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The "Variationist" View-point of Variation: Evidence from Catalan-Speaking Communities
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THE "VARIATIONIST" VIEW-POINT OF VARIATION: EVIDENCE FROM CATALAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES *

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INTRODUCTION

Linguists and scholars agree more and more nowadays that the consideration of language structure as constrained by the universals of cognition, memory and logic alone is insufficient, that language is structurally marked by its social use, and that both language structure and use are variable in nature. Obviously, the way this variability is accounted for and explained varies from model to model and from discipline to discipline. In this sense, this article a) discusses these many-faceted views of variation by looking at what it is and what it has been taken to be but is not, b) analyzes sociolinguistic variation as the way of analyzing language variation which is internationally associated with variation studies but which is labelled as a "variationist" view of variation in the Catalan context,¹ and c) illustrates this context of analysis with evidence from Catalan-speaking communities.

VARIATION: TO BE OR NOT TO BE

In the Catalan linguistic context the terms **sociolinguistics** and **variation** are used from a multi-faceted point of view. For those linguists in the Catalan situation who agree upon the variable nature of language, the term variation is meant to refer not only to the variable character of language structure, but also to the existing variability in language interaction and language behaviour, although in this case a preferable view would imply to speak about diversity or differentiation.

I suggest that we take the three basic criteria of aims, data, and method to see the similarities and differences between these two broad

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In the Catalan context also, the term *sociolinguistics* is used to refer to both *macrolinguistic* approaches (sociology of languages, language planning, etc.) and *microlinguistic* ones (analysis of the speech community, conversational analysis, etc.).

ways in which linguists view variation in the Catalan-speaking Countries.² First of all, it seems that, in spite of different specific **objectives**, both aim at explaining the variable nature of linguistic facts, linguistic interaction and language behaviour; as far as **data** are concerned, broadly speaking, one perspective would consider the linguistic facts themselves and, therefore, take the linguistic variables as starting point,³ while the other would start with language behaviour and interaction to then establish their variable nature and see how they are expressed linguistically; and finally, the same **method of observation** seems to be used by both approaches, although there are differences in the tools used to tackle this observation and in the way this observation is described, a fact which obviously also depends on the specific objectives and the nature of the data involved.

At all events, for those detractors of variation who still question its existence or deny its contribution to the understanding of language structure, I think it is important to clarify a number of points which help define the nature of variation.

1) First of all, to accept language variability does not mean that the categorical aspect of linguistic structure is denied or negated. In fact, a good proportion of linguistic facts, variables and data are categorical and this means that in linguistic analysis there is space for **categorical**, **optional** and **variable** rules. Accordingly, one cannot accept the sort of exclusive monopoly on the systematic character of language that certain linguistic models and schools claim to contribute to linguistic historiography. To study variation does not mean to leave linguistic structure aside; through the consideration of variation what is rather being questioned is the identification between structure and homogeneity and what is being proposed is a **structured heterogeneity** within the system (Weinreich, Labov i Herzog 1968).

2) Secondly, the study of variation does not only involve **external variation** either. It would not be possible because in variation studies external factors have to be correlated at least with one linguistic variable, **internal** to the language system, that is, with the dependent variable which is under analysis. Moreover, the variability present in the majority of linguistic facts is conditioned by other internal linguistic facts that help explain it.

In the Catalan context, for example, the variable use of the

² In Catalan, the term used Països Catalans (PP.CC.). That is: Catalonia, Valencia, Andorra, Roussillon, and the Alguer in Sardinia.

³ This would be most linguistically-oriented approach.

auxiliary (with the coexisting use of *ser* and *haver* in the pluperfect indicative) observed quite recently by Alturo (1995) in the Alta Ribagorça would have not been successfully explained if a number of **internal linguistic factors** had not been considered. These factors are: the thematic role assigned to the subject according to verb type, the aspectual value of the pluperfect, and the relation between time-of-action (TA) and time-of-reference (TR). However, the explanation of this variable use would have been also incomplete if a number of external social factors had not been taken into account.

