as such, a vestige of the pronunciation of the Middle Ages, whereas in Lisbon and hence, in standard Portuguese, it is monophthongised to [o] in *ouro* (gold), *outeiro* (hillock, knoll).

- In both Galician and northern Portuguese dialects and also in the dialect of Lisbon, the diphthong [ej] is retained and not monophthongised to [e] in *beira* (bank, edge), *primeiro* (first).¹³

- Unlike the standard, which retains orthographic *b* and *v* as distinct phonemes /b/ and /v/, there is general confusion of such in central and northern Portuguese dialects, where they are both resolved as /b/, the allophone [β] occurring intervocally and [b] elsewhere, as occurs in both Galician and Castilian. Thus, Portuguese *cabo* (cape, end) and *cavo* (hollow, deep), and *cem balas* (one hundred bullets) and *cem valas* (one hundred ditches) would be pronounced identically, the contextual evidence indicating the difference in meaning.

- Word-initially, the Galician-Portuguese palatal affricate /tʃ/ as in *chama* (flame), *chave* (key) is retained in Galician and much of northern Portugal, whereas it has been reduced to the palatal fricative /ʃ/ in the rest of Portugal. This mirrors the /ʃ/ found intervocally in words such as Portuguese and Galician *deixar* (to leave).

- In both southern Galicia and northern Portugal, there is a general addition of paragogic /e/ after infinitives in *-ar* or nouns in *-al* on such words as *pescar* (to fish) and *Portugal* (Portugal).

- One of the most salient markers of standard European Portuguese is the resolution of syllable-final atonic /e/. Historically, Galician retained the sixteenth century pronunciation [e] as in *xente* (people), as does Castilian, as it retained /o/ > [o], as in *burro* (donkey) in the same position. In many areas of the region, syllable-final atonic /e/ has disappeared in the pronunciation of the masculine singular subject pronoun *el* (he), although ILGA (1999) has found that it is regularly retained as [e] in dialectal varieties of southern Galician, hence [ele], mirroring to a large

¹² For further information on Portuguese linguistics, see Nogueira (1996), Vásquez Corredoira (1998). Comparative studies between specific linguistic aspects of Galician and Portuguese were also consulted: Lacerda and Head (1966), Gonçalves Blasco (1987), Mira Mateus (1987), Estravis (1987), Brandão de Carvalho (1988).

¹³ This diphthong is also retained in Lisbon, where it has been resolved as [ai] and even [ãĩ] in certain contexts (Teyssier, 1984: 63).

extent the plural form *eles* (they, masculine singular). The Portuguese derivation is [e > i > ə]; this schwa is likely to be pronounced so weakly nowadays [ə̃] that it may even disappear at the end of a word [ø] such as *gente* (people). Teyssier (1984: 59-63) attests that in Portuguese, posttonic /e/ may still be resolved as [i] around the Minho, as well as in the Beira Baixa, Madeira, the Azores and the Algarve, hence *ele* [eli]. However, pretonic /e/ is said to only be pronounced as [i] in the Alentejo and the Algarve as in Portuguese *pessoa* (person).

- Similarly, in Portuguese syllable-final atonic /o/ is raised to [u] as in *burro* (donkey), whereas it is retained as [o] in Galician.

- Fernández Rei (1990: 28-9, 161) employs three isoglosses in order to establish a linguistic frontier between Southern Galician and Northern Portuguese, one of which is the almost universal occurrence of a vowel plus the velar nasal consonant [aŋ] where Portuguese has a nasal diphthong [ãw̃] as in Galician *can* and Portuguese *cão* (dog). However, Teyssier (1984: 45-6) adds that in northern Portuguese dialects around the Minho, the diphthong [ow] may also be found in this context.¹⁴

- Most of the north-west region of Portugal, including the border areas along the Minho, appear to preserve four sibilant phonemes from the Middle Ages: the predental /s/ and /z/ found in the rest of Portugal as in *paço* (palace, royal residence), *cozer* (to cook), and the apicoalveolar /s̺/ (and /z̺/) found in Galician and Castilian as in Portuguese *passo* (pace, gait), *coser* (to sew).

- A voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ occurs in Galician when orthographic *c* precedes *e, i*: *nación* (nation), *aceptar* (to accept), whereas Portuguese retains the sibilant /s/: *nação* (nation), *aceitar* (to accept).

