

Sociolinguistics in Galicia: Views on diversity, a diversity of views

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Este monográfico está adicado ó mar e á súa xente

Sociolinguistics research conducted on the language situation of Galicia has traditionally held a low profile in the international scientific arena: few debates and contributions appear beyond the borders of the Spanish State¹. Over the last decade, however, an appreciable increase in the bibliography available has been noted. This volume sets out with no other aim than to add to this already considerable corpus, contributing works in the English language, written for the occasion: this is not a review nor is it a comprehensive, representative compilation of the studies conducted over the last few years².

1 In the French-speaking area, two monographs have appeared on Galician sociolinguistics, in the journals *Plurilinguismes* 6 (1993) and *Lengas* 47 (2000). To our knowledge, no work of this type has appeared yet in the English-speaking area.

2 The most exhaustive and up to date compilation of Galician sociolinguistics (and Galician linguistics in general) is provided by the BILEGA database, accessible on the Internet (<http://airas.cirp.es/WXN/wxn/homes/bilega.html>).

Galician sociolinguistics has benefited, as any other, from the theoretical-methodological contributions that have arisen. Over the last few years, we have witnessed a considerable growth and diversification, both delving deeper into the already traditional themes in our environment (language planning, the social history of the language, sociolinguistic dimension of certain variants previously termed as dialectal, the relationship between language and identity...) and introducing other new ones. Such development, however, has gone beyond themes that are being dealt with.

Scientific progress is rarely oblivious to its context³. One aspect that is always present but, perhaps, is particularly valued today in scientific work is its potential to develop technologies, i.e., tools designed to solve a given problem and which usually take on a value in the market; another is its capacity to develop discourses for social consumption, especially in the case of areas of social research. Prioritization of themes in Galician sociolinguistics is related to all this: in a situation of language contact with strong identity, political and educational implications, there is a need for sociolinguistic discourses, tools and arguments, which become part of the social and political life. Not only is language planning an example of technology developed in this field; sociolinguistic discourses are also implements where, on many occasions, their argumentative use (in terms of defending —or even of excusing— something) are more of interest than their explanative use. This may clarify why a considerable interest continues in certain themes mentioned above, although this is not the case with the diversification that has appeared over the last few years, nor is it with the consolidation of a community of sociolinguists active in Galician (and non-Galician) universities and in other institutions (such as the Seminario de Sociolingüística of the Real Academia Galega, or the Consello da Cultura Galega).

This growth and diversification in sociolinguistics that occurs in and about Galicia, is perhaps best explained by the fact that complexity has been discovered. Such a discovery has occurred in two planes: (i) firstly, it has been noted that reality —the context within which the phenomenon being studied is framed— is complex, and that it has repercussions in research, having a need to turn to other fields (for instance, to understand the construction of social reality and of identity, the symbolic function of social objects, the dynamics of social changes, prejudices and attitudes, etc.; all of this calls for ongoing updating of our knowledge in such areas); (ii) secondly, it is noted that the phenomenon itself studied has numerous dimensions that are difficult to isolate, and that the more progress is made in furthering

3 Some studies on the history of sociolinguistics cover these aspects. Such is the case of the book by Paulston & Tucker (1997), where different protagonists give their testimony of the first years of sociolinguistics: Dick Thompson —who worked at the U.S. Department of Education— considers, for example, that the landmark of modern sociolinguistics was on 4th October 1957 (not the meeting in summer of 1964 at Bloomington) with the launching of a Russian satellite, which gave rise to substantial changes in the scientific and educational policy of the American government, with more financing being injected into the study of social and educational aspects of languages (Paulston & Tucker, 1997: 263).

knowledge of the same, the more aspects and thorny problems do we come across. This has forced Galician sociolinguistics to diversify in methods, themes and approaches, while causing a considerable increase in the number of non-occasional sociolinguists. It is certainly the case that all this characterizes sociolinguistics in general and, to a certain extent, any other science (the more is known of a phenomenon, the more we find out that we do not know). As far as we are concerned, however, this dearth of themes has now been overcome, a dearth which was partly due to the lack of sociolinguists with a specific training and due to the socio-political conditions found in Galicia. Such conditions have strengthened a discourse focusing on the relationship between contact languages, on their socio-political background and on language planning (particularly in the fields of education and administration), frequently from different positions of language purism.

