

Language Change And Languages In Contact

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Summary

The hypothesis of the history of linguistics as a succession of paradigms was more appropriate to linguistic facts and to the continuity of history itself than to a substitution of models. One of the most assiduously maintained principles in historical linguistics was the theory of the regularity of linguistic change. However, 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. It was not, therefore, a mere linguistic issue, but also a social and cultural one. In this sense, we had to differentiate two interpretations: 1) an autonomous version of the assumption of phonological regularity, and 2) a grammatical version of linguistic change. Within the anthropological history of Hispanic romances there was a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the successive and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European, Iberian, Phoenician-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Castilian, Catalan-Aragonese, Hispanic 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. During the second half of the last century, great contributions to historical linguistics were accumulated, which were far from being recognized by historians of the language.

Keyword: Acculturation, communicative competence, historical sociolinguistics, language change, languages in contact, language shift.

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I. Introduction

In 19th century linguistics, the researcher W. von Humboldt (1767-1835) stood out, combining a broad and profound linguistic knowledge with a high level of reasoning, in which the border between linguistics and philosophy of language was erased for the first time. The oral register was always and at all times fleeting. Until its much later normalisation by means of the written register, it was only an ephemeral conservation, requiring the promotion of neural connections. It was not a result (*ergon*), but a social and cultural process of oral formation (*energeia*), and its true definition could only be genetic. In the strict sense, this was the materialisation of the Romance register, from the successive generational change of different social groups, within the various speech communities.

The hypothesis of the history of linguistics as a succession of paradigms was more appropriate to linguistic facts and to the continuity of history itself 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, and analogy dealt precisely with the relationship between phonological and morphological structure. In this sense, we had to differentiate two interpretations: 1) an autonomous version of the assumption of phonological regularity, and 2) a grammatical version of linguistic change.

The hypothesis of the autonomy of linguistic levels was incompatible with the postgenerative theory of grammatical change, but some European functionalists have not recognized this incompatibility. On the other hand, there was a double starting strategy in the investigation of linguistic change: a) homogeneity, and b) structured heterogeneity. According to these interpretations, which provided us with a double entry into the history of linguistics, 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 involved ongoing variation (although not all variation involved change), homogeneous models of linguistic change (neogrammarian, functionalist, and generative) were unrealistic and inadequate. However, a success of diachronic functionalism was the recognition that the formation of the different Romance languages from the same Latin system questioned the past simplification of hypotheses based solely on linguistic systems, but it was an intuition relegated from its objectives and methodology.

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

The problem of major interest in language transfer was the interaction of linguistic and social factors that promoted or impeded such transfer. Anthropologists investigating acculturation were forced to include linguistic evidence as indications of the total process of acculturation, whereas linguists needed the help of anthropology to describe and analyze those factors that governed language transfer and were actually within the domain of culture.

Acculturation was the term used to refer to all cultural events resulting from the acquisition, modification, or reinterpretation of a culture, particularly the reception and assimilation of cultural elements from one social group by another, with adaptation to a new sociocultural context . The term *acculturation* was 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 no distinction was made as to whether it should be applied to the results or the processes of cultural change.

Acculturation, then, included 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 the reinterpretation within new ensembles, as well as the rejection of said elements. Gradually, the term *transculturation* has become less common compared to the more frequent term 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 J. A. García de Cortázar, 1973, 1985; F. Gimeno, 1988, 1995).

An efficient methodological premise of social multilingualism was the analysis of language maintenance and language shift, which was basically concerned with the relationship between the degree of stability (or language shift) in patterns of language use and the psychological, sociological and cultural processes that developed in multilingual communities for inter- or intra-community communication. These processes were variables associated with habitual language use, and the selection of these variables had to be made not only by impressions of what seemed to be the most relevant processes in a given multilingual situation, but also by more general theories about personal, social and cultural change. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges in this field had been to determine the circumstances in which linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour changed concurrently, consecutively or independently, and to systematize these intuitive impressions (see J. A. Fishman, 1964/1968).

Many of the factors that were supposedly considered influential in language retention or language shift worked both ways, depending on the social and cultural context, or were found to be of no general significance when viewed from a broader perspective. Thus, for example, three generalizations were questionable:

- a) The preservation of the language was a function of belonging or loyalty to the group, particularly of expressions as ideologized as nationalism, within the current process of economic globalization and loss of political sovereignty.
- b) Urban residents were more inclined to language shift, and rural residents (more conservative and isolated) were less inclined to language shift.
- c) The most prestigious language displaced the less prestigious one.

It was therefore appropriate to establish a comparative analysis and a typology of contact situations between groups, which is essential in any search for intercultural and historical models (see F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003).

Our current working hypothesis has been an application of languages in contact, within a new anthropological history project on the long process of the gradual displacement of Valencian by Castilian, based on the historical sociolinguistic model on the anthropological, sociological, cultural and legal determinants of the southern Valencian-Alicante speaking community. The linguistic displacement was not based on a process of disaffection, degradation, deterioration, decline or involution of the family transmission of the mother tongue, but on a process of social, cultural diffusion and acculturation. Languages were not agents of linguistic change, nor could they be assumed to have died, but rather excellent instruments of expression and communication of the cognitive development of social groups within the speaking community.

II. Communicative Competence And Sociolinguistic Competence

The relationships between oral and written registers have been very important, since written standardization was often the only practical alternative to language shift, and we must establish the respective roles of orality and

writing. The registers configured autonomous units of social meanings, which were determined by functional criteria of linguistic use, according to the communicative situation. The oral register and the written register were modes of discourse that referred not only to the selection of the communication channel, but also to choices linked to the diversity of social processes. These registers were social varieties conditioned by the communicative situation, which ultimately derived from the semiotic system that constituted the culture.

Within the sociological function of language, social and situational varieties of language were fundamental depending on the domain of use of the family (or private) versus the domain of use of education (or public). Thus, for example, the vernacular was the variety acquired by the child in early and late childhood, within the family environment, and the standard was the codified variety of a language, which served as a model for a speech community, and which was learned in the school environment. Romance was, therefore, an oral variety acquired in the family environment, while Medieval Latin was a variety learned in the school environment and primarily written. Moreover, the Romance languages were the primary instrument of the social and situational dynamics of linguistic variation and change, within the various Romance speech communities .