- In Galician, orthographic *x* is pronounced as a voiceless palatal fricative /x̟/, but its Portuguese cognate (orthographic *j, g*) is voiced /z̞/: hence, Galician *hoxe* Portuguese *hoje* (today), Galician *xente* Portuguese *gente* (people).

- Similarly, although syllable-final /s/ and /z/ are palatalised in Portuguese, this is only found in sporadic pockets of Pontevedra in Galicia. Thus, voiceless and voiced cognates are Galician *e/s/te*, Portuguese *e[ʃ]te* (this); Galician *atrás/z/ dele* Portuguese *atrás[ʒ] dele* (behind him).

- Finally, the *gheada*, the Galician aspirate pronunciation of word-initial and intervocalic orthographic *g* as a voiceless pharyngeal fricative [h], a weak voiceless velar fricative [x] or its aspirated counterpart [x^h]: *amigo* (friend) *galo* (cock), is said not to occur south of the Minho.

¹⁴ Earlier unpublished research indicates that [ŋ > ɲ] is possible in Santiago de Compostela.

6. Methodology

Some twenty inhabitants were chosen from each of the towns in question. The respondents chosen had to satisfy sociolinguistic and extra-linguistic criteria of the study. All were born and raised in their particular community, all resided within the confines of the town, in order to ensure as much parity as possible was achieved as far as the notion of an urban setting was concerned. All respondents were aged between twenty and fifty; all worked in non-professional jobs (eg in shops or banks) and there was an equal split between men and women. The Galician speakers confirmed that they spoke Galician exclusively within the home environment and within their own community, unless spoken to firstly in Castilian. The majority had been taught in Castilian in school, but felt more comfortable using Galician in the majority of contexts.

The first aim of this empirical investigation was to examine the intuitive, unconscious linguistic conduct of the respondents whilst performing speech acts. To this end, the investigator told them that she was aiming to collect anecdotal tales and stories about their respective hometowns and about trips across the *Minho*.

The second aim was to evaluate the mutual intelligibility between the two communities in question. Finally, the attitudes and opinions of the respondents regarding their idiolect and that of the other community and how far these appear to impact on their notion of group membership and ethnicity were examined. Two complementary methodologies were employed; observational and interview techniques. The aim of the former is to avoid inaccurate native speaker evaluations of their own abilities to understand the discourse of the other community in question. During the latter, the focus is on the respondents' own intuitions, attitudes and opinions.¹⁵ The researcher employed an informal, open-ended interview technique to guide the conversation in order to encompass points not covered by the respondent's stories.

The dialogues were recorded between June and August 1998. Each interaction took place in a fairly informal setting such as a bar or café, and although the respondents were not made aware of the research objective regarding their linguistic output, they were given the opportunity to talk about the context of the interview beforehand and to ask others about suitable stories. Recordings were made on a hand-held DAT recorder with the respondents' permission. Although the quality of these recordings may be distorted slightly by dint of the fact that they were made in public places, it was felt that the majority were clear enough to merit analysis and those that were not, were discarded.

¹⁵ In this way it was hoped to avoid potentially imprecise evaluations regarding attitudes, which the use of observational techniques of respondent behaviour on their own may provoke. For a full account of methods suitable for language attitude research, see Labov (1994: 149-78).

7. Results

The results appear to confirm that the following features occur:

- Inhabitants of both towns (Tui and Valença) tend to retain the diphthongs [ow] and [ej].
- The majority in both towns (95% in each) confuse orthographic *b* and *v* as /b/, resolving both phonetically as [b] and [β] depending on the context.
- Nearly all the respondents retain the palatal affricate /tʃ/ word-initially.
- All the respondents affix paragogic /e/ after infinitives in *-ar* or nouns in *-al*.

However:

- Instances were found in Valença of syllable-final /e/ as [i], not [ə], confirming Teyssier's findings (1984: 59-63) for the Portuguese zone bordering the Minho. However, ILGA's assertion (1999) that the southern Galician resolution is [e] was not confirmed, with 90% of the Tui interviewees employing a final [i] in *xente* (people). Regarding the pronunciation of syllable-final /o/, the general tendency in Tui was to approximate the [u] allophone of Portuguese, although this was somewhat intermittent. There was also a certain amount of raising of [e] to [i] in pretonic position, mirroring the Portuguese pronunciation as in *Espanha* [iʃpaɲa] (Spain). The same pattern exists for the third person singular subject pronoun *ele*, also contradicting ILGA's findings (1995) that [el], displaying a loss of the word-final vowel, is prevalent in Tui. Thus, the form is pronounced [ile] in Galician and [ili] in Portuguese.