It seems clear then that the fact of external variation alone cannot be established, because the basis of linguistic analysis are the linguistic facts and variables themselves, and the analysis mentioned above would not be successful without them, unless, of course, we were considering a sociological framework on its own. On the other hand, it is true that there can be linguistic facts which are not socially constrained. I am thinking of certain functional discourse variables, such as, anaphora, which requires the consideration of internal linguistic factors (subject, referent type, and others). But, maybe at this point it would be useful to raise a point suggested by Suzanne Romaine at the First International Conference on Linguistic Contact (ICOLC): the fact that there might not be a clear-cut distinction between internal and external factors and that it is probably clearer to speak about an interplay between them.⁴

3) Thirdly, variation does not only involve **synchrony** either, the same as linguistic change does not only imply **diachrony**. And although the concepts of variation and change, on the one hand, and synchrony and diachrony, on the other, have been traditionally considered separately, more and more linguists agree nowadays that linguistics as a whole would benefit from a context of analysis in which these concepts were considered jointly.

One striking point in relation to what has been mentioned is that, in spite of the overwhelming evidence that there is for the heterogeneity of the speech community, the concepts of *ideolect* and *homogeneous speech community* still seem to be useful for a good number of modern linguistic theories. However, it is precisely when one abandons the synchronic level of the discussion and tackles the theory of linguistic change, through diachrony, that it seems not only plausible but necessary to negate the homogeneous character of the

⁴ Such would be the case in anaphora studies, where sometimes it is difficult to establish whether elements such as the subject, the referent, etc. should be classified as internal or external factors.

speech community and linguistic analysis via the idiolect only. Labov (1981:19-20) reminds us that change is the substitution process itself and not the result of this process, and that when one studies this process in detail the heterogeneous character of linguistic systems is detected: "change implies variation; change is variation." Accordingly, language change will not be explained rationally unless one tries to explain the variability existing within the linguistic system used by a specific speech community. Moreover, recent studies on several linguistic variables⁵ have shown that the understanding of the direction of linguistic change in previous periods of the history of a specific language, and the community that uses it, can help us understand the processes of synchronic variation and social and stylistic stratification observable in the speech of the members of a particular community.

VARIATIONISM: TO BE OR NOT TO BE

After stating what elements define or do not define variation, let me raise a question which might be irrelevant for the understanding of variation world-wide, but which seems to be useful for Catalan sociolinguistics: is it possible and relevant to speak about a variationist view of variation?⁶ The answer is affirmative, since this view is acknowledged by Catalan sociolinguists when they distinguish between **variation** and **variationism**. In this sense, it may be useful to propose two terms to identify these two types of variation: **loose variation**, that is, a broad variability detected in language use and interaction and patterns of linguistic behaviour, and **strict variation (variationism)**, that is, a structured linguistic heterogeneity found in speech, conditioned by internal linguistic and external social factors and analyzed with quantitative techniques.

Once again, for those detractors of a variationist view of variation, it may also be useful to clarify a number of matters which might help us define its nature and distinguish it from a other approaches to language variation.

1) Firstly, to study variation from a variationist point of view does not only mean to consider language as it is used by the speech

⁵ See Labov (1989), among others.

⁶ A question which might be unnecessary at an international level, but which seems to have proved useful in the Catalan context, considering the numerous and multifaceted interpretations of the variable character of language.

community; this would be the approach considered by what is known as "sociolinguistic variation" in the context of which the occurrence of certain linguistic variables is favored by a series of linguistic (internal to the linguistic system), social and stylistic factors. A variationist view-point also considers variation within the individual, and not only at a sociolinguistic, but also at a psycholinguistic level;⁷ and at the level of discourse, from the point of view of language functions which are constrained by linguistic factors of a somewhat different nature.

2) Secondly, variationism does not consider phonological variation only, the same as it cannot only be identified as "Labovian."⁸ In fact, the problem of taking "sameness in meaning,"⁹ – a criterion used in variation studies to define the phonological variable, as starting and basic point for variation analysis, – is that other types of variation remain unexplained. In this sense, the need for syntactic and semantic studies of variation,¹⁰ where the different variants of specific linguistic variables may not always mean the same, has been proposed to cover other types of variation. Another aspect of variation which has been suggested (Hasan, 1992) is the consideration of language use, not only from the point of view of use *per se* but also for what characterizes this use at the semantic level, along the lines of what I proposed elsewhere, that is, that a) language should not only be taken as "a means of referring to and describing the world, but also as a way of contributing to its existence and persistence," b) that speakers "are social characters who talk to each other to communicate the actions that they undertake and negotiate the scope of the world to which they refer, and finally, c) that, following Bernstein (1975), a series of relationships are established among different social groups by means of which there is a specialization and distribution of meanings related to the world that surrounds them" (Turell, 1990: 257).