In the study of language planning, E. Haugen (1966: 282-4) referred to writing as primary and speech as secondary. The reversal was justified by the function of writing as a means of communication between different social groups separated by time and space. The durability of writing and its importance to the speech community made it necessary to study it differently from the oral record. The best planner was therefore the one who not only codified but also wrote down the text. Particular authors were necessary in the case of the written record, just as specific social groups were necessary in the case of the oral record.

He also mentioned that the register of discourse (formal or informal) was important. Generally, the written register of the past was careful and public, while the colloquial register was not. So language planning was fundamentally more concerned with formal registers than with informal ones, especially in its written register. As might be expected, the syntaxes of Greek and Latin came well after the classical periods of these languages, and were essentially codifications of an already accepted norm. The term *codification* simply meant the explicit expression of the code in the form of an *orthography*, a *syntax* and a *lexicon*.

Language planning was the assessment of language change, and it was necessary to know what it was and how it related to the past and present structure of the language. However, it was necessary to establish the limitations of change, and reconstruction was (sometimes) not easy. One way for the planner to identify a language was to establish its history. Linguistic geography and history combined to set the limits on the possible changes that could be made. Historically, most written standardizations were implicit, undertaken either by individuals or by institutions.

In order to understand most of the systematic aspects of linguistic performance, D. Hymes (1971a) proposed an extension of N. Chomsky's (1965: 6) concept of *linguistic competence*, under the name of "communicative competence", which considered the fact that the social group became capable of either carrying out a repertoire of communicative acts, or taking part in communicative events, or evaluating the statements of others. This competence was made up of a system of rules that superimposed the two subcomponents (linguistic and social), and encompassed attitudes, values and motivations that concerned both language and its interrelation with other codes of communicative conduct. Currently, with the reformulation and application of communicative competence to teaching, the four components of knowledge and skill (grammatical competence, discursive competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence) are integrated (see H. López Morales, 1989: 32-3).

The line of sociolinguistic research assumed that the bilingual speech community had a complex communicative competence that allowed us to encompass the different linguistic varieties, and thus understand and explain in a unique way the behavior of that community. In this sense, the linguistic repertoire defined the set of linguistic resources available to the members of a particular community. The repertoire was, therefore, the system that described the communicative competence of the bilingual members of the speech community, each of whom (according to the social and contextual meaning) selected within the repertoire the pertinent sociolects and registers.

W. Labov (1969: 251) formulated bilingual analysis as an alternation between two subsystems (ABC...) of two varieties (L1 and L2) of a single repertoire, where any element could covary within it. Thus, for example, the variable (B) with variants B1 and B2 could covary with other variables (A) and (C) and A1 B2 C1 could occur, which would justify speaking of code-switching within a single complex system. In this way, the speech behaviour of the bilingual community could be described from the point of view of its selection within particular groups of linguistic variables, and open the way to deeper studies of the mutual influence in social multilingualism.

Furthermore, W. Labov (1970: 299-300) expressed the specification of the diverse influence of linguistic environments and extralinguistic contexts (both social and functional variation), based on an attention to discourse and a perception of norms, in order to determine the frequency of some *linguistic variables* as non-discrete minimum units that represented the predictable and orderable variability within the heterogeneous system. *Sociolinguistic competence* collected those systematic aspects of the performance of the bilingual of the speech

community, through variable rules, which characterized the components of a given subgroup, in order to describe the social grammar of the variation present in the speech community, and to accurately predict the behavior of each bilingual social group (see F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 49-52).

There are many variationist studies on Romance languages and particularly on Caribbean Spanish, and among them the variable rules of aspiration and elision of *-s* in implosive position stand out. The contribution of H. López Morales (1983) on the social stratification of the Spanish of San Juan, Puerto Rico, was aimed at describing and understanding the most relevant phonological variables of the sociolinguistic competence of the San Juan-speaking community, and constituted a thorough analysis of an urban-speaking community, as well as an excellent contribution to the variable rule methodology. The sample was representative, and handled four sociological variables: sex, age, sociocultural level and origin. The sociocultural stratification was established on the parametric sum of schooling, profession and annual income, and was made up of four strata: upper-middle, middle, lower-middle and low. The underlying phonological segments studied were six (*-s*, *-r*, *-n*, *-d*, *r*- and *c*) (see J. A. Samper, 1990; F. Gimeno, 1979, 2023b).

From the point of view of the “ethnography of communication”, language shift as a complex historical process raised some questions of special interest. The capacity of each social group to select the appropriate variety or register in the specific situation represented a valid indicator of its communicative competence. Although there are still many attempts to understand and explain language conservation and language shift through macrocorrelations with the psychological, social and cultural processes involved in a particular situation, new work alternatives have been opened on the role played by cultural conceptions, linguistic ideologies and social and symbolic messages involved in the choice of language.

The speech (familiar or careful) that speakers considered appropriate for a situation had to be considered natural in that context and provided important evidence of the communicative competence of social groups to interact in meaningful and culturally acceptable ways. Distinctions between the expressive functions of marked and unmarked choices were particularly useful in the study of language shift, as they highlighted the shift in expectations about which language was normal for which kinds of activities in the speech community.

Social groups within the bilingual speaking community influenced each other, leading to linguistic convergence. Indeed, cultural formation and acculturation have been an essential fact in the process of linguistic variation and change, as part of the collective tendency towards convergent development. The key to bilingual performance was linguistic convergence, since the experiences of social groups under conditions of languages in contact involved a superficial materialization of the semantic features of both languages and language shift.

III. Synchrony, Diachrony And History

Linguistic change had its origin in the social and generational variation of the oral register of social groups within a speech community. Anything that deviated from the existing models in the language could be called “innovation” (fact of the oral register). Change in the language was the diffusion or generalization of an innovation and a series of adoptions (fact of the system). In this sense, all change was originally an adoption. No one, therefore, should dispute that linguistic change was a social fact, since it implied diffusion, adoption and generalization of any innovation by the social groups of the speech community.

Nor had anyone documented the loss of communicative efficiency that could be expected from a language in the course of change. Rather, the process of change did not seem to impede communication within the same community. On the other hand, the recognition of the structured heterogeneity of the language developed within the communicative competence of the social groups of the speech community, since the ability to speak and understand included an awareness of linguistic variation, and the linguistic structure itself was designed to understand and explain geographical, social and situational differentiation.

