

Review

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*Estudos sobre o
cambio lingüístico
no galego actual*

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The collection opens with a very theoretical but interesting general discussion by Johannes Kabatek on the ingrained preconceived ideas about linguistic change and how knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms of linguistic change can help language planners to ensure the future of the Galician language. The author highlights that, although change can only come about through use and through the interactions of people, language change can also be affected by the metalinguistic meanings and stereotypes associated with certain usages and variables. Thus if planners are sensitive to such meanings, language planning can influence language change indirectly. He concludes by analysing present-day Galicia and characterises it quite rightly as ‘un escenario dinámico e vivo de cambio lingüístico’ and one in which knowledge of the processes of language change can help to ensure the future of the Galician language.

The next chapter, entitled ‘Breve reflexión histórica sobre o cambio inducido por contacto castelanizante en galego’, by Ramón Mariño Paz, offers a socio-historical overview of the history of contact between Galician and Castilian. His thesis is essentially that, despite the incorporation of Galicia into the crown of Castile in 1230, the great majority of Galician speakers both in the medieval period and what is called the middle-Galician period (16th-18th centuries) had little or no contact with Castilian and thus the language was not an important cause of linguistic change for Galician in these times. Castilian was merely the language of the military and the governing elite, who, along with their administrative retinue and followers were usually born outside Galicia. Thus, Castilian had very limited contact with Galician with the exception of (a) a diastratic minority of Galician

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speakers who interacted with the Castilian speakers and (b) in cities such as A Coruña and Ferrol as attested by the historical record. It is therefore only in the modern period in which Galician was strongly influenced by Castilian due to contact motivated by: (a) the rural exodus of peoples and a dramatic shift in their occupations from agriculture to service industries, (b) the creation of a class of civil servants and (c) the spread of universal education.

Frustratingly, however, the author does not explain why such a massive convergence of monolingual Galician speakers in urban centres, which were mainly populated in his view by other monolingual Galician speakers, did not trigger the formation of new simplified varieties of Galician via dialect mixing and koineization. The author merely states this expected result did not come about 'senón máis ben se converteu nun eficaz axente castelanizador'. No justification for this result is given and the lack of explanation weakens the argument for a pre-18th century Galicia in which the huge majority of speakers spoke only Galician and had very little contact with Castilian. The reader is left dissatisfied as to the exact historical, social and political mechanisms which produced the modern sociolinguistic situation. It may well be the case that this information is covered in the reference to Rei-Doval (2007) but the reader feels the need to have a justification and summary for such a dramatic change in the linguistic habits of speakers. Moreover, there is a noted lack of references to and discussion of contact-induced language change, which makes the reader wonder whether a scholar with no ties or affinity to Galicia and with a better understanding of the processes and dynamics of language contact would have arrived at the same conclusions as the author.

The chapter entitled 'Factores externos na variación do vocalismo galego, estudo perceptivo', by Alba Aguete Cajiao, is based on an experimental study carried out on University students from the Universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo. The study was a perception test based on minimal pairs to establish what sociolinguistic variables were correlated with the ability to distinguish between the high and low mid-vowels of Galician. The findings of the study were unsurprisingly that speakers whose native language was Galician had no problems in identifying the different minimal pairs (nearly 100% success rates) whilst those whose native language was Castilian could not. Regarding speakers who self-identified as being bilingual in both Castilian and Galician, the situation was more varied and complex but, in general terms, the ability to distinguish between the two phonological categories seemed to be related to the amount of Galician that they had been exposed to. In experimental terms this was correlated with tests in which the distinction between the mid-vowels was primed (i.e. they were previously exposed to minimal pairs of the type [^hbela] [^lbela], [^hbola] [^lbola]). In 'real-life' terms it corresponded with the native language of their parents and, interestingly, whether they were students of Santiago (where more Galician is spoken) or Vigo (where less Galician is spoken). The author references research on first and second language acquisition to motivate and justify the differing abilities of speakers to discriminate between the minimal pairs based on their linguistic history.

The most interesting and novel finding of the experiment was that of the three variables relating to the type of place where speakers originated from ((a) densely populated areas, (b) sparsely populated areas or (c) areas whose population is between the two), the variable which was correlated with the worst rates of being able to distinguish the minimal pairs was

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that of (c) as opposed to (b). That is, the Galician speech from villages or semi-urban areas, as opposed to urban areas, was identified as more phonologically similar, in terms of vowel aperture, to Spanish and these areas could be acting as sources of the spread of this sound change.

I wonder, however, whether this finding is a result of the experimental configuration in which a significant percentage of informants were from the University of Santiago; a city which I am assuming would be categorised as densely populated but which has a strong presence of Galician. Hence, bilingual speakers from this city may be able to distinguish more successfully the two sets of mid-vowels as opposed to students from other less densely populated areas. Thus, the main influencing factor is once more the extent of exposure with the Galician language.

Regardless of the validity of the finding, the author's conclusion remains valid – there is an ongoing sound-change in progress in which the phonological distinction between open and closed mid-vowels is being lost. This sound change seems to be spreading and is not confined to the new urban varieties of Galician and speakers who initially were not native speakers.

The study by Gisela Tomé Lourido and Bronwen G. Evans entitled 'Os neofalantes galegos no contexto europeo: a produción e a percepción da fala' compares and contrasts Galician 'new-speakers' with those of other European languages and notes how the former are different from the majority of the latter in that (a) they have a high level of linguistic competence in both languages and (b) they almost exclusively only speak in the 'new language' due to ideological reasons. The study presents a welcome literature review of the abilities of 'new-speakers' to produce and perceive the sounds of Galician and, drawing upon their own previous study, notes (a) that the perceptual system is less flexible than the production system and (b) the inter-speaker variation as to the ability to produce and perceive the open mid-vowels of Galician. As to the causes of such speaker variation they point to a number of factors which are all related to language exposure.