3) Variationism cannot just be equated with quantitative analysis. As has been pointed out frequently, quantification is only possible after a very thorough qualitative analysis has taken place. And in order to be able to take a qualitative stand, to be able to establish a valid research context and formulate the hypotheses that will allow a valid

⁷ That is, variation in first-language-acquisition, second-language-acquisition and foreign-language acquisition.

⁸ Since we owe its development to many other linguists.

⁹ In the sense that variants of a particular variable share the same meaning. See Labov (1978), Lavandera (1978) and Romaine (1981) for details on the discussion.

¹⁰ See Lavandera (1984) and Silva-Corvalán (1984, 1985 and 1989) among others.

systematization of the data, one has to be a (smart) linguist and has to make use of linguistic knowledge. However, even if it is true that quantitative analysis is not all that there is in variation studies, quantification is necessary to fight back the sort of research tradition¹¹ that accepts as valid and conclusive results on the variable use of certain linguistic facts and variables which have not been validated and which have only been observed in very small speaker samples. As a matter of fact, the study of variation involves the use of big samples and a good amount of speech data, to be able to correlate linguistic factors with social and stylistic ones, and this proportion of data can only be processed if one has a number of statistical packages available that make the quantification process easier and more manageable.¹²

Pradilla's study (1995) on an ongoing linguistic change which is taking place in Benicarló¹³ and which has to be understood as a diachronic process of disaffrication affecting the intervocalic position of the phonological variable /z/ in North-Western Catalan, – proves the need for the application of quantitative techniques when dealing with relatively large samples of speakers. According to the last census available (1986), in this study the sample's real universe involved a total of 9000 Catalan-speaking inhabitants between 16 and 70, with at least five years of residence in the municipality. Using the technique of "non-probability sample by quota" (Moreno 1990:123), the final sample was established at 70 informants (0.72% of the real universe). In this study the linguistic factors considered were: **stressed-syllable position, previous and following phonological context, etymology and modern derivation, word class and analogy**, the social factors taken into account were: **sex, age, profession and educational level**, considering at the same time the possible influence of linguistic competence in normative Valencian;¹⁴ finally, the stylistic contexts of usage considered were: **narrative, interview**, and two degrees of formality achieved through a **translation task and a text**. The real challenge in this study was to show the significance of all these factors in every process which had been observed (**iod segregation and the**

¹¹ As has been the case in the Catalan context until very recently.

¹² What should be avoided is the use of quantitative analysis as a «fishing operation», that is, even before one has formulated real hypotheses.

¹³ A Mediterranean small town in the Valencia province.

¹⁴ The dialect of Catalan spoken in the *apís* Valenciana, one of the Catalan-speaking areas along the Mediterranean and which has been awarded historical, linguistic and cultural *identi* to constitute one of the autonomous communities recognized by the Spanish State.

fricativization process (with *iod dropping*), and their correlations with all the realizations of all possible variants).¹⁵ If the researcher had had to do all these correlations for all the data manually, he would still be in the process of counting.

THE CORRELATION OF DEPENDENT LINGUISTIC VARIABLES WITH OTHER INDEPENDENT AND INTERACTIVE LINGUISTIC FACTORS

As mentioned above, most of what occurs in variation is framed within a purely linguistic context, that is to say, many variable linguistic facts are only internally-motivated. Notwithstanding, there is enough evidence to also suggest that, for a considerable number of those facts, the understanding of the development and direction of some specific linguistic changes is impossible outside the social structure in which it occurs. In other words, language is also motivated externally.

Within the Catalan context, all the studies undertaken under the auspices of the variationist view of sociolinguistic variation have involved a considerable amount of linguistic factors that account for linguistic heterogeneity and situations of ongoing linguistic change. Alturo and Turell (1990), for example, account for an ongoing phonological change – the substitution of the local variant [tʃ] by the normative [ʒ] – which appears to be taking place in El Pont de Suert.¹⁶ The two major internal constraints are: the predictable effect of the segmental environment, such that a preceeding vowel favors the normative fricative form, avoiding the voiceless interruption of the fricative; and the conservative behaviour of proper names,¹⁷ since surnames and toponyms favor the local variant.

At the syntactic level, and also in relation to El Pont de Suert, Alturo (1995) describes a syntactic change, in the sense that *ser*¹⁸ is being replaced by *haver*.¹⁹ The linguistic factors taken into account in this case were: the subject's thematic role, the relation between the auxiliary's distribution (*ser/haver*) and the situational aspect, that is, the verb's aspect together with its arguments, subject and objects (Comrie, 1976, quoted by Alturo, 1995:231), and finally, the relation between the time-of-reference (TR) and the time-of-action (TA) (Sankoff and Thibault,

¹⁵ Up to nine, in this case.