Historical sociolinguistics adopted a completely historical stance and proposed some empirical strategies that helped us to reconstruct the system of a language at one or more moments in the past, as well as to relate different phases of its evolution. In this way, W. Labov (1972: 341) assumed the *principle of Lyell's uniformitarianism*, that is, historical evolutions were subject to the same social and cultural pressures as our daily communicative activity, so that nothing foreign to the linguistic structures of our time should be attributed, in principle, to a linguistic structure of the past.

Qualitative and quantitative (scientifically prevalent) analyses of differential behaviour between social and generational groups, within a speech community, showed us the possibility of observing “ongoing” linguistic change from the perspective of “apparent” time. In this sense, W. Labov (1972: 53-4) highlighted the social research of the Swiss Romanist L. Gauchat (1905) on phonological change in the French-speaking community of Charmey (Switzerland), where he analysed the family linguistic behaviour of three generations (over 60 years, between 30 and 60 and under 30), based on five linguistic variables. In 1929, this contribution 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). On stable linguistic change, apropos of the elision of final *-s* in Spanish, see F. Gimeno (2008a, 2008b).

Concerning the empirical principles of the process of linguistic change, U. Weinreich, W. Labov and M.I. Herzog (1968: 183-7) put forward five proposals for a sociolinguistic theory: *constraint*, *transition*, *insertion*, *evaluation* and *execution*. Universal linguistic constraints determined the possibilities of a change and its probable directions, and were by definition independent of any particular speech community, although it was also possible to speak of universal social constraints on change. The question of locating the transition between two stages of a change constituted an “internal” linguistic problem, but further developments in the transition proposal concerned the social transmission of change, within and outside the speech community. The question of insertion presented two aspects (linguistic and social), that is, the change appeared included within a matrix composed of other linguistic changes (or constants), but also within a social complex, that is, in correlation with other social changes.

The relevance of the social component was also found in the evaluation proposal, which showed how community members reacted to change (ongoing and stable), and how they discovered the expressive information conveyed by the various variants. The notion of evaluation was to be understood here as a response to all levels of knowledge and open discussion of reactions that were completely inaccessible to introspection, so that it encompassed both the notions of prestige and linguistic attitudes, as well as that of correctness and stereotypes. Finally, social and cultural factors were expected to appear deeply involved in the proposed execution, in order to address why it was carried out at such a time and in such a place. In this sense, a “social network” model would propose the condition that weak links between social groups were necessary, so that linguistic innovations could be gradually generalized (see F. Gimeno, 2019).

E. Coseriu (1958: 29-67) raised the issue of language change and criticised the Durkheimian doctrine of the social fact as external to individuals, which was advocated by F. de Saussure and A. Meillet. He also alluded to the fact that Saussure's perplexity regarding language change and the tendency to consider it as a spurious phenomenon (caused by “external” factors) were ultimately due to the fact that they started from abstract language, separated from speaking and considered as a result, without even asking themselves what languages were, how they really existed, as well as what a “change” in a language actually meant. Language changed in order to fulfil a function, which corresponded to the purpose of continuing to function.

Although three different problems had often been confused, it was necessary to distinguish: a) the *rational problem* of change, i.e., why were languages not immutable?; b) the *general problem* of change, i.e., under what conditions did changes in languages usually occur?; and c) the *historical problem* of such a particular change. As a theoretical problem, 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 by the “cause” of linguistic change, or by all the alleged “causes” of the many particular “changes.”

Likewise, according to this author (1958: 114-6), it was better to speak of “systematic” and “extra-systematic” factors than of structural and historical factors. While the former were the functional system and the normal achievements of the language, the latter (“non-external”) referred to the variety of linguistic knowledge in a speech community and the strength of the linguistic tradition. Both series of factors belonged to the language, although not in the same sense, and it should be taken into account that these factors were not “causes” but conditions or determinations of linguistic freedom, and that change should find its possibility and justification in “language” as a systematic technique and culture. That is, it was not wrong to speak of historical and structural factors, as long as their circumscription to the circumstances of speech and historical determinations of linguistic freedom were understood, that is, mere passive factors and not “causes” determining change.

Moreover, even these had to be included within the framework of properly internal factors, as conditions or determinations of speech, since other cultural factors (e.g., the mixing of populations, cultural centers, etc.) would be relegated to a secondary role, not as a direct determinant of linguistic activity, but rather as 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 that change was the diffusion of an *innovation* that had to find in a “state of language” the favorable conditions for its interindividual acceptance.

However, innovations were linguistic variations and changes (ongoing and stable) that could only be fully and completely understood and explained in relation to social and cultural factors, and not in linguistic characteristics for their social and cultural justification. Languages were excellent instruments of expression and communication of the cognitive development of social groups, within a speech community. Linguistic change was never a problem, nor even a complex matter of oral or written traditions, but a process in which the successive generational change of different social groups and diverse cultures was directly involved, and the analysis and delimitation of the complex relationships between linguistic, 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; F. Gimeno, 1995: 39-53, 2019: 343-51).

IV. Historical Sociolinguistics

In the anthropological history of Hispanic romances there was a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the successive and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European, Iberian, Phoenician-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Castilian, Catalan-Aragonese, Hispanic 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. During the second half of the last century, great contributions to historical linguistics were accumulated, which were far from being recognized by historians of the language, and have meant great successes and technical applications to decontextualized purposes and facts inexplicable until now. The only viable solution is the intrinsic relationship between language, society and culture.

The first written manifestations and the oldest historical-linguistic testimonies of the oral formation process of the Romance languages were the loss and readjustment of the casual Latin inflection, from the 1st century AD (with the syntactic calque of the Semitic word order), and the glosses (especially legal, from the 3rd century), that is, superficial variants (morphological and lexical) of the pre-Romance derivation in colloquial and Christian Latin in contact with the pre-Roman vernaculars. The historical sociolinguistic analysis of the early medieval glossaries constituted one of the most valuable means of understanding and reconstructing the process of written standardization of the Romance languages, as the first signs of the temporal, geographical, social and situational differentiation of medieval Latin (see F. Gimeno, 2019: 299-307).

Historical and strategic considerations were what influenced linguists of the past in their decision to resist studying the social basis of language change, although all linguists recognized that language was a social fact. W. Labov (1963: 326-41) observed its polarization into two large blocks: social (A) and asocial (B). Linguists of the first group considered the role of social factors in the development of language change, studied changes (ongoing and stable) and noted the importance of linguistic diversity, as well as referring to information on evolution in models of linguistic waves, through time, space and society. Among them were W. D. Whitney, H. Schuchardt, A. Meillet, J. Vendryes, O. Jespersen and E. Sturtevant. However, his arguments were very limited, especially in considerations of the social context, since they were based almost solely on an intuitive explanation of some accidental facts, together with the prejudices of the historical moment.