- For Galician *irmán* and Portuguese *irmão* (brother), both groups under examination use both vowel plus nasal and vowel diphthong forms indiscriminately, although where the diphthong is used, it does not tend to be nasalised, hence [aŋ] and [ao]. This contradicts both Fernández Rei's (1990: 28-9, 161) and ILGA's assertions (1990, 1995) that only the velar nasal is employed in the south of Galicia. Similarly, Teyssier's claim (1984: 45-6) that in northern Portuguese dialects it is common to find [ow] replacing the standard Portuguese [ãw] was not substantiated.

- In general terms it appears that the respondents from Valença are starting to simplify the sibilant opposition /s/, /z/ and /s/, /z/ to the apicoalveolar /s/ and /z/ prevalent in Tui and the rest of Galicia.

- The Galician (and Castilian) voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ and its cognate Portuguese form /s/ are generally retained as such in their respective zones. However, some Tui respondents did demonstrate the cognate Portuguese form /s/ at the beginning of words eg *cera* 'wax', but this was not consistent and one only respondent ever replaced /θ/ with /s/ intervocalically.

- There were many instances of voicing of the Galician voiceless palatal fricative in Tui in line with the Portuguese form /ʒ/, as in Galician *hoxe*, Portuguese *hoje* (today) and Galician *xente*, Portuguese *gente* (people).

- Although syllable-final /s/ is not palatalised in standard Galician, about half of the respondents in Tui offered the Portuguese voiceless palatal fricative /ʃ/ in words such as *este* (this).

- Finally, although the *gheada* was not found in the Portuguese spoken in Valença, nor was it found in the Galician of Tui.

These initial findings confirm some long-standing assertions regarding the approximation of certain phonological features in the borderland regions, but there are also contradictions. Importantly, they also establish that the extent and degree of mutual intelligibility of this particular northern Portuguese dialect to speakers of this southern dialect of Galician could be even higher than previously indicated by the perceived linguistic homogeneity of features. For although 90% of the Galicians and 70% of the Portuguese stated that they neither would nor could attempt to speak the other's vernacular, almost total aural comprehension is evidenced by the observational data. Some 80% of the respondents in Tui display a high level of understanding of northern Portuguese, even though some of the Galicians did admit to struggling at times to differentiate oral and nasal vowels and diphthongs. Some 90% of respondents in Valença demonstrated that they had no problem understanding southern Galician. Around 10% even admitted that in encounters with new acquaintances, it could sometimes be unclear whether they were speaking Galician or Portuguese.¹⁶

However, native speakers of both varieties maintain that they employ their own dialectal variety for all their cross-border communications and make no concessions to the fact that their interlocutor is a non-native speaker of the said dialectal variety, indicating that as far as contextual functions are concerned, the respondents themselves believe that there is little to no mixing of, or switching between, codes. So native speaker's perception appears to decree that a bilingual conversation ensues, and because of the high degree of mutual intelligibility, there is no need for either community to attempt to employ each other's variety.

Yet, the observational data indicates that to an extent, levelling of phonological oppositions has been and is still occurring. So from a purely linguistic perspective, there may be some form of transitional accent variety emerging between that of southern Galician and northern Portuguese.¹⁷ What remains to be decided is whether such a reduction in intersystemic variation arises as a result of convergence phenomena.

¹⁶ There has also been consistent cross-border linguistic contact in the fertile valley of Chaves, in the eastern section of the Portuguese borderlands. Vogensen (website) has revealed that in Vila Verde da Raia near Chaves, no one would attempt to speak Galician, whilst across the state line in Feces de Abajo only a handful of people were able to utter a complete sentence of Portuguese. Despite this inability to speak the other's variety, almost total aural comprehension was evident.

¹⁷ Whether or not mutual lexical borrowing occurs will be investigated at a later date.