¹⁶ A Speech-community in the Catalan Ribagorça (Spain), just on the Catalan side of the Catalan-Aragonese linguistic border.

¹⁷ As the last redoubt of local dialects.

¹⁸ Whose present use is, in fact, reduced to the pluperfect indicative.

¹⁹ An extension which have been experimenting all Romance languages.

1977, quoted by Alturo, 1995:232). This study shows that the subject's thematic role is not significant, or in other words, that in Catalan there is no longer the need to grammaticalize the distinction between *ser* and *haver*. However, the distribution of these two auxiliaries in the variation group²⁰ could imply a new grammaticalization, that of the [+anterior] meaning, which would illustrate one of the latest stages of the transformation of the auxiliary system in Catalan. *Haver* is favored in those contexts in which the time-of-action precedes the time-of-reference.²¹

At the language-contact level, the sociolinguistic study of *borrowing* in a bilingual speech community (Turell, 1995b), where a number of linguistic factors were considered, shows that the interplay between internal and external factors is relevant. At the linguistic level, the profile of **distant**²² Spanish borrowings into Catalan has the following characteristics: it is a phonologically integrated and partially morphologically integrated borrowing and as to type, it is unique (**nonce**)²³ and idiosyncratic. Another linguistic factor that was considered was word class: the majority of distant borrowings are conjunctions, interjections, prepositions and adjectives. **Cognate** borrowings, on the other hand, can be characterized as follows: it is a partially phonologically integrated and a morphologically unintegrated borrowing and, as to type, repeated and recurrent, which proves that this type constitutes the great body of what is known as extended borrowings in Catalan. Finally, as to word class, **cognate** borrowings are pronouns, adverbs, verbs and nouns.

However, all these studies would have been incomplete unless a number of social and stylistic factors had been taken into account. These factors have proved to be explanatory as to variation patterns and the direction of linguistic change, as is shown in the following section.

²⁰ That is, the group in El Pont de Suert which still shows a variable use of both *ser* and *haver*.

²¹ That is, in those situations where the aspect is stative and non-stative/non-cyclic with an [+anterior] meaning.

²² Borrowings which do not have a cognate form in the other language.

²³ This confirms the findings on nonce borrowings (Sankoff, Poplack and Vanniarajan (1990) in the sense that unique and isolated borrowings, occur more frequently in typologically distant languages; obviously, Catalan and Spanish are not typologically distant, but what is distant in the case is the type of borrowing.

PATTERNS AND DIRECTION OF LINGUISTIC CHANGE:
EVIDENCE FROM CATALAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

A lot has been written on the theoretical and methodological base of sociolinguistic variation,²⁴ so in this section I will only be referring to some of its well established principles with evidence drawn from Catalan-speaking communities.

Consistent findings concerning language variation and change emerge from systematic sociolinguistic research done in a great number of speech communities throughout the world. These valid and reliable findings have allowed us to establish a number of principles which have been and are being confirmed in ongoing research. Among these the most relevant ones as far as the Catalan context are the principles which affect a) initiation of change, b) diffusion of change within specific sociolinguistic situations and across different speech communities, and c) the different routes that these changes can take.

The initiation and innovation of linguistic change

Research on social structure has proved to be fruitful in uncovering the patterns of linguistic change that might be taking place in a specific speech community. It is not that there are big differences in the way in which forms diffuse across internal linguistic and external extralinguistic contexts. However, on the one hand, it is true that a set of predictable expectations about linguistic structure would allow us to predict those linguistic facts which help originate the change; on the other, it is also true that a corpus of generalizations as to the origins of linguistic change would allow us to adopt theoretical principles on linguistic change within the speech community context.

It is also important to remember that for the majority of theories on language change the latter originates either in the lowest social class, according to the principles of the *minimal effort* (Saussure, 1945), of *local density*²⁵ (Bloomfield, 1933), and of *substrate*, or in the most prestigious social group, and later, according to the *imitation* principle, diffused from below. In fact, though, none of the sociolinguistic studies carried out throughout the world supports this; on the contrary, it seems that linguistic change initiates in several

²⁴ See Turell (1995a) for an updated commentary, in the Catalan context.