On the contrary, the linguists of the second group explained linguistic change by purely internal, structural or psychological factors, rejected the possibility of studying change “in progress” and supported the strategy of a strictly monolingual and perfectly homogeneous community, as well as taking the genealogical tree of Indo-European languages as a model of evolution. This group consisted of H. Paul, H. Sweet, N. Trubetzkoy, L. Bloomfield, C. F. Hockett, A. Martinet, J. Kurylowicz, N. Chomsky and M. Halle. Moreover, they defined the influence of society as alien to the normal operations of language, and considered that the intervention of social factors represented either an interference, the effect of which was dysfunctional, or an extraneous and unsystematic intervention.

If we are committed to the analysis of the social basis of linguistic evolution, W. Labov (1965) set out three fundamental issues of linguistic change:

- a) The locus of social and situational variation played an important role in language change. Social variation included the linguistic features that characterized the different social groups of the speech community in a heterogeneous society (e.g. socioeconomic group, generation, sexuality, etc.), while situational variation referred to the diversity of social processes, in which registers are determined by functional criteria of language use, according to the communicative situation (formal or informal).
- b) The level of abstraction of phonological and syntactic rules was far removed from the speakers consciousness, and raised 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 higher performance and productivity, with respect to the lesser variation in the less superficial (syntactic) rules (see W. Labov, 1982).
- c) The function of language diversity was that the languages and cultures of the different speech communities were the result of an inherited product, and 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 change was carried out within their traditions. The acquisition of language by a child was subject to the combined action of nature and education, just as its innate character was the necessary basis for acculturation. However, the child could not begin to speak if he did not have contact with speakers, but as soon as that contact was established (whatever the language of his environment) he acquired it, provided that he had not exceeded seven years of age (see R. Jakobson, 1962, 1970; C. F. Hockett, 1958/1962: 547-76; B. Malmberg, 1966; F. Gimeno, 2023a).

Later, in the internal factors of *Principles of Language Change*, W. Labov (1994: 865-919) studied the general principles that would determine the internal evolution of linguistic structures. It was no accident that the focus of attention was on phonetic change, since it might 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 had successively become interested in grammatical problems of increasing abstraction, since any sustained pressure on the surface of a language would eventually resonate throughout the structure as a whole.

This hypothesis was that we would be 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 such a way as to preserve information. Most of the results mentioned showed the opposite: that in the flow of speech one or another variant was selected without considering maximizing information. On the contrary, the main effects that determined these choices would be mechanical: phonetic conditioning and simple repetition of the preceding structure.

So far, the results would favour the Neogrammarian view that language 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) in one way 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 investigations showed that the Neogrammarian characterization of linguistic structure was essentially correct. That structure was a largely mechanical system, beyond the reach of conscious recognition or adjustment by its users. There could be no doubt that language was designed to carry propositional information, as a result of an organization operating in the non-human species from which we evolved. It seemed strange, therefore, that we should not be free to adjust this system to its maximum efficiency for communicating information of this kind.

One possible explanation might be that the efficiency of language depended on its automaticity, and that a phonological or grammatical structure that was open to conscious inspection or manipulation would necessarily operate very slowly. Our efforts to consciously change language might therefore 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 more attractive to those who conceive of language as a social fact, rather than as the result of individual choice. Many recently proposed theories of language would explain linguistic structure as the result of the speaker's intentions to communicate meaning to the listener. There is a part of linguistic behavior that would be subject to conscious control, to deliberate choice, to purposeful and reflexive behavior. But it would not be a major part of the language faculty, and it would have relatively little bearing on the long-term evolution of linguistic structure.

It was no accident that the illustrations used to present probability matching were drawn from the behavior of other species of animals. I had proposed that abstract syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations were controlled by faculties that were shared with animals that were both closely and distantly related to humans. So we should not be surprised if we found that the systemic adjustments in the syntax and morphology of language were governed by the same cognitive faculty that governed the social behavior of mallards.

This hypothesis is historically and anthropologically implausible and unacceptable, 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 internal proposal on the principles of linguistic change lacked an explanation of what is most specifically human, which separated us from the rest of the animal species: the symbolic attitudes from which our immense capacity for culture was derived.

It was not only a linguistic and social issue, but also a cultural one. Languages were excellent instruments of social expression and communication, of the cognitive development of social groups, as well as of temporal, geographical and social variation within the various speech communities. Linguistic, social and cultural factors were directly related to the process of linguistic change. Explanations that were limited to one or the other element were simplifications and had to be based on the regularities observed in empirical studies on linguistic behaviour and the dimensions of social multilingualism, within the historical, sociological, cultural and legal determinants of the speech community.

The acquisition of language by a child before the age of seven was subject to the combined action of nature and education, just as its innate character was the necessary basis for acculturation. The undeniable fact that the lexeme was a universal and exclusive property of man demanded a study of the most general and primitive superficial structures (phonological and syllabic), which determined the precedent of the oral register of languages in the *ma-ma* materialization, starting from the imitation of the nasal sound produced by the sucking of the infant. Languages have been specific to human beings.

It would not be possible to examine the lexical differences between languages if we did not implicitly accept the notion that there is an underlying universal matrix of semantic features and a set of universal selection rules that establish the basic patterns of human cognition. Anthropologists have been engaged in sociological and cultural research into how the different channels through which humans interpret and organize the material world

will lead to an understanding of the underlying universals. Lexemes as surface phenomena are restricted to the specific grammars of each language.

It should also be mentioned that the lexicon of a language was a conglomerate of semantic features combined in a hierarchical manner. For these reasons, according to R. J. Di Pietro (1971: 123), it was useful to examine the following different functions of semantic features and to determine: 1) how they affected the rules of realization of a language; 2) how they were projected into general syntactic categories, and 3) how each language created its lexicon. Each language, in its own specific way, made an extraction from the universal inventory of semantic features in order 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, by means of semantic marking.

Each lexeme was to be regarded as a set of semantic features generated by 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. As hidden units underlying the lexemes, semantic features could not be observed directly. In order to arrive at an understanding of these features and the selection rules operating on them, an appropriate procedure would have to be developed. Any postulate of 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, 2024a, 2024b).

