

Historical Sociolinguistics and Acculturation

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Summary

Historical sociolinguistics faced the need to materialize the most plausible working hypotheses on the historical, sociological, and cultural reconstruction of the processes of oral formation and written standardization of Romance languages, based on empirical principles for a grammatical theory of linguistic change. During the second half of the last century, major contributions to historical linguistics accumulated, which were far from being recognized by historians of language, and have represented great successes and technical applications in the face of context-free purposes and hitherto inexplicable events. The only viable solution was the intrinsic relationship between language, society, and culture. Acculturation was the empirical foundation of the anthropological history of humanity and integrated the history of languages, societies, and cultures. The hypothesis of the anthropological history of humanity as a succession of acculturations was more appropriate to linguistic, social, and cultural facts and to the continuity of history itself. There was no linguistic change without language contact, and both the history of linguistic change and language substitution were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion. There was never a final generation of medieval Latin, nor a first generation of Romance.

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I. Introduction

The entry of anthropology into medieval history was one of the most significant historiographical developments in the last third of the last century. Indeed (since 1970), there was an enrichment of perspectives and a deepening of knowledge about the configuration of society, and especially its behavior in relation to the occupied territory. The interest of geographers and economists in regional fact and analysis was strengthened in the field of medievalism by the appearance of a series of notable French theses based on a framework of this type (G. Fourquin, R. Fossier, P. Toubert, P. Bonnassie and G. Bois).

The central idea of ecosystem and the key concept of acculturation were used by some Spanish historians to provide a new perspective on the implications that the social organization of space had during the Middle Ages in the Crown of Castile, and to offer a new interpretation of the behavior of Hispano-Christian society. J. A. García de Cortázar (1985) proposed starting from the conception of society and space as elements of a system, whose evolution occurred through the complexity of its social organization, and established the close connection between the formulas of economic reproduction and the structures of domination and social cohesion, as well as the system of values (see J. A. García de Cortázar, 1973).

1.1. The introduction of anthropology (and medieval history) into the history of language came later and could be dated to the end of the last century. F. Gimeno (1988, 1990: 138-44, 1995) showed that sociolinguistics was born from an anthropological commitment that ultimately considered linguistics as a chapter of social and cultural anthropology (and the psychology of knowledge). General sociolinguistics, as an extension and revision of institutional disciplines (linguistics, sociology, and anthropology), integrated a *sociology of language* and a *strict sociolinguistics*, as well as the *ethnography of communication* (see C. A. Ferguson, 1959; R. Jakobson, 1970; J. A. Fishman, 1971; D. Hymes, 1971, 1974; F. Gimeno, 2019: 182-96).

Studies on language contact and culture contact in Europe did not enjoy widespread coordination, although the precursors were European (W. Leopold, E. Haugen and U. Weinreich). U. Weinreich (1953: 37-40) commented that for some anthropologists, language contact was nothing more than an aspect of culture contact, and language transfer was a facet of social diffusion and acculturation. However, despite the increase in anthropological interest in problems of contact, particularly in the United States of America after the First World War, studies on language contact and culture contact did not enjoy widespread coordination, nor was the relationship between the two fields of study properly defined.

The most interesting problem in language transfer was the interaction of social and cultural factors that promoted or impeded such transfer. Anthropologists investigating acculturation were forced to include linguistic

evidence as indications of the overall process of acculturation, while linguists needed the help of anthropology to describe and analyze those factors that governed language transfer and were truly within the domain of culture.

II. Historical Sociolinguistics

The hypothesis of the history of linguistics as a succession of paradigms was more adequate to linguistic facts than to a substitution of models. One of the most assiduously upheld principles in historical linguistics was the theory of the regularity of linguistic change. In the Neogrammarian model, phonological change and analogy constituted the two basic components of linguistic change. Phonological change acted independently of the morphological, syntactic, and semantic function. Analogy dealt precisely with the relationship between phonological and morphological structure. In this sense, two interpretations had to be distinguished: a) an autonomous version of the assumption of phonological regularity, and b) a grammatical version of linguistic change.

The hypothesis of the autonomy of linguistic levels was incompatible with the post generative theory of grammatical change, but some European functionalists have not recognized this incompatibility. Moreover, there was a dual starting strategy in the investigation of linguistic change: 1) homogeneity, and 2) structured heterogeneity. According to this interpretation, there were the following models of linguistic change: a1) neogrammarian; b1) dialectological; a2) functionalist; b2) pragmatic; a3) generative, and b3) historical sociolinguistic.

If all linguistic change implied ongoing variation (although all variation did not imply change, see F. Gimeno, 2008a, 2008b), homogeneous models of linguistic change (neogrammarian, functionalist, and generative) were unrealistic and inadequate. One success of diachronic functionalism was its recognition that the formation of the various Romance languages within the same Latin system challenged the past simplification of hypotheses based solely on linguistic systems, but this intuition was relegated from its objectives and methodology. Syntactic, semantic, or phonological change implied a grammatical change in the communicative competences of successive generational groups of different social groups within the speech community, through the reorganization of the vernacular with the generational relay (see F. Gimeno, 2024 d).