8. Ethnolinguistic identities

The aim of the recent standardisation of Galician was to produce a set of shared and unifying linguistic forms to facilitate written and oral communication between internal groups. The issue here is not whether the inhabitants of Tui know how to employ the written standard, but rather, since the introduction of its prescriptive phonological system, whether they consider their accent and dialectal variation as inferior and whether this, in turn, impacts on their perceptions of group identity. We have seen that southern Galician varieties do appear to have certain phonological traits more in common with northern Portuguese than with the Galician standard. Likewise, although the overall uniformity of Portuguese has helped motivate and strengthen a powerful national identity, nonetheless, its northern dialects do display certain marked phonological differences to the standard and conversely, marked similarities to those of the southern Galician varieties. Bearing this in mind, the final investigation carried out concerns Galician and Portuguese ethnolinguistic identities, their emblematic and unifying characterisation and their role and impact within such cross-border cultures. The aim was to employ both self-identification and peer observation techniques to evaluate language use and issues pertaining to identity.

Firstly, by the use of a scale format, the Valençan respondents were asked to select one or more of the following to describe who they are, to mark those selected in order of importance and then to comment further if necessary: Portuguese, northern Portuguese, from the Minho region, from Valença. The Tui respondents were offered the following selection: Spanish, Galician, southern Galician, from the Pontevedra region, from Tui.

Many of the respondents from Valença (90%) indicated that first and foremost, they considered themselves to be from Valença, that their identity was intimately tied in with their hometown. All the respondents selected the Minho region as an integral part of their self-identity classification, although some stated that it was the river and not the region as a whole with which they associated:

- (1) Não sou de Lisboa, sou do Minho. (P.6)
(I am not from Lisbon, I am from the Minho.)

Nearly half (45%) dismissed the notion of a Portuguese identity as irrelevant, a term simply relating to the populations of Lisbon or Oporto, yet a few (30%) were quite happy to consider themselves northern Portuguese as well as Valençan. In Tui, nearly all the respondents (85%) indicated that their main identity was allied to that of Tui as their home town, but that they were also Galician –but not southern Galician:

- (2) Si, son galega nos ollos do resto de España, pero son de Tui antes de máis.
(G.3)
(Yes, I am Galician as far as the rest of Spain is concerned, but I am from Tui above all else.)

However, this heightened sense of their own Galician identity did not mean that they dismissed the notion of Spanish out of hand. When pressed, all conceded that they were Spanish, but many (80%) insisted that they did not feel close to the rest of Spain. Interestingly, not one respondent selected the region of Pontevedra, and a couple of the respondents even asked where this was.¹⁸

When asked about the standard language, the Tui community representatives all admitted that they didn't know how to write Galician 'correctly', and yet appeared quite proud of the fact that dialectal varieties such as theirs, and in particular, strong accents, create regional differences. One Tui resident commented:

(3) Por suposto, temos unha pronunciación moi distinta, non é posible comparala coa de Vigo ou de Santiago de Compostela... eh... ás veces, esa xente vén aquí, reclama o feito de non entende-lo noso acento –ben, é divertido, me fai rir moito. (G.10)

(Of course we sound very different, you can't compare our pronunciation to that of Vigo or Santiago de Compostela... eh... sometimes, people from there come here and complain that they cannot understand our accent –well, it's amusing, it makes me laugh a lot.)

Another added:

(4) Hai que admitir, non falámo-lo galego por si, non, falamos unha forma ben difícil a atopar noutros lugares, ben difícil a entender fóra da zona do Miño. (G.14)

(It has to be said, we don't really speak Galician as such, we speak a variety which is really difficult to find elsewhere, really difficult to understand beyond the confines of the Miño.)

Interestingly, the overriding claim of the Tui community was that the use of Castilian is irrelevant to them on a daily basis and consequently, their spoken command of such at the very least is somewhat tenuous. One commented:

(5) Aquí, non adianta fala-lo castelán, de maneira que naide o fala ben. A maioría dos nosos negocios xerais, habituais, son coa xente do outro lado do río, que non o falan en absoluto. (G.5)

(Here, there is no point in being able to speak Castilian, which means that no-one speaks it well. The majority of our general, our routine transactions, are with the people over the river, and they cannot speak it at all.)

¹⁸ For comparable analyses of perceived identity, see in particular de Oliveira (2002) with respect to the southern Spanish/Portuguese border and Dominic Watt's elucidative paper (2002) on Berwick on Tweed.