²⁵ In the context of which each act of communication between speakers goes with a transfer of linguistic influence that makes his/her verbal behaviour more similar to his/her interlocutor.

intermediate groups and, therefore, a sort of curvilinear pattern is established,²⁶ where the highest frequency of occurrence is found in one or other similar intermediate social groups. These findings have been corroborated by several studies in the Catalan speaking situation.

Alturo and Turell (1990) similarly showed that this substitution of [t] by [z] originates in an intermediate group: the public services and the industrial workers, and within these groups, the innovators "play an important role within the community and have more social interaction and a higher proportion of contacts outside the local community (p. 25). In the case of the substitution of *ser* by *haver* described in Alturo (1995), the process is led by an intermediate social group, with a wider range of social networks and a higher index of contact with the world outside the community.

Change diffusion: the intersection of sex and social class in the course of linguistic change

Among the most consistent outcomes of sociolinguistic research on language variation and change are the findings related to how linguistic change operates within the system. These outcomes are labelled as *change from above* and *change from below*. *Change from above* takes "place at a relatively high level of social consciousness, show a higher rate of occurrence in formal styles, are often subject to hypercorrection, and sometimes show overt stereotypes as with stable sociolinguistic variables" (Labov, 1990:213).

These *changes from above* a) typically emerge in what is known as stable sociolinguistic situations, b) involve alterations in the social distribution of many linguistic variables and c) involve clear correlations with social variables, namely sex and social class. *Change from below*, on the other hand, constitutes "the basic form of linguistic change that operates within the system, below the level of social awareness" (Labov, 1990:215). These changes show the clearest evidence for the effect of sexual differentiation on linguistic changes in progress, where women appear as innovators.

Determination of these two types of changes has been achieved by accurate observation of sociolinguistic situations in the form of reliable data on vernacular speech production found from members of speech communities throughout the world. Labov (1990) reviews sociolinguistic findings on linguistic differentiation between men and

²⁶ See labov (1980) and Turell (1988).

women in several sociolinguistic situations, and sums them up in two fundamental principles, which he develops with their respective corollaries, and which, as Labov (1990:210) writes, "run counter to the intuitions of linguists as well as the general public."

PRINCIPLE I: For stable sociolinguistic variables, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard form than women

This principle can be read in two complementary ways, as Labov suggests; that "men use more nonstandard forms, less influenced by the social stigma directed against them," or that "women use more standard forms, responding to the overt prestige associated with them" (1990:210). According Labov, there is enough evidence to suggest that this principle applies not only in urban industrialized Western communities, but also in many urban African and South-American societies. However, this principle is qualified by the following corollary (Labov, 1990:213):

PRINCIPLE IA

In change from above, women favor the incoming prestige form more than men

In the Catalan situation, an example of what has just been mentioned is the change from [tʃ] to [z] in Èl Pont de Suert (Alturo and Turell 1990) where women are the real innovators.²⁷

The second principle proposed by Labov (1990) is related to *changes from below*, and is stated as follows:

Principle II

In change from below, women are most often the innovators

The opening of the neutral unstressed vowel [ə], analyzed and described by Pla (1995) in the Barcelona metropolitan area, shows that

²⁷ The fact that is not confirmed in Alturo (1995), where the substitution of *ser* by *haver* is described, may be due, as the author points out (p. 234) to the fact that the sample is unevenly stratified and unevenly distributed. Another reason could be that in relation to this variable it is very difficult to determine whether it is immersed in a stable sociolinguistic situation or in a process of ongoing change. Ever further, it is also very difficult to determine whether it involves the initial or the final stage of the change and this, in turn, would involve considering social (for example, age-grading) and stylistic covariation, something impossible because the data were not stratified from a stylistic point of view.

this vowel is a *sociolinguistic indicator*, in the sense there is no significant stylistic stratification. Two facts reinforce this conclusion: a) the fact that the change is still kept at a very low level of social consciousness, and b) the innovators seem to be the women, although this has to be shown empirically, as Pla mentions (p. 157). All this implies that the opening of the neutral vowel constitutes an ongoing linguistic change, neither incipient,²⁸ nor very advanced, that is it has not reached a high degree of social consciousness.

In his observation on one of the directions taken by an ongoing linguistic change which is taking place in the Benicarló speech community (see note 13), Pradilla (1995) observed two important processes concerning voiced intervocalic prepalatal: one is disaffrication and iod segregation, as the diagram below shows:

$$d3 > i3 > 3$$

The subjective evaluation test was decisive in showing that change in the direction of $d3 > i3 > 3$, with iod-less z as the innovative variant, is a *change from below*, which explains why men favor the realization of the variant without the semivowel [i]; the other in the reverse direction, that is, the tendency to affrication, as the most innovative variant, is overwhelmingly favored by women.