2.1. E. Coseriu (1958: 29-67) raised the problem of linguistic change and criticized the Durkheimian doctrine of the social fact as external to individuals, which was advocated by F. de Saussure and A. Meillet. Furthermore, he alluded to the fact that Saussure's perplexity in the face of linguistic change and the tendency to consider it a spurious phenomenon (caused by "external" factors) were due to the fact that it started from abstract language, separated from speech and considered as a result (*ergon*), without even asking what languages were, how they really existed, as well as what a "change" in a language actually meant. Language changed to fulfill a function, which corresponded to the purpose of continuing to function.

Although three different problems had often been confusing, it was necessary to distinguish:

- a) The *rational* problem of change, that is, why were languages not immutable?
- b) The *general* problem of change. is, under what conditions changes in languages usually occur?
- c) The *historical problem* of such a determined change.

As a theorist, the first problem of the mutability of languages had depended on knowledge of the "facts" and on "original knowledge" about language, and not on the belief that it had been solved with the "cause" of linguistic change, or all the alleged "causes" of the many particular "changes."

Likewise, according to this author (1958: 114-6), it would be better to speak of "systematic" and "extra-systematic" factors than of structural and historical factors. While the former were the functional system and normal realizations of language, the latter ("non-external") referred to the variety of linguistic knowledge in a community and the vigor of linguistic tradition. Both sets of factors belonged to language, although not in the same sense, and it should be borne in mind that these factors were not "causes" but rather conditions or determinations of linguistic freedom, and that change had to find its possibility and justification in "language" as a systematic technique and culture. That is, it would not be erroneous to speak of historical and structural factors, provided that their circumscription to the circumstances of speech and the historical determinations of linguistic freedom were understood, that is, as mere passive factors and not determining "causes" of change.

Moreover, even these had to be included within properly internal factors, as conditions or determinants of speech, since other cultural factors (e.g., population mixing, cultural centers, etc.) would be relegated to a secondary role, not directly determining linguistic activity, but rather the state of interindividual linguistic knowledge that could result from them, and as indirect factors. In this way, one could arrive at the apparently paradoxical conclusion that language was the "cause" of its own change, but change was the diffusion of an *innovation* that had to find in a "state of language" the favorable conditions for its interindividual acceptance.

2.2. However, innovations were ongoing linguistic variations and changes that could only be fully and completely understood and explained in relation to social and cultural factors, and not in terms of linguistic characteristics for their social and cultural justification. Languages were excellent instruments of expression and communication for the cognitive development of social groups within a speech community. Linguistic change and language shift were never a problem, nor even a complex matter of oral or written traditions, but rather a process directly involving the successive generational renewal of different social groups and diverse cultures. The analysis and delimitation of the complex relationships between linguistic variables and social and cultural factors, as well as the historical, sociological, cultural and legal determinants of the various Romance-speaking communities, was essential (see B. Malmberg, 1966: 207-22; J. P. Rona, 1974; H. López Morales, 1989, 2006, 2013; F. Gimeno, 1995: 27-53, 2019: 343-51).

Faced with a partial diachrony of the various linguistic levels (and even, descriptively, of all of them) of the Romance languages, we must now assume an anthropological history of the communicative competences of successive generations and social groups within the various Romance-speaking communities. Visigoth Spain was one of the last and most valuable manifestations of ancient culture. Isidore of Seville laid the foundations of medieval culture and was the bridge that united Antiquity with the Middle Ages, although we must always bear in mind Jerome's masterful legacy in the cultural transmission of the millennia-long history of monasteries, codices, and copyists.

The qualitative and autonomous descriptions of linguistic change in the Latin compilation of the early medieval Riojan glossaries prevented us from seeing and understanding the social multilingualism of hybrid manuscripts (as well as the implicit normalization of romances), through regulating the multiple linguistic variables and factors (social and cultural), as well as the superficial variants of the texts.

In this sense, synchronic monolingual description techniques were insufficient and inadequate in themselves for the analysis of linguistic variation in these manuscripts, and the study of the sociological, cultural and legal changes that determined the written standardization of the romances. Only in this way have we revised the hypotheses of historical dialectology and diachronic functionalism that prevailed throughout the last century, and we offer new research on the anthropological history of the formation of Hispanic Romance languages (see F. Gimeno, 2013, 2024c).

2.3. An anthropological investigation of the history of language proposed the deduction of linguistic variables and the social and cultural factors of the past and verified them empirically in the present. Historical sociolinguistics faced the need to materialize the most plausible working hypotheses on the historical, sociological, and cultural reconstruction of the processes of oral formation and written standardization of Romance languages, based on empirical principles for a grammatical theory of linguistic change. In accordance with these foundations, it has gone beyond the descriptive contributions of historical pragmatics, based on the functionalist analysis of stable discursive traditions of written texts (see B. Frank and J. Hartmann, 1997; D. Jacob and J. Kabatek, 2001; C. García Turza, 2011; C. García Turza y J. García Turza, 1997, 2000, 2004; F. Gimeno, 1988).