When the researcher switched to Castilian, only the youngest respondents found it easy to switch, the older ones code-switching and mixing. The Valença residents claimed that they knew, more or less, how to write standardised Portuguese, but that as far as their regional accents was concerned, only one respondent gave any thought to trying to lose it:

(6) Mas, se eu perdesse o meu sotaque, então ninguén me reconhecera de cá, e isso não presta para nada. Não, não gostaria de perder o meu sotaque, forma parte do meu ser. (P.16)

(But if I did lose my accent, then no-one would know I was from around here, and that's useless. No, I wouldn't like to lose my accent, it is part of me, of who I am.)

Another two added:

(7) Eu gosto da minha maneira de falar porque demonstra as minhas origens. (P.7)

(I like the way I talk because it shows where I come from.)

(8) Ser do norte de Portugal, do Minho, bem, é a minha herança. E é a língua do meu povo que nos define, que nos destaca da gente de fora. (P.18)

(To be from the North of Portugal, from the Minho area, well, it is my inheritance. And it is the language of my people that defines us, that makes us stand out from the people elsewhere.)

In general, both communities also appear to find it easier to associate with their neighbours on the opposite side of the Minho than with their fellow Galicians or Portuguese. Comments in Tui included:

(9) O noso pobo non ten muitas das características típicas dun galego; parece-se muito máis á xente da Valença que á do Santiago. (G.1)

(Our people do not have many of the typical Galician traits; they are much more like the people of Valença than those of Santiago.)

(10) Non me sinto español, pero ademais, non teño conciencia de falar tal coma xente aquí das cidades. (G.12)

(I don't feel Spanish, but I am not aware of speaking in the same way as the city folk do here either.)

(11) As nosas comunidades están nos dous lados opostos dun río, en países distintos, pero somos, no esencial, o mesmo pobo. (G.16)

(Our communities are on the opposite sides of a river, in different countries, but we are, essentially, the same people.)

(12) Somos un conxunto de persoas que viven en vilas distintas pero que teñen en común a lingua, as tradicións, a cultura. (G.6)

(We are a group of people who live in different towns but who share a common language, common traditions, a common culture.)

In Valença, some of the more succinct comments were:

(13) Tenho amigos que moram em Tui e são como eu; somos todos gente do Minho. (P.2)

(I have friends in Tui and they are like me; we are all Minho people.)

(14) Não importa que o rio nos divida. Em minha opinião, o que conta é a nossa maneira de falar. Isso é o que nos une; somos muito parecidos afinal de contas.

(P.14)

(It doesn't matter that the river divides us. The way I see it, what counts is the way we talk. That's what unites us; at the end of the day we are very similar.)

(15) Política? Bem, não tem nada de ver com a nossa situação. Moramos em países diferentes, é óbvio, mas as nossas comunidades entendem-se bem. (P.19)

(Politics? Well, that's got nothing to do with our situation. It is obvious that we live in different countries, but our communities understand each other.)

(16) Olhe, apesar da fronteira, não somos, no fundo, povos diferentes. Se eu tivesse de nomear esa gente de Tui, diria que é Minhote, como nós. (P.11)

(Look, despite the boundary, fundamentally we are not different folk. If I had to label the people of Tui, I would say that they are from the Minho, just like us.)

9. Conclusions

The issue of ethnolinguistic identity is multi-faceted and complex. In this research, the concept of a national identity appears to be less essential to the perception of self than that of a regional or even community identity, reinforced by the emblematic and unifying characterisation of their respective linguistic varieties, both within their home towns and across the border. Moreover, the linguistic diversity of the borderland communities has not been eroded by the given standard forms, certainly as far as pronunciation is concerned. From a sociolinguistic point of view, the spoken varieties in question are perceived by the respondents themselves to differ in many characteristics from the Galician spoken in Santiago de Compostela and the Portuguese spoken in Lisbon. Spatial distance obviously has its role to play in reinforcing the idea that one's dialectal variety may differ from the norm. That said, what is relevant here is that the respondents' own opinions appear to impact on the way each community categorises its own ethnicity and that of its near neighbours. A sense of pride and loyalty to their respective dialectal varieties is clear, whilst at the same time, there appears not to be a strong sense of national identity.