The social situations of languages in contact posed three processes (convergence, non-convergence and divergence), and revealed to us that the different social groups continuously modified their variety to reduce, maintain or accentuate the linguistic differences, depending on the broad framework of their social and cultural identity (see D. Hymes, 1971b; J. J. Gumperz and A. Bennett, 1980: 104-36). The bibliography on linguistic convergence was the most abundant, and the social situations of languages in contact favored said convergence of the different groups and the social and cultural mixing, within the diverse speech communities (see E. Haugen, 1953/1969: 383-411; F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 101-35).

Broadly speaking, the covariation of two or more systems in the linguistic repertoire of the different social groups of a speech community could be included within the following solutions:

- a) *Interference*, understood as the simultaneous superposition of two linguistic varieties in the same element.
- b) *Code switching*, or phonological, lexical or syntactic import (total or partial), without any linguistic integration.
- c) *Calco*, or lexical or syntactic substitution without import.
- d) *Loan*, understood as the linguistic and social integration of a foreign element.

This section constituted what was called *linguistic transfer*, well known to all current scholars of social multilingualism. Another essential section was *cultural transfer*, which involved the social and cultural mixing of multilingual peoples. In particular, linguistic and cultural transfer were related, and were resolved in two mutually exclusive dynamics (although the relationships and connections between both processes offered a special contribution, depending on the different social situations), namely:

- a) *Amalgamation*, or linguistic restructuring of two particular varieties into a new grammar (L3).
- b) *Linguistic substitution*, as the abandonment of a particular variety (B) in favor of another (A).

Amalgamation or creolization (unlike linguistic substitution) tended towards a more complex morphological and syntactical system. In this way, the delimitation between substitution and linguistic change in current situations of languages in contact was presented. Thus, for example, “Spanglish” was not a case of amalgamation, but rather of the substitution of the vernacular Spanish of Hispanic immigrants in the United States of America (mainly Mexicans from the Southwest and Puerto Ricans from New York) by standard American English (see A. Morales, 1999; C. Silva-Corvalán, 2000; R. Otheguy, 2008; F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 289-310; F. Gimeno, 2008c, 2023b).

In short, language transfer was a feature of languages in contact, and was a breach of the L2 norm, and we had to start from a concrete delimitation of the various degrees of transfer, that is, interference, code-switching, calque and borrowing, based on the corresponding social and linguistic dimensions. Thus, for example, in code-switching there would never be linguistic integration, although social integration could occur, while in integrated borrowing there would be both linguistic and social integration. In non-integrated borrowing there could be social integration, but not linguistic integration, and vice versa, linguistic integration, but not social integration (see F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 72-9).

The close relationship between substitution and linguistic change implied the need to integrate them into the written standardization process of the Romance languages, although their delimitation and significance had never been established. Regarding situations of languages in contact, the primary hypothesis of linguistic change resided in the solutions of linguistic conservation or substitution, depending on the different contextual coordinates (temporal, geographical and social) of the different speech communities.

V. Linguistic Conservation And Language Shift

In recent decades, the question of the possible analogy between the genesis of the Creole languages and the origin of the Romance languages has been raised again, but there has not been a conclusive answer. Thus, for example, E. Alarcos (1982: 18 and 47-8) suggested that the rural dialect of ancient Cantabria was originally almost a Creole or a lingua franca used for centuries by Basque-Romance bilinguals. The Latin poorly learned by the Hispanic natives of the north (including the Duero basin) gave rise to a number of forms of oral recording in the ancient territories of the primitive peoples, administratively grouped by the Romans in various legal convents.

B. Schlieben-Lange (1977) offered a historical overview of the discussions about whether or not the development of the Romance languages had corresponded to a process of "creolization", and proposed a heuristic use of the possible analogy between both types of linguistic processes (Romanization and creolization), in order to enrich our knowledge of linguistic universals in the field of language history. Although it is true that Romance linguistics achieved considerable knowledge of the processes of Romanization, from a linguistic point of view, these results could be reinterpreted in sociolinguistic terms.

Meillet's proposal for the creolization of Latin, although he had previously made entirely contrary statements (see A. Meillet, 1929). In the morphology of common Romance, most of the archaic features of the Indo-European type that archaic Latin still retained in large numbers were eliminated, as well as many of the new nuances that Latin had acquired. In its role as the "lingua franca" of a great empire, Latin tended to simplify itself, and to hide above all what was banal about it. Colloquial Latin became a variety that the most varied and the least cultivated men could handle, that is, a comfortable tool suitable for any occasion.

Likewise, H. Lüdtke (1968) in his history of the Romance lexicon offered an even clearer view. Although the *situation* of the current creoles was comparable to that of the Romance varieties of the Middle Ages, the *structure of the language* showed a fundamental difference: such a considerable reduction of morphology and vocabulary (as shown by the pidyines and creoles) had never occurred in the oral register or in the Romance vernaculars.

In short, forty years ago, B. Schlieben-Lange concluded that it was risky to decide on the origin of the romances by one of these two possibilities:

- a) A diglossic situation in which one of the languages (or one of its varieties) fulfilled official functions, while the other was relegated to informal relations.
- b) The emergence of a language of relationship (whether one of the languages, a simplified form of one of them, or a mixed language) that performed only reduced functions (for example, a strict commercial relationship).

In our days, it could be objected to the first hypothesis that diglossia characterized a relatively stable process, and that C. A. Ferguson (1959: 337) cited the case of Latin and the Romance languages among the examples of diglossia from other times and places, over a period of several centuries in various parts of Europe. The school teaching of the standard facilitated the displacement of the corresponding vernacular, along with social mobility. Regarding the second assumption, it could be refuted that the linguistic and historical characteristics of the Romance languages were completely different from those of the creoles (basilect, acrolect, and mesolect), since they did not develop from a pidyin, although the speech continua (temporal, geographical, social, and situational) and the creole continuum were different aspects of the *transition* and *insertion processes* of the general and historical process of linguistic change (see F. Gimeno, 1990, 1995).

The lack of precision in the use of the term language shift was a remnant of the past, and we had to avoid any kind of terminological ambiguity between language shift and linguistic change, between linguistic atrophy and amalgamation. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that although we found a simplification in the nominal morphology of the Romance languages (with numerous Romance vestiges), this was not the case with the verbal morphology, which preserved the Latin verbal paradigm quite well (particularly in Spanish language).