The autonomous version of linguistic change advocated by the Neogrammarians was unacceptable in our time, and the phonological rules of historical-comparative linguistics were simplifications of linguistic change. This was especially true when we considered the geographical and social differentiation of language, within its own "structured heterogeneity," and variability as part of the communicative competence of the various generational and social groups that coexisted within the speech community. Only in this way was it possible for the social history of language to become a true reality, with the necessary complementarity between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Moreover, both linguistic change and the ongoing variations were neither mechanical nor merely phonologically determined.

Within the broad sociocultural framework of languages in contact, U. Weinreich (1953: 236-43) described language shift as the displacement of the habitual use of one language by that of another. Language shift, which involved changes in the social and cultural functions of a language, had to be distinguished from language change, which considered the process of transformation in the structure of the language over time, space, society and situation (see F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 24-64, 101-35).

III. Acculturation

Acculturation was the empirical foundation of the anthropological history of humanity, and integrated the history of languages, societies and cultures. The hypothesis of the history of humanity as a succession of acculturations was more appropriate to linguistic, social, and cultural facts and to the continuity of history itself. There was no linguistic change without languages in contact, and both the history of linguistic change and language shift were part of acculturation, based on social and cultural diffusion. It was not, therefore, merely a

linguistic issue, but also a social and cultural one. The primary principle of the history of linguistic change and language shift was the acculturation of social groups, with social and cultural interbreeding.

Acculturation referred to all cultural events resulting from the acquisition, modification, or reinterpretation of a culture, particularly the reception and assimilation of cultural elements specific to one social group by another, with adaptation to a new sociocultural context. The term *acculturation* became widely accepted among American anthropologists in the late 19th century to refer to the changes that occurred when social groups with different cultural traditions came together, and there was no distinction between whether it should be applied to the results or the processes of cultural change.

Acculturation thus encompassed those events resulting from direct and continuous contact between social groups with different cultures, with the corresponding changes and reinterpretations in the original culture of one or both groups. The terms "acceptance," "adaptation," and "reaction" referred to the assimilation of cultural elements and their reinterpretation within new groups, as well as the rejection of these elements. Gradually, the term *transculturation* has become a minority term compared to the more common acculturation. While the latter had been used to refer to the change of only one or both poles of contact, in the case of transculturation it has generally been used in relation to a single society or group (see F. Gimeno, 2024a, 2024b).

3.1. R. Menéndez Pidal (1923: 414) wrote that the languages of Spain had three periods of development:

- 1) From the most remote times until the end of the Second Punic War, in the year 206 BC
- 2) From the arrival of the Romans to Spain in 206 BC until the fall of the Visigoths in 711 AD.
- 3) From the Arab invasion in 711 AD to the present day.

Regarding its main objective, the *History of Humanity. Cultural and Scientific Development* (I,7-9), sponsored by UNESCO (1963), he alluded in the "Preface" to the need to overcome traditional approaches to the study of history that attributed decisive importance to political, economic and military factors. History was needed sought to appreciate the significance of events and took as its starting points and reference system the positions adopted by various cultures. The perspective opened by each culture on the universal in the human being was a projection of the humanity of that culture onto its own particular circumstances.

The fundamental principle of the history of languages in contact and linguistic change was the acculturation of generational and social groups. An anthropological history of the Hispanic Romance languages assumed the contact of different social groups and distinct languages, with the linguistic and cultural transfers that entailed the social and cultural intermingling of pre-Roman peoples within the various Romance-speaking communities.

E. Coseriu (1955: 157) alluded to the fact that by discarding linguistic geography, the generality and physical nature of the "phonetic law" had to introduce a new rule: the continuity of the areas. The risks of falling into the objectivism of linguistic forms and areas considered as independent of the speakers, and of attending only to multiplicity and heterogeneity, meant questioning the unity and homogeneity of the language (see A. Alonso, 1941; R. Menéndez Pidal, 1950; A. Martinet, 1955: 275-80; B. Malmberg, 1963; Y. Malkiel, 1976; F. Gimeno, 1984, 1995: 40-2).

During the second half of the last century, major contributions to historical linguistics were made, which went far from being recognized by historians of language. These contributions have represented significant achievements and technical applications for purposes without any social context and for previously inexplicable events. The only viable solution was the intrinsic relationship between language, society, and culture.

Within the anthropological history of the Hispanic romances, our working hypothesis has been that there was a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the successive and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European, Basque-Iberian, Pheno-Punic-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigoth, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragones, medieval Castilian, medieval Valencian, Castilian and Anglo-Saxon), with the linguistic and cultural transfers that implied the social and cultural mixing of these groups, and the adaptation to a new sociocultural context.