Undoubtedly, this is not entirely due to a convergence of phonological traits; the degree of mutual intelligibility between these two language varieties facilitated the initial need of both communities to be able to communicate effectively in their regular transactions. Individual speakers appear to have modified their own linguistic behaviour in line with that of their interlocutors, to some extent unconsciously but also from a desire to ingratiate themselves on and accommodate the other community. Once such convergence processes and the resultant phonological approximation of the two varieties in question by individuals is adopted by each society as a whole, language can become a unifying tool, enabling each to demonstrate solidarity. Despite some of the respondents believing that they are carrying out bilingual conversations, many feel that they have more in common with their neighbours than with the communities elsewhere in Galicia or Portugal. This contradicts the traditional belief that such communities trade the designations *gallego* and *portugués* as insults (Henderson, 1996: 196-99).¹⁹ However, whether this will lead to the emergence of a borderland identity that transcends political, cultural, historical and geographical borders is, as yet, unclear.

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¹⁹ In popular theatre, the traditional Portuguese perception of the Galician has been as the figure of fun, portrayed as a country bumpkin, speaking an archaic and rustic variety of language (Teyssier, 1984: 39-40). However, in more recent times, it is the northern Portuguese themselves who tend to be one of the regional groups regarded as the butt of many jokes. The issue of global Spanish-Portuguese identity in general is a taboo subject, stemming from territorial claims and political disharmony, engendering a lack of cooperation and at times, a refusal to recognise the others' legitimacy.

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Appendix 1: Galician phonological system.

Oral vowels

| | Tonic position | | Non-final atonic position | | Final atonic position | |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| a | [a] | cama ‘bed’ | [a] | palabra ‘word’ | [a] | casa ‘house’ |
| e | [e] [ɛ] | cera ‘wax’ letra ‘letter’ | [e] | escrito ‘written’ | [e] | lume ‘light’ |
| i | [i] | clima ‘climate’ | [i] | último ‘last’ | | |
| o | [o] [ɔ] | son ‘sound’ forma ‘shape’ | [o] | época ‘era, period’ | [o] | novo ‘new’ |
| u | [u] | grupo ‘group’ | [u] | portugués ‘portuguese’ | | |

Diphthongs

| Falling | | | Rising | | |
|---------|------|-------------------------|--------|------|------------------------|
| ai | [aj] | pai ‘father’ | ia | [ja] | copia ‘copy’ |
| au | [aw] | auga ‘water’ | ie | [iɛ] | Ciencia ‘science’ |
| ei | [ej] | maneira ‘manner’ | io | [jo] | Milenio ‘millenium’ |
| eu | [ew] | meu ‘my’ | iu | [ju] | diurno ‘daily’ |
| iu | [iw] | partiu ‘he, she breaks’ | ua | [wa] | igual ‘same’ |
| oi | [oj] | biscoito ‘biscuit’ | ue | [wɛ] | frecuencia ‘frequency’ |
| ou | [ow] | doutor ‘doctor’ | ui | [wi] | lingüista ‘linguist’ |
| ui | [uj] | puiden ‘i was able to’ | uo | [wo] | Residuo ‘residue’ |

Consonants

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| Orthographic symbol | | |
| b intervocalically | [β] | beber 'to drink' |
| b elsewhere | [b] | |
| c + e, i | [θ] or [s] | cedo 'early' |
| c + a, o, u | [k] | carta 'letter' |
| Ch | [tʃ] | chiste 'joke' |
| d intervocalically | [ð] | dedo 'finger' |
| d elsewhere | [d] | |
| F | [f] | feo 'ugly' |
| G | [g] or [h] | garfo 'fork' |
| L | [l] | lei 'law' |
| Ll | [ʎ] or [j] | allo 'garlic' |
| M | [m] | mesa 'table' |
| N | [n] | nó 'knot' |
| Ñ | [ɲ] | viño 'wine' |
| Nh | [ɲ] | unha 'one' |
| P | [p] | persoa 'person' |
| Q | [k] | quente 'hot' |
| r intervocalically, word finally | [r] | ira 'anger'; ser 'to be' |
| r elsewhere | [r] | rede 'net'; tenro 'tender' |
| Rr | [r] | carro 'cart' |
| S | [s] | sabor 'taste' |
| T | [t] | tema 'theme' |
| v intervocalically | [β] | vivir 'to live' |
| v elsewhere | [b] | |
| X | [ʃ] | xente 'people' |
| Z | [θ] or [s] | zapato 'shoe' |

(Note that some dialectal variation condoned by the *Normas*, 1995, is shown).