Our specific hypothesis for the article was a new project of anthropological history of the Valencian-southern Castilian border, based on the coordinates of social and cultural diffusion, as well as the successive and diverse historical acculturations. These processes enriched the different speech communities, with changes in the sociological, political, economic and cultural structure. Based on the sociolinguistic surveys, the hypothesis of historical sociolinguistics on the state and evolution of the gradual displacement of Valencian had to be confirmed, and it did not respond to a situation of linguistic conflict, without social mobility.

The sociolinguistic situation of the Valencian Community, according to certain authors (R. L. Aracil, R. L. Ninyoles, among others) showed a linguistic conflict, where the displacement of the Valencian vernacular by standard Castilian occurred without modifying the social condition. Castilianization was a slow and progressive process of social, cultural diffusion and acculturation, which followed three directions: a) horizontal and selective (16th-19th centuries); b) descending and spontaneous (19th century), and c) totalizing (appearance of the media) (20th century). A transcendental event was the War of Succession and the *Decreto de Nueva Planta* of Felipe V (1707), an event that meant the general divorce between language and culture.

According to the responses to the first survey by the Conselleria de Cultura, Educació i Ciència of the Generalitat Valenciana (1985), communicative competence in Valencian in the Valencian Community was presented as an area of subjective knowledge of Valencian that was scarce (see D. Mollà, L. Alpera, F. Gimeno *et al.*, 1989).

Furthermore, within the use of Valencian in the family domain two speaking communities had to be differentiated in the province of Alicante, based on the *Biar-Busot* linguistic border, since the regions of *Alcoi-Gandia* and *Alacant* differed totally, and responded to the first and the last in the number of Valencian speakers. As well as the last and the first in the number of Castilian speakers.

The communicative competence of Valencian in relation to the Valencian regions (see F. Gimeno, 1986) was analysed in the composite indices of the subjective communicative competence of Valencian (based on the simple indices of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing), namely:

- a) Alcoy-Gandia (1.3).
- b) Castellon (1.2).
- c) Valencia (1.2).
- d) Alicante (1).
- e) Requena-Segorbe (0.5).
- f) Orihuela (0.3).

The communicative competence of Valencian in the Valencian Community was therefore presented as an area of insufficient subjective knowledge of Valencian (composite index 1). In general terms and at a descriptive level, the decreasing correlation of the successive simple indices of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing with the absence of linguistic normalisation (and in particular, with the exclusion of Valencian from the domain of public use in the last century) was perceptible. The composite index of Requena-Segorbe (0.5) and that of Orihuela (0.3) indicated only the level of comprehension of Valencian.

The sociolinguistic situation in terms of communicative performance, within the domain of family use (in composite indices), appeared to be differentiated into three zones:

- a) Area of active bilingualism with a clear predominance of Valencian: Alcoy-Gandia (3.1), Castellón (2.7) and Valencia (2.6).
- b) Active bilingualism area with predominance of Castilian: Alicante (2.1).
- c) Passive bilingualism area with mastery of Castilian: Orihuela (1.1) and Requena-Segorbe (1.1).

However, the sociolinguistic situation in terms of communicative performance, within the domain of use of economic exchange (in composite indices), appeared to be differentiated into two areas:

- a) Active bilingualism area with predominance of Castilian: Alcoy-Gandia (2.4), Castellón (2.1) and Valencia (2).
- b) Passive bilingualism area with mastery of Castilian: Alicante (1.4), Orihuela (1) and Requena-Segorbe (1).

Thus, based on this sociolinguistic survey, the displacement of Valencian by standard Castilian was confirmed in the domain of economic exchange in the Valencian-speaking regions (and in particular in the Alicante region), without objective social mobility, within a possible situation of linguistic conflict.

The domain of use of economic exchange (small shops, large stores and banking institutions) was characterized by a lower degree of formality than the domain of public use. Bilingual activities in the public domain were regulated since a possible appearance of extensive diglossia in the 16th century, with the displacement of Valencian by standard Castilian, with objective social mobility.

During the 20th century, the geographical (by region) and sociological (by domain of use) dynamics of the displacement of Valencian in the Valencian Community could be observed in the gradual regression of the southern Catalan border (based on the comparison between the composite indices of bilingual performances in the family and economic domain), which showed a medium phase in the family domain and an advanced phase in the economic domain, depending on active (or passive) bilingualism with a predominance of Valencian or dominance of Castilian (see B. Montoya and A. Mas, 2011; F. Gimeno and J. R. Gómez, 2007; F. Gimeno, 2024c).

Also J. R. Gómez (1991) and R. Casesnoves (2002) compared the results of recent surveys (1985-2004) on communicative performance in the family environment, within the Valencian-speaking area, and showed that official data indicated that the Castilian was the predominant language in intergroup communication (street, 70.6%; traditional shops, 64.5%; large stores, 74.1%; work, 57.2%; etc.), while the Valencian had decreased considerably (36%). These data reflected a substantial decrease in Valencian as a familiar variety (13%) and an increase in the use of Castilian (12%), a fact that corroborated a clear example of the process of linguistic displacement from past times, in our case without social mobility, as a manifestation of Castilian acculturation, in relation to the socialization and education of children (see J. R. Gómez, 1986).

A more nuanced explanation would require us to recognise this strategy of linguistic displacement in the family domain between the different Valencian regions (Alcoy-Gandia, Castellón, Valencia and Alicante), especially in the metropolitan area of Valencia and the city of Alicante. On the other hand, the administrative and professional sectors that provided the largest number of Valencians who adopted Castilian as their family language did not experience any social advancement, but rather it was a simple consequence of Castilian acculturation.

According to the penultimate survey by the Conselleria d'Educació, Investigació, Cultura i Esport de la Generalitat Valenciana (2015), 66.5% of the inhabitants of the *Alcoi-Gandia region* spoke Valencian at family domain, as much or more than Castilian. In addition, 5.2% spoke Castilian more than Valencian, and 23.4% always

spoke Castilian. Meanwhile, 20.4% of the inhabitants of the *Alacant* region spoke Valencian at family domain, as much or more than Castilian. In addition, 9% spoke Castilian more than Valencian, and 66.5% always spoke Castilian.