This hypothesis has been confirmed (see F. Gimeno, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025 d, 2025e, 2025f). The peoples and cultures were the first agents of the medieval Latin change to Romance, in their respective Romance-speaking communities (see J. A. García de Cortázar, 1969, 2012, 2016; F. Gimeno and C. García Turza, 2010; F. Gimeno 2016a, 2016b, 2025h).

3.2. In his considerations on structuralism and history, R. Menéndez Pidal (1959: 106-9) sought the adoption of new methodological proposals, but within his own convictions and without revising their basic foundations, so that he assimilated the concept of "structure" (despite continuing to admit that language was a historical product, the essence of which was uninterrupted tradition), and that evolution depended on a thousand-year-old tradition that exerted pressure on the structural forces acting at each moment. In most cases, when faced with linguistic change, he concluded, the possibilities of historical explanation offered should first be examined,

and his starting hypothesis was that an initial historical tradition preceded structural elaboration and therefore conditioned it.

Previously, R. Menéndez Pidal (1926/1950: 532-8) commented that the beginning of the evolution of language had been sought in each change of generation, but generations (according to him) did not change every twenty or thirty years but rather were born and renewed imperceptibly every day. Without a doubt, this was an unfounded geological assumption, within a section in which the author argued that the constitution of a phonological change was never usually the exclusive work of three or four generations into which the living population was arbitrarily divided, but was rather the product of a multi-secular latent state that persisted through many generations of social groups, and was based on the fact that many consecutive generations participated in the same innovative idea, and constituted a new tradition, in conflict with an older tradition (see M. Torreblanca, in press; F. Gimeno, 2019).

The term "substratum" designated the latent influence of the defeated native languages on the victorious languages and was accepted (in one way or another) by various linguists, even from the beginning of the 19th century (see I. Iordan, 1932: 20-1). On the assumption of linguistic strata, B. E. Vidos (1956: 203) offered the reference that, deep down, substratum, superstratum and ad stratum were nothing more than metaphorical expressions to indicate the linguistic influences of the defeated, victorious and cohabiting peoples, respectively.

However, the historian P. Wolff (1971), when he summarized that in Gaul the action of the superstratum confirmed and reinforced the action of the substrata, did not realize that the duality of the victorious/defeated people offered the same result (linguistic transfers), and that this meant that the conflict did not matter, since it was unrelated to linguistic change.

Furthermore, he argued that Christianity promoted the sociological function of Romance, and in the ninth century, Europe was immersed in a bilingualism that dominated its intellectual life for several centuries. Outside of the oral and everyday register, vernacular languages only slowly gained traction in the written register, especially in the didactic register, as well as in England within the legal register. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon legislation in that country was written in its native language.

The action of the linguistic substrate was explained by the enormous duration of phonological changes, the long coexistence of forms that struggled with one another, and the latent state of a tendency that existed with roots, although completely ignored by observers. Linguistic geography affirmed that each word had its history, and that the sum of the history of each of the words would give us the history of the constitution of the phonological rule.

R. Menéndez Pidal's (1911: 26-70) assumption that the Castilian epic in its primitive period lived for several centuries in constant variation and a supposed latent state, in which there were no written texts, but limited oral texts on each occasion, was an incomprehensible contradiction, since in the long process of written normalization of the Castilian romance (and in the specific case of the epic), within the ancient period, the materialization of the *Poema de Mio Cid* was inadmissible (sociological and culturally), through the oral transmission of the various minstrels who intervened in the creation and dissemination of the Poem. The author was a multilingual monk from Burgos (Per Abatt) with a deep knowledge of the corresponding Poetics, and it was written in the Benedictine abbey of Saints Peter and Paul of Cardeña, related in a documentary way to Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, at the beginning of the 13th century (see K. Baldinger, 1958, 1988; M. Torreblanca, 2021; J. F. Domene, 2021; F. Gimeno, 2021, 2024b).

3.3. Within the sociocultural framework of language contact, U. Weinreich (1953: 4) re-evaluated (based on the words of E. Haugen) that theories constructed on the influence of languages were suspended in the air, since what was said about substrata and superstrata should continue to be considered stratospheric, unless we found it empirically in the behavior of different social groups. The assumption of strata confusingly simplified the facts of linguistic and cultural transfer in social situations of language contact and represented a first very superficial and pre-scientific manifestation of a grammatical theory of linguistic change, based on the contributions of social multilingualism and the acculturation.

We sociolinguists have therefore overcome the obsolete assumption of linguistic strata, authentic catch-all's and simple imitations of the bilingual chapter and have accepted the proposal of historical sociolinguistics on the general configuration of linguistic change, based on the social situations of language contact.