This attitude echoes the fact that our research is covering the trends and interests present in international sociolinguistics, progressing in terms of incorporating new approaches and methodologies, and in their application to its own circumstances of the same. It is pluralistic and diverse —as was already the discipline in its very beginnings— since so too is the object under analysis, and the study strategies and viewpoints adopted: thus the title of this monograph, *Sociolinguistics in Galicia: Views on diversity, a diversity of views*. The objective here is to portray a photograph of a sociolinguistics in a state of constant flux, as are societies and languages themselves, dealing with new themes regarding not only what can be lost but also what is emerging: the new “Galicians” and sociolects, new forms of interaction, modern representations of languages, new uses of traditional forms and modern forms for old uses, current conversational strategies, and so on.

Good examples of many of these points appear in the articles of this issue, their order responding quite simply to their thematic and methodological proximity.

Ramón Mariño-Paz in his article (“18th century linguistic mentality and the history of the Galician language”) offers us a review of the different positions prevailing in the 18th century on the consideration of Galician, Portuguese and Spanish as languages, drawing particular attention to Padre Sarmiento. Linguistic ideology and the social representation of languages are dealt with here from a diachronic and historiographic viewpoint. Montserrat Recalde also provides a partially diachronic and historiographic outlook of linguistic ideologies (“The Castilianist theory of the origin of the *gheada* revisited”) dealing with the theory that considers the phonetic phenomenon known as *gheada* has its origin in Castilian, i.e., it is due to language contact. The author links this view with linguistic purism, developing a critique of the application of the concepts of *diglossic bilingualism* and *prestige* in this theme.

Modesto A. Rodríguez-Neira (“Language shift in Galicia from a sociolinguistic viewpoint”) uses data from the Sociolinguistic Map of Galicia, obtained by

questionnaire, to analyze language shift and language faithfulness in Galicia: out of the almost 40,000 interviewees, attention turns on those (over 16,000) who confirm having changed language in the course of their lives. Celia Pollán's article ("The morphological expression of pragmatic values in oral and written Galician") deals with the use of the verbal forms *cantara* and *cantei* with the same time-aspect value (aoristic preterit of the indicative); to do so, she analyzes cases of written and spoken Galician applying a variationist approach.

Several articles, using methods of discourse and conversation analysis, look into private or public type interactions. The first three deal with interactions among young people, where they construct and reveal new uses and language judgements.

Virginia Acuña ("Gendered emotive displays in complaint discourse"), taking into account the gender of the participants, analyses some strategies adopted in complaint discourses, such as emotive display, underlining the essential role played by prosody in this type of communicative interaction. In a similar vein, Sonia Álvarez-López ("Functions and strategies of male humour in cross-gender interactions") focuses on some of the functions of male humour in an inter-gender conversation. More especially, in this work, she shows on the one hand how male humour comprises a conversational control strategy while, on the other, how humour is a mechanism to reinforce ties among the male participants. Luzia Domínguez-Seco also chooses the youth environment as a source for the data in her work ("Social prestige and linguistic identity. On the ideological conditions behind the standardisation of Galician"). Here she discusses how a group of young speakers handles the criteria of idiomatic correction and the distance between what they say about the language and what they actually do. By touching on aspects of language purism, this paper serves as a complement to the contributions by Mariño-Paz and Recalde.