In his characterization of backing of stressed mid-central vowel, accounted for in the variable rule: $\text{'ə} \rightarrow \text{'ε}$, Montoya (1995:198) suggests that this change should be considered as *stable* in Majorca and Ibiza, whereas in Minorca it should be considered a change in progress. The evidence on which he based these conclusions comes from the historical data he used to reconstruct the initiation of the change undergone by the stressed neutral vowel. These data were collected by Alcover between 1906 and 1928 and then compiled by Moll (1929-32), and consist in 67 complete verbal conjugations. Varbrul analysis done to a section of the Alcover data, that is, to the competence model in use in Ibiza and Minorca, where the variable rule $\text{'ə} \rightarrow \text{'ε}$ was operating between 1919 and 1921, showed that the realization of the innovative variant (['ε]) was constrained by geographical factors and at the social level by age groups²⁹ and sex, whereas the structural linguistic factors did not indicate important differences or contrasts in the behaviour of the linguistic variable

²⁸ It has been diffused beyond the innovative social groups, but also it has basically only affected the very young.

²⁹ According to David Sutcliffe's personal observation in Minorca, the occurrence of the innovative variant (['ε]) is geographically distributed for all ages.

under analysis. However, it is worth mentioning that when the variable is part of a grammatical morpheme (verbal conjugations -em, eu) then the favored variant is the innivative ['ə], which confirms Alcover's first impression (1921-22:43, quoted by Montoya (1995). On the contrary, if the variable is part of the root, then the conservative variant ([ə]) is firmly kept.

Route taken by change

According to Pradilla (1995: 104), there are two important factors which account for intervocalic disaffricativization: **etymology and modern derivation**, on the one hand, and **age**, on the other, and both show interaction with many other factors. One process of interaction was found in the inverted behaviour shown by different age groups in the variable rules of iod segregation and fricativization: iod segregation was favored by old informants whereas fricative realizations were favored by young speakers, which confirms the conservative use of iod in contrast with the innovative character of [ʒ]. Affricativization was also favored by old speakers, thus confirming that there are two routes in the process of change: one is the innovative process of affricativization, favored by the old age group, and the other is the reverse process of fricativization, favored by the young generations.

However, the work which best illustrates the two types of change mentioned above, *changes from above* and *changes from below*, is the research done by Plaza (1995) in La Conca de Barberà on the behavior of postonic [e]. Thus, the existence of three phonetic realizations (variant [i], typical of the **xipella**,³⁰ variant [e], which coincides with Western dialects in postonic position, and [ə], as the standard variant) confirms two different stages of this ongoing change. In the stage from [i] to [ə], the women are leading the change, but in the stage from [e] to [ə] the probabilities of [ə] are higher for men than for women, and this could be taken as showing that this is a stable sociolinguistic situation. However, Plaza suggests that it rather involves an unstable sociolinguistic situation and that in that case, women would be preferably using the innovative standard variant, [ə]. This fact is corroborated by cross-tabulation of **age** and **sex**, which indicates that young women lead the change towards [ə].

³⁰ The **xipella** is an Eastern dialect of Catalan (Veny, 1983), characterized by Recasens (1990), quoted by Plaza (1995:121), as a subsystem involving unstressed vocalism.

CONCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVES

Evidence from Catalan-speaking communities seems to confirm one important statement proposed by Labov as a summing-up account of his **principles of linguistic change** in the sense that "both men and women respond to the general principle that whenever people become aware of a change in the mechanism of their language, they reject it (p. 244). Results in the Catalan context seem to suggest as well that for stable variables men use more nonstandard forms than women and that in *changes from above* women favor the prestige forms more than men. Finally, in view of the the Catalan-speaking communities analysed as well as evidence from many others, I would agree with Labov in that the explanation for this behaviour must be found in "upward mobility and a relative increase in the power of women" (1990:244) within the intermediate groups of the social spectrum. (1990).

Lastly, I hope to have shown that every language, naturally including Catalan, has a very active social life, and that by contributing to linguistic theory from the Catalan linguistic end, Catalan Linguistics will also achieve normalisation. But I am also utterly convinced that this normalisation is not going to exist until the scientific study of Catalan stops being an ultimate end in itself and turns into a form of contributing to general Linguistics and to a nonexistent general theory of Language.

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