Faced with traditional and meager labels of substrate, superstrate and adstrate, we had to look for hypotheses based on empirical studies on linguistic behavior and the dimensions of social multilingualism, and specify which facts of linguistic transfer (interference, code switching, calque or borrowing) and cultural transfer (social and cultural mixing) appeared involved in which dynamics (language shift and acculturation), within the convergent strategies of linguistic change and cultural.

On the other hand, centuries-old traditions and stable discursive traditions of written texts were alien to the anthropological history of the communicative competences of successive generations of different social

groups, within the Basque-Iberian acculturation of some Romance-speaking communities, less closely linked to the Latin-Romance tradition.

Variation and change were distinct dimensions of linguistic evolution, and ongoing variation and linguistic change should never be confused. If all changes involved ongoing variation, not all variation involved change. Indeed, linguistic change based on the discontinuous interaction of parents and children simplified the issue to one of generational variation, but the parents' grammar was the first component of the child's primary grammar, ensuring acculturation and continuity of family transmission.

The historical varieties of medieval Latin could be arranged along a temporal continuum, like a chain in which each pair of adjacent varieties from successive generations of social groups (within different speech communities) were mutually intelligible, although the opposite ends of that chain were not. There was never a last generation of medieval Latin, nor a first generation of Romance (see Y. Malkiel, 1985: 30-40; J. Portolés, 1986: 45-83; R. Cano, 1998; M. T. Echenique, 2004, 2006; H. Lüdtke, 1968, 2005: 565-8; F. Gimeno, 1995: 21-7).

3.4. Regarding the realism and contribution of variational grammar, H. Weydt and B. Schlieben-Lange (1981) expressed a certain skepticism and argued that variationists replaced the concept of a 'functional language' system with a conception of language as a continuum. According to these authors, functionalist sociolinguistics made no sense. However, it was only a matter of placing discrete varieties on a continuum determined by their partial similarities, with the aim of constructing a *Dia* system at a higher level than that of discrete, homogeneous systems and of moving towards the analysis of language use, in such a way as to complement and revise the ultimate generative approaches through the heterogenization of homogeneity. Variability and regularity were not mutually exclusive and constituted the key to a correct general and historical understanding and explanation of the process of linguistic change. Furthermore, a "structured heterogeneity" of the language was proposed, and maternal dominance implied control of such heterogeneous structures.

J. P. Rona (1976) examined the relationship between sociolinguistic stratification and dialectological variation, without which the dialectal situation and evolution could not be satisfactorily explained. His working hypothesis was clear about the Uruguayan-Brazilian border, between Montevideo (Uruguay) and Porto Alegre (Brazil), in which the geographical varieties could be ordered along a dialectal continuum, as a chain of contiguous varieties in which each pair of adjacent varieties were mutually intelligible, but those at opposite ends of this chain were not (see U. Weinreich, W. Labov and M. I. Herzog, 1968: 187-8).

The association between structure and homogeneity was a false assumption, since linguistic structure included the orderly differentiation of social groups and registers through rules governing variation within the speech community. F. Gimeno (1987, 1990, 46-9, 79-87) distinguished between the term's *idiomatic community*, *linguistic community* and *speech community*. The idiomatic community delimited a set of social groups belonging to a historically established language. The linguistic community implied a shared language. The speech community specified social groups (not necessarily of the same language) that were characterized by a shared knowledge of communicative restrictions and norms of social behavior and appeared to be configured by certain evaluative behaviors and by the uniformity of abstract models of variation (see H. López Morales, 1989, 180-207).

IV. Principles of Linguistic Variation

W. Labov (1972: 53-4) highlighted the social research of the Swiss Romani scholar L. Gauchat (1905) on phonological change in the French-speaking community of Charmey (Switzerland), where he observed and analyzed the familiar linguistic behavior of the three generations of the social groups (over 60 years old, between 30 and 60, and under 30), based on five linguistic variables. In this way, he showed us a clear precedent of the linguistic change "in progress", rather than considering an "apparent" time, since the variants in the colloquial register of successive generations helped to determine whether a linguistic variable was in expansion or recession within the speech community. In 1929, this research was confirmed by E. Hermann, since the comparison of these variables showed that in three cases the data of L. Gauchat were corroborated, given the testimony of the change in real time (see S. Pop, 1950: 187-96; F. Gimeno, 1990: 70-5).

4.1. In his analysis of the social basis of linguistic variation, W. Labov (1965) outlined three fundamental issues of ongoing change:

a) The locus of social and situational variation played an important role in the ongoing change. Social variation comprised the linguistic features that characterized the different social groups within the speech community in a heterogeneous society (e.g., socioeconomic, generational, sexual, etc.), while situational variation referred to the diversity of social processes, in which registers are determined by functional criteria of linguistic

use, according to the communicative situation (formal or informal) (see W. Labov, 1970; H. López Morales, 1989).

b) The level of abstraction of phonological and syntactic rules was far removed from speakers' awareness, raising the question of what role social factors played in language learning. The impact of social factors on language was more related to the more superficial structures and their underlying forms (phonological, morphological, and lexical) with greater performance and productivity, compared to the lesser variation in the less superficial (syntactic) rules (see W. Labov, 1982, 2001).

c) The function of linguistic diversification was not immediately or obviously functional, as species diversification might be. Rather, we could (and with serious reason) consider that language diversification was possibly dysfunctional, and that we would be better off if we all spoke a version of post-Indo-European intelligible to everyone. However, there was a tendency to think that the development of linguistic differences had a positive value in human cultural evolution, and that cultural pluralism might even be a necessary element in the human extension of biological evolution. And linguists themselves might be encouraged to consider more deeply the mechanisms of language differentiation, as well as the limiting conditions that formed the content of universal grammar.