Appendix 2: Portuguese phonological system.

Oral vowels

| | Tonic position | Examples | Pretonic position | Examples | Final atonic position | Examples |
|-----|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| a | [a] [ɐ] | gato ‘cat’ ano ‘year’ | [ɐ] | saber ‘to know’ | [ɐ] | boca ‘mouth’ |
| e | [e] [ɛ] | mesa ‘table’ pedra ‘stone’ | [ə] | pedir ‘to ask’ | [ə] | sorte ‘luck’ |
| i | [i] | vida ‘life’ | [i] | dizer ‘to say’ | | |
| o | [o] [ɔ] | boca ‘mouth’ bola ‘ball’ | [u] | cortar ‘to cut’ | [u] | novo ‘new’ |
| ou* | [o] | pouco ‘little’ | [o] | poucíssima ‘very little’ | | |
| u | [u] | grupo ‘group’ | [u] | mulher ‘woman’ | | |

Oral diphthongs

| Orthographic symbol | | Examples |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| ai | [aj] | pai ‘father’ |
| au | [aw] | pausa ‘pause’ |
| ei | [ɛj] [ej] | maneira ‘manner’ ideia ‘idea’ |
| eu | [ew] | meu ‘my’ |
| iu | [iw] | partiu ‘he, she breaks’ |
| oi | [oj] | oito ‘eight’ |
| ui | [uj] | ruim ‘bad, evil’ |
| ua | [wa] | igual ‘same’ |

Nasal vowels and diphthongs

| Orthographic symbol | | Examples |
|------------------------------|-------|--|
| ã, a + m/n + consonant | [ẽ] | lã ‘wool’; branco ‘white’ |
| ão, am | [ɐw̃] | mão ‘hand’; cantam ‘they sing’ |
| ãe, ãi | [ɛj̃] | mãe ‘mother’ |
| e + m/n + consonant | [ɛ̃] | tempo ‘weather, time’; vender ‘to sell’ |
| em, ens | [ɛj̃] | bens ‘goods’ |
| i + m/n + consonant, im, ins | [ĩ] | limpo ‘clean’; fins ‘aims’ |
| o + m/n + consonant, om, ons | [õ] | ponte ‘bridge’; som ‘sound’; bons ‘good’ |
| õe | [oj̃] | nações ‘nations’ |
| u + m/n + consonant, um, uns | [ũ] | fundo ‘bottom’; um ‘one’; uns ‘some’ |

Consonants

| Orthographic symbol | | Examples |
|------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| b | [b] | beber ‘to drink’ |
| c + e, i; ç | [s] | cedo ‘early’; começar ‘to begin’ |
| c + a, o, u | [k] | carta ‘letter’; comer ‘to eat’ |
| ch | [ʃ] | achar ‘to think’ |
| d word initial; nd, ld | [d] | dedo ‘finger’; andar ‘to walk’ |
| d intervocalically | [ð] | cada ‘each’ |
| f | [f] | feo ‘ugly’ |
| g + e, i | [ʒ] | gente ‘people’ |
| g elsewhere | [g] | grande ‘big, huge’ |
| j | [ʒ] | jogar ‘to play’ |
| l | [l] | lei ‘law’ |
| lh | [λ] | alho ‘garlic’ |
| m * | [m] | mesa ‘table’ |
| n + c, g | [ɲ] | branco ‘white’ |
| n elsewhere | [n] | ano ‘year’ |
| nh | [ɲ] | vinho ‘wine’ |

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| p | [p] | pessoa 'person' |
| q | [k] | quente 'hot' |
| r word initially, lr, nr, sr r elsewhere | [rr] [r] | rua 'street'; honra 'honour' cara 'face' |
| rr | [rr] | carro 'car' |
| s intervocalically s + unvoiced consonant, word final s + voiced consonant s/ss elsewhere | [z] [ʃ] [ʒ] [s] | mesa 'table' gostar 'to like'; gatos 'cats' desde 'since' sopa 'soup'; passo 'step' |
| T | [t] | tema 'theme' |
| V | [v] | vida 'life' |
| z word final z elsewhere | [ʃ] [z] | voz 'voice' fazer 'to do, make' |

* Both m and n word-finally denote a nasal resonance of the preceding vowel.