Interactions in the media are a highly appropriate field of public discourse study for analyzing the social representation of languages and for identifying the forms or mechanisms in operation nowadays as preferred or prestigious. This is the field chosen by Gabriela Prego-Vázquez ("*¿De onde es?, ¿de quen es?*: Local identities, discursive circulation, and manipulation of traditional Galician naming patterns"), analyzing how traditional Galician naming patterns circulate from discourses produced in traditional networks to the institutional and political speech belonging to the networks that emerge in the process of urbanisation and establishment of a democratic political system in Galicia. Her work echoes how traditional forms to express local identity are currently used in political discourse.

In their paper, Ana Iglesias-Álvarez and Fernando Ramallo ("Language as a diacritical in terms of cultural and resistance identities in Galicia") focus on the relationship between language and identity. Particularly, they analyze the discursive strategies reproduced by subjects in the processes of constructing a cultural identity of resistance. Mário J. Herrero-Valeiro ("The discourse of language in Galiza: Normalisation, diglossia and conflict") reviews different uses that the terms

diglossia, *linguistic normalisation* and *linguistic conflict* have been given in discourses on the language in circulation in Galicia; this author draws particular attention to the relationship between such uses and the different existing conceptions of identity, nation, language and history.

Xan M. Bouzada-Fernández (“Change of values and the future of the Galician language”) focuses on the sociolinguistic situation of Galicia from the theory of culture and of values. This author sets out the dialectic between the cultural changes that have taken place in Galicia over the past few years and language transformation in our society.

Johannes Kabatek (“What variational linguistics can learn from Galician”) takes into consideration the benefits that studies on the Galician language may contribute to “variational linguistics”. Furthermore, he turns to the areas of research which, at some point in the future, need to be activated in order to foster this theoretical outlook.

Xoán Paulo Rodríguez-Yáñez and Håkan Casares-Berg (“The *Corpus of Galician/Spanish Bilingual Speech* of the University of Vigo: Codes tagging and automatic annotation”) dedicate their paper to presenting the *Corpus of Galician/Spanish Bilingual Speech* of the University of Vigo, outlining the protocols used in its computerization and annotation.

Is there any specificity in Galician sociolinguistics? The questions raised are basically the same as in other parts of the world, as are the methods used, the objectives pursued and, to an increasing extent, the traditions and scientific schools from which they derive. But each language reality is a melting pot where numerous factors —historic, socioeconomic, political, psychological, etc.— give rise to a unique situation and, therefore, may also entail responses more or less unique to universal questions.

There is a language consciousness, regarding the most widely varying aspects, in all individuals, but in countries such as Galicia, a considerable degree of political relevance and of group articulation of the community is found. Sociolinguistics has an undeniable social and ideological dimension, which means that, on many occasions, a front line role is assigned to sociolinguistics beyond that of the researcher⁴: in short, society requires them not only to do science, but also to generate discourse for immediate “consumption”, not subject to criticism but rather to opinion. With this, our work takes on a social relevance and notoriety (which other sciences seek), but can be placed in a level similar to that of the newspaper

4 In this regard, see the debate on the public perception of linguistics and sociolinguistics, and on the different conceptions of language held by sociolinguists and by the public at large, in *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5 (4), 2001: 576-631. On the question of the social role of sociolinguists and the implications of sociolinguistic work in the public sphere, see some works, compiled by Heller, in another volume of the same journal (Heller et alii, 1999). These debates are still pending in Galicia, as occurs in many other parts of the world.

opinion columns, with “occasional sociolinguists” and the scientificness of the discipline is often queried: we should be aware of this risk, although fighting against it is probably in vane.

Out of all the linguistic sciences, sociolinguistics is the one most concerned with what one (individual or community) is, but also with what one wishes to be. Thus its enormous involvement in social life: as a result, sociolinguistic discourses are incorporated into the reality analyzed, influencing it and modifying it. In short, the product of research becomes part of the object of the study: we create discourses avidly incorporated by and into society, and which we then study. The editors of this volume assume this, and we simply set out to provide a sample of some of the sociolinguistic interests and discourses currently under consideration in Galicia. It is our hope that the reader will find a good reason here to return, some time in the future, to become more acquainted with our language reality.

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