4.2. However, among the internal factors of ongoing change, W. Labov (1994: 865-919) studied the general principles that determine the internal variation of linguistic structures. It was no accident that the focus of attention was on phonetic change, since it may be the driving force most responsible for the continued metamorphoses of languages throughout recorded and unrecorded history. Nor was it accidental that the various chapters successively became concerned with grammatical problems of increasing abstraction, since any sustained pressure on the surface of a language would eventually resonate throughout the entire structure.

This working hypothesis was that we were products of our own evolutionary history and that of the animal kingdom, and our efforts to understand language would be enriched by understanding this continuity with other populations of socially oriented animals. Regarding phonological and morphological variation, the functional hypothesis predicted a tendency for speakers to select one variant or another in a way that preserved information. Most of the results mentioned showed the opposite: that in the flow of speech, one variant or another was selected without regard for maximizing information. On the contrary, the main effects determining these choices would be mechanical: phonetic conditioning and simple repetition of the preceding structure.

So far, the results have favored the Neogrammarian view that linguistic change was mechanical and phonetically determined. When a language changed its ability to transform information would often be threatened, but in the long run, most languages would preserve their way of communicating information (more or less) through one route or another. Although speakers might not behave wisely and thoughtfully when selecting one variant or another, the system would react in some way.

Taken together, their research showed that the Neogrammarian characterization of linguistic structure was essentially correct. That structure was a largely mechanical system, beyond the reach of recognition or conscious adjustment by its users. There is no doubt that language was designed to carry propositional information, the result of an organization operating in the non-human species from which we evolved. It therefore seemed strange that we were not free to fine-tune this system to its maximum efficiency in communicating information of this kind.

One possible explanation would be that the efficiency of language depended on its automatic nature, and that a phonological or grammatical structure open to conscious inspection or manipulation would necessarily operate very slowly. Therefore, our efforts to consciously change language might be confined to higher-level stylistic choices: the selection of words and the construction of phrases and sentences within a narrowly limited set of choices.

The general perspective presented would be most attractive to those who conceive of language as a social fact, rather than because of individual choice. Many recently proposed theories of language would explain linguistic structure because of the speaker's intentions to communicate meaning to the listener. There is a portion of linguistic behavior that would be subject to conscious control, deliberate choice, purposeful and reflective behavior. But it would not be a major part of the language faculty and would have relatively little significance for the long-term evolution of linguistic structure.

It was no accident that the illustrations used to present probability matching were taken from the behavior of other animal species. He had proposed that abstract syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations were controlled by faculties shared with animals that were both closely and distantly related to humans. So, we should not be surprised if we find that the system's readjustments in the syntax and morphology of language were governed by the same cognitive faculty that governed the social behavior of wild ducks.

4.3. Moreover, in the introduction to cognitive and cultural factors in linguistic variation, W. Labov (2010: 1-4) noted that cognitive factors were used in the narrowest sense, as factors that influenced the acquisition

of a linguistic system that conveyed information about states of affairs (i.e., more about what was said than about the manner of the style of expression). Furthermore, cognition was sensitive to the systematic variation in which the message was delivered, with information produced about the speakers' social characteristics and relationships with the addressee or audience.

Cultural factors were distinguished from other social factors by their generality or isolation from simple acts of face-to-face communication. Thus, for example, neighborhood, ethnicity, social network, and communities of practice could be considered social factors in linguistic variation regarding the transparency of social processes responsible for the diffusion of ongoing change. At the same time, there was, strangely, no correlation with variation in the broader categories of gender and social class. Both were characterized as social or cultural factors based on what was commonly considered to be responsible for the diffusion of these traits.

In his conclusion, W. Labov (2010: 367–75) presented a broad selection of factors responsible for linguistic variation and divergence. Cognitive and cultural factors were considered in the origin, development, and motivation of linguistic variation, as well as whether they operated jointly, in alternation, or in opposition while the course of variation.

Regardless of how these cultural factors were perceived and transmitted, their relationship to the cognitive processing of language forms was problematic. To the extent that they promoted and reinforced regional differentiation, they could be considered to interfere with the primary cognitive function of language and hinder understanding of what the other side of the border was speaking.