The chapter by Estefanía Mosquera Castro entitled 'A escrita electrónica galega: tradición, innovación e recepción' stands out as original since it analyses the impact on Galician of non-oral communication through new technologies, specifically electronic writing. The author presents a number of interesting cases of abbreviations and claims that this is a new innovative linguistic variety but one which 'bebe – e moito – da tradición'. The author notes, however, that no overarching generalisation can be made about this variety due to the amount of variation it presents and the fast-changing nature of graphic trends. She concludes making the very valid point that it is both necessary and positive that people are using Galician in these new technologies and ways.

In the chapter entitled 'Fainos cambiar a situación e a propia evolución da vida, non?: identidade e performance en narrativas relacionamente mediadas', Noemi Basanta seeks to analyse how heterosexual masculinities are constructed in discourse. The research question and project is interesting and worthy of study but the author only analyses 20 minutes of spontaneous speech of a group of three men from a small village in Ourense. The limited dataset therefore precludes the abstraction of any interesting or general results and discussion.

The next chapter by Soraya Suárez Quintas, entitled "'O galego non é o ghallegho que falamos nós": a percepción e as actitudes como

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condicionantes do cambio lingüístico', mainly analyses the much-studied Galician *gheada* and the beliefs and opinions that everyday speakers have about this dialectal variant and the speakers of such a variant within the framework of perceptual dialectology. She carried out a standard experimental study in which she interviewed 108 speakers in 27 different *concellos*. Her results confirmed the persistence of the negative stereotypes associated with the *gheada* and the author argues that this linguistic feature is gradually falling out of use in the zones where it was originally attested. The young speakers and those of high-status are the first to abandon this pronunciation but, from these speakers, its 'non usage' is spreading to other categories of speakers. She concludes the chapter with a very valid warning that this linguistic feature could disappear since even though, theoretically, the *gheada* is accepted in the oral standard, in practice, it is entirely absent from the media in which the oral standard is diffused. This lack of visibility contributes to it being associated with negative stereotyping.

The next study, 'Esempi di variazione fonetica nell'Appennino Settentrionale. Il caso dei vocalismi instabili', presents some extremely interesting data on patterns of diphthongisation but makes no mention of Galician since the data is from Italo-Romance. It is followed by a contribution by Xulio Sousa and David Rodríguez entitled 'Do espazo ó tempo: o cambio lingüístico en galego a partir da xeolingüística'. The authors analyse how Galician has changed in the very recent past by comparing the results of three geolinguistic projects: the *Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica* (1934-1935), the *Atlas Lingüístico Galego* (ALGA, 1974-1977) and the *Nova Enquisa* (2008). They show that over time there has been a reduction of lexical variation and that whilst some dialectal lexical variants have remained unchanged, others have been ousted by Castilian or competing Galician forms. Their work endorses and justifies the worth of geolinguistic projects. I wholeheartedly agree with the authors when they describe them as a 'ferramenta indispensable para o desenvolvemento de investigacións sobre o cambio e historia das linguas'.

Carolina Pérez Capelo in her contribution entitled 'O cambio lingüístico nos nomes de lugar. Notas a partir da toponimia galega' presents a thorough and thought-provoking study on the changes which place names undergo and shows that they can, at times, adhere to general tendencies of change within Galician whilst, at other times, display either a more irregular or a more conservative development. Both changes are explained via the loss of transparent meaning in the place names (an apple-grove is no longer associated with apples but merely is the name of a place – applegrove) which can (a) separate them off from developments which corresponding words undergo in the lexicon and thus make them resistant to change and (b) lead to phonological reductions due to frequency of use and then reanalysis via folk etymologies, producing changes not attested elsewhere in the lexicon.

The book closes with an excellent contribution from Francisco Dubert entitled 'Cambio e estrutura morfolóxica. Segmentacións atípicas en verbos galegos e portugueses', in which the author questions (a) Saussure's widely-accepted dichotomy between synchrony/diachrony and langue/parole and (b) item-and-arrangement models of morphology. The former claims that the synchronic study of a language ought to be focussed on language conceived as an abstract and fixed system in which there is no need to consider its historical evolution or the current variation

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it presents. The latter assumes that the basic unit of storage of language is the morpheme (a biunique matching of meaning and form) and word production is therefore a matter of the concatenation of morphemes. The author draws upon developments in certain varieties of Galician and argues that such developments cannot be explained or fully understood synchronically without (a) an appreciation of their historical development and (b) admitting that the mind stores fully inflected words which are related to other words in complex networks; notions such as grammatical morphemes and lexical roots emerge from abstractions over stored forms and do not exist in isolation. The author is therefore supporting more constructive theories of morphology (Blevins 2006, 2016; Bybee 1985, 1988; Croft and Cruse 2004) and highlights the similarities between these theories and Saussure's thinking regarding the storage of words and organisation of the lexicon. In this chapter Dubert is not only challenging current mainstream thinking about language but also making an extremely important and often unrecognised and undervalued point: that the generalisations that linguists can make about language are not always those that speakers make, and often diachronic changes reveal the underlying generalisations that speakers are making.

This book successfully manages to combine theoretical and experimental studies on language change and offers some original and thought-provoking ideas not only on actual changes currently taking place in Galician but also on theories of language change and, more generally, on theories of how language is stored and processed in the mind.

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