In the latest survey by the Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura i Esport de la Generalitat Valenciana (2021), 53.9% of the inhabitants of the *Alcoi-Gandia* region spoke Valencian at family domain, as much or more than Castilian. In addition, 6.3% did so more in Castilian than in Valencian and 28.2% always did so in Castilian. While 14.9% of the inhabitants of the *Alacant* region spoke Valencian at family domain, as much or more than Castilian. In addition, 6.1% did so more in Castilian than in Valencian and 70% always did so in Castilian.

The comparison between the 2015 and 2021 surveys on the use of Valencian in the family domain, within the Valencian-speaking region of *Alcoi-Gandia*, fell from 66.5% to 53.9%, i.e. the use of Valencian in the family domain in the *Alcoi-Gandia* region fell by 12.6% of speakers. The same comparison between the 2015 and 2021 surveys on the use of Valencian in the family domain, within the Valencian-speaking region of *Alacant*, also fell from 20.4% to 14.9%, i.e. the use of Valencian in the family domain in the *Alacant* region fell by 5.5% of speakers. In general, Valencian was used less in both regions in the family domain, but much less in the *Alacant* region (14.9%).

Both in the use of Valencian and Castilian in the family and among friends, as well as in the economic domain of small shops versus large stores, two speaking communities had to be differentiated in the province of Alicante, based on the *Biar-Busot* linguistic border, within the specific coordinates of social multilingualism, and the historical, sociological, cultural and legal determinants. The regions of *Alcoi-Gandia* and *Alacant* differed completely in the number of Valencian and Castilian speakers.

In order to offer statistically significant interpretations of the collected data, the Pearson X^2 distribution calculation was applied. The first null hypothesis was that the use of Valencian and Castilian in the family domain was independent of the regions of *Alcoi-Gandia* and *Alacant*. The second null hypothesis was that the use of Valencian and Castilian in the economic domain of small businesses was independent of the regions of *Alcoi-Gandia* and *Alacant*. The significance level chosen was 95% for all calculations performed, with a probability of error of less than 1%.

In the first case, the value of the practical X^2 was much higher than the theoretical X^2 , and therefore the null hypothesis of independence between the above-mentioned factors was not met. The dependence between the use of Valencian and Castilian in the family domain and the speakers of the regions of *Alcoi-Gandia* and *Alacant* has been statistically significant. And two speech communities had to be necessarily differentiated in the family domain, based on the historical *Biar-Busot* border.

In the second case, the value of the practical X^2 was therefore much higher than the theoretical X^2 , and therefore the null hypothesis of independence between the above-mentioned factors was not met. The dependence between the use of Valencian and Castilian in the economic domain of small businesses and speakers in the regions of *Alcoi-Gandia* and *Alacant* has been statistically significant. Consequently, two speaking communities also had to be differentiated necessarily in the economic sphere of small businesses, based on the historical *Biar-Busot* border.

R. Cerdà (1967) proposed the acceptance by central Catalan of the phonological change [k] to [x] in the lexical Castilianisms of the Campo de Tarragona, and the adoption and generalisation of phonetic Castilianism in the younger generations and semi-educated social groups. The Castilianisation of Valencian society began with a possible situation of extensive diglossia in the first third of the 16th century, in which linguistic displacement with social mobility followed very different historical, sociological, geographical and cultural dynamics, despite the fact that they had been little studied.

Our descriptive and superficial hypothesis proposed the integration of the linguistic loan of the Castilian lexeme with /x/ in the social groups of the Santa Pola-speaking community, from an initial adaptation of the closest corresponding Valencian allophone [k], in past generations who were probably monolingual. Among the lexical Castilianisms in a local speech of the Campo de Tarragona, S. Mariner (1953: 189) admitted the [x] in the generations born between 1860 and 1875. In the same sense, this data could be confirmed from the surveys carried out in *Alcoi*, *Elx*, *La Vila Joiosa* and *Santa Pola*.

The lexematic names of the pair *sársia/xarsia*, in several fishing ports of the Valencian Community (*Dénia*, *La Vila Joiosa* and *Santa Pola*), alluded to an integrated loan (linguistically and socially) and to the Castilian lexematization /x/ in the sailor's lexicon. The residual level of the first linguistic adaptation was that of the Castilian lexeme /x/ > cat. /k/, which had acquired phonological rank, if it had managed to differentiate itself from its predecessor. Now, the lexeme with /k/ had entered the casuistry of the bilingual lexeme by the combination of allophones of two different languages and corresponded to the three stages of phonological importation of E. Haugen (1953/1969: 392-6), starting from the reintroduction of loans and hypercorrection.

The generalisation and subsequent normalisation of the Valencian variant [x] dissipated the attached social value and characterised a complete social integration. The lexematic materialisation of the Valencian variant of the bilingual as a phonetic transfer from Castilian and code-switching ruled out any identification of the Castilian lexeme with the Catalan lexeme /k/, and this was manifested by his linguistic awareness. The lexematic commutation x/k was, therefore, part of the opposition of pairs that differed in a relevant feature.

However, from a historical sociolinguistics perspective, in the 20th century, the appearance of mass media and general instruction in standard Castilian did not give rise to a linguistic conflict, in which language shift became independent of objective social mobility. The communicative competence of the social groups in the southern Valencian-Alicante speaking community responded to the only effective process of Castilianisation of the urban middle classes, within the social and cultural diffusion, as well as Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon acculturation.

VI. Conclusions

1. One of the general principles of the study of language change was that linguistic, social and cultural factors were directly related to the process of linguistic change. Explanations that were limited to one or the other element were simplifications and had to be based on the regularities observed in empirical studies on linguistic behaviour and the dimensions of social multilingualism. There was no language change without social variation (ongoing and stable) and without cultural variation, without historical, sociological, cultural and legal determinants of the various speech communities. 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 change.

2. The hypothesis of the history of linguistics as a succession of paradigms was more appropriate to linguistic facts and to the continuity of history itself 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 this sense, we could differentiate two interpretations: 1) an autonomous version of the assumption of phonological regularity, and 2) a grammatical version of linguistic change.

The hypothesis of the autonomy of linguistic levels was incompatible with the postgenerative theory of grammatical change. On the other hand, there was a double starting strategy in the investigation of linguistic change: a) homogeneity, and b) structured heterogeneity. According to these interpretations, which provided us with a double entry into the history of linguistics, there were the following models of linguistic change: a1) neogrammarian; b1) dialectological; a2) functionalist; b2) pragmatic; a3) generative, and b3) historical sociolinguistic.