In the ongoing relationship with animal communication systems, language (as distinct from animal communication systems) allowed us to transfer information about distant times and places, and to use that information to solve life's basic problems. No matter how cumbersome, clumsy, or inefficient our language might be, it was reasonable to believe that it would serve its best purpose if it remained unchanged, as a common convention accessible to all.

Ongoing change is linked to (and parasitic on) variation. Most students of linguistic variation accepted U. Weinreich *et al.*'s (1968) view that the speech community displayed “orderly heterogeneity”. Uniform patterns of social and stylistic stratification suggested that community members could make use of such variation to place speakers on scales of social distance and social power, and many experiments confirmed this view.

When the system changed, community members did not necessarily show the flexibility necessary to adapt to what younger speakers were doing. Within the community, it must be the case that young people who participated in the increase in sound change had some perception of the age vector involved, and adults could recognize the new forms used by their children. But it remained to be demonstrated whether this age sensitivity led to accurate interpretation of speech across generations. The incidence of misunderstanding is even greater across dialect boundaries.

The analogies with animal communication systems (ACS), which lacked rational capabilities, were evident:

- a) Local identity is analogous to territorial functions in birdsong and other ACS.
- b) The behavior of the reference group corresponds to mimicry in ACS.
- c) The development of cues for markers and the acquisition of style change is analogous to dominance and submission cues in ACS.
- d) The gender differentiation of ongoing change, a nearly universal feature of community studies, may have some relation to sexual selection, but the analogy here is not clear.

4.4. From a historical and anthropological perspective, this hypothesis was implausible and untenable, and both the history of languages in contact and linguistic change were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion, which implied the intrinsic relationship between linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. Unfortunately, W. Labov's internal proposal on the principles of ongoing change lacked an explanation of what was most specifically human, which separated us from the rest of the animal species: the symbolic attitudes from which our immense capacity for culture derived.

It was not, therefore, a linguistic and social issue, but also a cultural one. Languages were excellent instruments of expression and social communication, reflecting the cognitive development of social groups, as well as temporal, geographical, and social variation within the various speech communities. Social and cultural factors were directly related to the acculturative process of language contact and linguistic change. Explanations were limited to one element, or another were simplifications and had to be based on the regularities observed in empirical studies on linguistic behavior and the dimensions of social multilingualism, as well as the acculturation, within the historical, sociological, cultural, and legal determinants of the speech community (see F. Gimeno, 1990, 2019).

The undeniable fact that the lexeme was a universal and exclusive property of man required a study of the most primitive and general surface structures (phonological and syllabic), which determined the precedent of the oral register of languages in the materialization of *mama* lexeme, based on the imitation of the nasal sound

produced by the sucking of an infant, before the age of seven (see F. Gimeno, 2023). Languages have been specific to human beings.

4.5. It would not be possible to examine the differences between languages in terms of lexicon if we did not implicitly accept the notion that there are an underlying universal matrix of semantic features and a set of universal selection rules that establish the basic patterns of human cognition, according to R. J. Di Pietro (1971: 69–123). Historians have been concerned with sociologically and culturally investigating how the different channels through which humans interpret and organize the material world led to an understanding of the underlying universals. Lexemes as surface phenomena are restricted to the specific grammar of each language.

All languages share the fundamental categories of each component (semantic, syntactic, and phonological), along with the universal rules of semantic selection, syntactic ordering, and phonological selection. Languages began to differentiate themselves by the specific rules of semantic selection, syntactic ordering, and phonological selection, which generated the surface structures of each language. The acculturation of social groups under conditions of language contact implied surface structures, with the generalization of specific features of semantic selection, syntactic ordering, and phonological selection. Each lexeme constituted a complex of semantic features, and for this reason, an analysis of a language's lexicon had to be considered a surface realization of those semantic features.

It should also be mentioned that a language's lexicon consists of agglomerations of semantic features combined in a hierarchical manner. For these reasons, it was useful to examine the following different functions of semantic features and determine:

- 1) How these affected the rules for realizing a language.
- 2) How they were projected into general syntactic categories.
- 3) How each language created its lexicon

Each language, in its own specific way, drew from the universal inventory of semantic features to constitute its own set of lexical units or idiomatic expressions. Semantic complexes are technically called *lexemes*, and the totality of lexemes makes up the vocabulary of a language. Languages have different ways of grouping lexemes into general semantic categories, using semantic marking.

Each lexeme had to be considered as a set of semantic features generated through the secondary selection rules of the language in which it operated, and sensitive to the social and cultural communication needs of the speakers of that language. Because they were hidden units underlying lexemes, semantic features could not be directly observed. To understand these features and the selection rules that operated on them, an appropriate procedure had to be developed. Any postulate of the universality of semantic features had to be formulated on a completely provisional basis, although the importance of the search for semantic universals was in no way diminished by procedural difficulties (see M. Banniard, 2023: 103-6; F. Gimeno, 2019: 343-51).

V. Conclusions

1. Since approximately 1970, the landscape of concern for space in the historiography of the Crown of Castile began to change. The entry of anthropology into history was one of the most significant historiographical developments, and there was a deepening of the understanding of the configuration of society, and especially of its behavior in relation to the territory occupied. The central idea of ecosystem and the key concept of acculturation were used by some Spanish historians to offer a new interpretation of the behavior of Hispano-Christian society. The introduction of anthropology (and medieval history) into the history of language came later and could be dated to the end of the last century. Historical sociolinguistics faced the need to materialize the most plausible working hypotheses on the historical, sociological, and cultural reconstruction of the processes of oral formation and written normalization of Romance languages, based on empirical principles for a grammatical theory of linguistic change.

2. Acculturation was the empirical foundation of the anthropological history of humanity, and integrated the history of languages, societies, and cultures. Acculturation referred to all cultural events resulting from the acquisition, modification, or reinterpretation of a culture, particularly the reception and assimilation of cultural elements specific to one social group by another, with adaptation to a new sociocultural context. The term acculturation became widely accepted among American anthropologists in the late 19th century. The main hypothesis of the history of humanity as a succession of acculturations was more appropriate to the continuity of history itself. The intrinsic relationship between linguistics, sociology, and anthropology was confirmed, and both the history of languages in contact and of linguistic change were part of acculturation of social groups. Historical sociolinguistics opened new possibilities for understanding the social and cultural dynamics of the historical processes of linguistic change.

3. The hypothesis of the anthropological history of humanity as a succession of acculturations was more appropriate to the linguistic, social and cultural facts, and to the continuity of history itself. Our main working hypothesis was that within the anthropological history of the Hispanic Romances there was a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the successive and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European, Basque-Iberian, Phoenician-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragonese, medieval Castilian, medieval Valencian, Castilian and Anglo-Saxon), with the linguistic and cultural transfers that implied the social and cultural interbreeding of these groups, and the adaptation to a new sociocultural context. This hypothesis has been confirmed, and the peoples and cultures were the first agents of the medieval Latin change to Romance, in their respective Romance-speaking communities.

4. All languages share the fundamental categories of each component (semantic, syntactic, and phonological), along with the universal rules of semantic selection, syntactic ordering, and phonological selection. Languages began to differentiate themselves by the specific rules of semantic selection, syntactic ordering, and phonological selection, which generated the surface structures of each language. The acculturation of social groups under conditions of language contact implied surface structures, with the generalization of specific features. Each lexeme constituted a complex of semantic features, and for this reason, an analysis of a language's lexicon had to be considered as a surface realization of the semantic features.

5. Linguistic change and linguistic diversity responded to the languages and cultures of the different speech communities, which were the result of an inherited product. Human evolution was completed before the African diaspora, in successive waves. The social and cultural variation of languages was ancient and was found in the subsequent social and cultural diffusion of languages, with the proliferation of the most superficial variants, where all linguistic change took place within their traditions. Languages were excellent instruments of expression and communication for the cognitive development of social groups in the anthropological history of humanity and had to be considered within the biological process of childhood language acquisition. This acquisition was subject to the combined action of nature and nurture, just as their innate nature was the necessary basis for acculturation. There was never a final generation of medieval Latin, nor a first generation of Romance.

6. In the field of internal factors of linguistic variation, W. Labov (1994) proposed general principles that determine the internal evolution of linguistic structures and are products of our own evolutionary history and that of the animal kingdom as a whole. Our efforts to understand language would be enriched by understanding this continuity with other populations of socially oriented animals. Furthermore, the results would support the neogrammarian view that linguistic change was mechanical and phonetically determined. The readjustments of the system in the syntax and morphology of the language would be governed by the same cognitive faculty that governed the social behavior of wild ducks.

7. From a historical and anthropological point of view, this hypothesis was implausible and untenable, and both the history of languages in contact and linguistic change were part of acculturation, based on social and cultural diffusion, which implied the intrinsic relationship between linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. Unfortunately, W. Labov's proposal on the internal principles and cognitive and cultural factors of linguistic change lacked an explanation of what was most specifically human, which separated us from the rest of the animal species: the symbolic attitudes from which our immense capacity for culture derived. It was not, therefore, a linguistic and social issue, but also a cultural one. Languages were excellent instruments of temporal, geographical, and social variation within the various speech communities.

8. Social and cultural factors were directly involved in the acculturative process of language contact and language change. Explanations limited to one element or another were simplifications and had to be based on the regularities observed in empirical studies of linguistic behavior and the dimensions of social multilingualism, as well as on acculturation, within the historical, sociological, cultural, and legal determinants of the speech community. It would not be possible to examine the differences between languages in terms of their lexicons if we did not implicitly accept the notion that there were an underlying universal matrix of semantic features and a set of universal rules of semantic selection, syntactic ordering, and phonological selection that established the basic patterns of human cognition. Languages were specific to human beings.

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