3. Acculturation was the name given to all cultural events that resulted from the acquisition, modification or reinterpretation of a culture, in particular the reception and assimilation of cultural elements from one social group by another, with adaptation to a new sociocultural context. The term acculturation was widely accepted among American anthropologists in the late 19th century, in order to refer to the changes that occurred when social groups with different cultural traditions came together.

Although studies on linguistic and cultural contact did not enjoy wide coordination in the first half of the last century, the history of languages in contact and linguistic change formed part of acculturation, based on social and cultural diffusion, which implied the intrinsic relationship between linguistics, sociology and anthropology. Within the anthropological history of Hispanic Romance there was a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on successive and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European, Iberian, Fenno-Punic-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Castilian, Catalan-Aragonese, Hispanic 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. During the second half of the last century, great contributions to historical linguistics were accumulated, which were far from being recognized by historians of the language.

4. The study of language conservation and language shift was basically concerned with the relationship between stability or change in patterns of language use and the psychological, sociological and cultural processes that developed in multilingual speech communities for inter- or intra-community communication. The speech community responded more to rules of behaviour than to rules of adaptation. Variation appeared to be governed by a set of rules that reflected the communicative competence of the various social groups. Linguistic and cultural convergence occurred within a complex social process of linguistic and cultural transfer, in which the communicative competence of the social groups in said community changed, and linguistic variation and change were transmitted globally within it.

Languages, as excellent instruments of expression and communication of the cognitive development of social groups in the cultural history of humanity, had to be considered within the biological process of child language acquisition. The acquisition of language by a child was subject to the combined action of nature and education, just as its innate character was the necessary basis for acculturation. However, the child could not begin to speak if he did not have contact with speakers, but as soon as this contact was established (whatever the language of his environment) he acquired it, provided that he had not exceeded seven years of age. The undeniable fact that the lexeme was a universal and exclusive property of man demanded a study of the most general and primitive superficial structures (phonological and syllabic), which determined the precedent of the oral register of languages in the *ma-ma* materialization, starting from the imitation of the nasal sound produced by the sucking of the infant.

5. Historical sociolinguistics adopted a completely historical stance and proposed some empirical strategies that helped us to reconstruct the system of a language at one or more moments in the past, as well as to relate different phases of its evolution. According to Lyell's *principle of uniformitarianism*, historical evolutions were subject to the same social and cultural pressures as our daily communicative activity, so that nothing foreign to the linguistic structures of our time could be attributed, in principle, to a linguistic structure of the past.

However, in the discussion of internal factors of linguistic change, W. Labov (1994) proposed general principles that would determine the internal evolution of linguistic structures, and would respond to products of the evolutionary history 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 favour the Neogrammarian view that language change was mechanical and phonetically determined, and that there would be a part of linguistic behaviour that would be subject to purposeful and reflexive behaviour. But it would not be a major part of the language faculty, and would have relatively little bearing on the long-term evolution of language structure. So the system's readjustments in the syntax and morphology of the language would be governed by the same cognitive faculty as the social behaviour of mallards.

6. This hypothesis was, from a historical and anthropological point of view, implausible and unacceptable, 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 internal proposal on the principles of linguistic change lacked an explanation of what is most specifically human, which separated us from the rest of the animal species: the symbolic attitudes from which our immense capacity for culture was derived.

It was not only a linguistic and social issue, but also a cultural one. Languages were excellent instruments of social expression and communication, of the cognitive development of social groups, as well as of temporal, geographical and social variation within the various speech communities. Linguistic, social and cultural factors were directly related to the process of linguistic change.

It would not be possible to examine the lexical differences between languages if we did not implicitly accept the notion that there is an underlying universal matrix of semantic features and a set of universal selection rules that establish the basic patterns of human cognition. Anthropologists have been engaged in sociological and cultural research into how the different channels through which humans interpret and organize the material world will lead to an understanding of the underlying universals. Lexemes as surface phenomena are restricted to the specific grammars of each language.

Each language, in its own specific way, made an extraction from the universal inventory of semantic features in order 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, by means of semantic marking. Each lexeme was to be regarded as a set of semantic features generated by 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.

7. The close relationship between language shift and linguistic change implied the need to integrate them into the written standardization process of the Romance languages, although their delimitation and significance had never been established. Regarding situations of languages in contact, the primary hypothesis of linguistic change resided in the solutions of linguistic conservation or language shift, depending on the different contextual coordinates (temporal, geographical and social) of the different speech communities.

The social situations of languages in contact presented three processes (convergence, non-convergence and divergence), and revealed to us that the different social groups continuously modified their variety to reduce, maintain or accentuate the linguistic differences, depending on the broad framework of their social and cultural identity. The bibliography on linguistic convergence was the most abundant, and the social situations of languages in contact favored said convergence of the different groups and the social and cultural mixing, within the various speech communities.

8. Our current hypothesis of the article was an application of languages in contact, within a new anthropological history project on the long process of the gradual displacement of the Valencian-southern Castilian border. Languages in contact were a central aspect of social and cultural contact, and language transfer was a consequence of social and cultural mixing, as well as successive and diverse historical acculturations, which enriched the different speech communities.

Based on the surveys, the specific proposal of historical sociolinguistics on the state and evolution of the displacement of Valencian was confirmed, and did not respond to a situation of linguistic conflict, without social mobility. The long process of linguistic displacement of Valencian by Castilian was not based on a process of disaffection, degradation or involution of the family transmission of the mother tongue, but on a process of social, cultural diffusion and Castilian acculturation.

9. The phonological component comprised all the features and processes that had to do with the realization of syntactic and semantic elements into sounds. In contrast to the autonomous interpretation of phonemes as phonological units, the systematic phoneme has a clearly secondary importance, but it is convenient to refer to phonemes as underlying segments that are used to designate or “spell” morphemes, that is, segments that contain the minimum number of specifications of distinctive features necessary to express the phonetic realization of the morphemes.

Social groups within the bilingual speaking community influenced each other, leading to linguistic convergence. Indeed, cultural formation and acculturation have been an essential fact in the process of linguistic variation and change, as part of the collective tendency towards convergent development. The key to bilingual performance was linguistic convergence, since the experiences of social groups under conditions of languages in contact involved a superficial materialization of the semantic features of both languages and language shift.

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