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Valencian within Contemporary Standard Catalan: an Approximation
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VALENCIAN WITHIN CONTEMPORARY STANDARD CATALAN: AN APPROXIMATION

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INTRODUCTION

Joseph Gulsoy has devoted many hours of his life to the study of Valencian. It is only fair that Valencian linguists, as a token of their gratitude, contribute to the volume the North American Catalan Society publishes in his honour. In these pages, I would like to submit to the esteemed linguist some personal reflexions about the situation of the Valencian linguistic variety within modern standard Catalan.

We will begin with a survey of the linguistic norms standard Catalan has had since the *Renaixença* of the second half of the 19th century. This will allow us to contrast the situation of Valencian, showing that the differences are positive as far as linguistic norms are concerned, but unsatisfactory in respect to linguistic standards. We will limit our comments to two periods. The first, covering the years between Teodor in the mid 19th century and the entry on the public stage of Joan Fuster around 1960, will only be dealt with cursorily. In contrast, our description of the years from 1960 until the end of General Franco's dictatorship will be more detailed, with a special section on the social factors which condition the interaction between colloquial Valencian and standard Catalan. In the closing paragraphs we will turn our attention to the future, asking the ineluctable, but difficult and polemic question: What is the future of Valencian within standard Catalan?

1. THE OFFICIAL CATALAN LINGUISTIC NORMS: POSITIVE, BUT NOT PERFECT. THE CASE OF THE VERB FORMS

The norms of contemporary standard Catalan are built, in my opinion, on solid grounds, thanks to the efforts of three persons. First, the Majorcan Marià Aguiló (†1897), who had advocated a concept for a new supraregional Catalan which was very fair, trying to balance not only the language of his time and the writings of the great writers of the past, but also all Catalan dialects, without privileging a particular one. Second, Antoni Maria Alcover (†1932), also from Majorca, who had gathered a huge amount of linguistic data from all dialects in his *Diccionari Català-Valencià-Balear*. Finally, Pompeu Fabra, from

Barcelona (†1948), who, imbued with Aguiló's ideology, brought coherent reasoning to the discussion, justifying with logical arguments the selection of the constituents of the new Catalan linguistic norms.

To give examples of sensible choices made when establishing rules for standard Catalan, let us look at the fields of compositionality and polymorphism. Compositionality refers to the process of basing linguistic norms of the supraregional language on rules found only in one or two dialects. For example, the construction "*en* + infinitive" (*En arribar a casa, et telefonaré*: 'When I get home, I'll call you') is truly alive only in Balear and Valencian, but it is now offered as option to the whole linguistic territory. Also, the emphatic negative *pas* (*Això no ho he dit pas jo*: 'It wasn't me who said that'), formerly unknown in colloquial Balear and Valencian, is now used also in these regions, even though, as yet, only in formal registers.

The compositionality of modern Catalan benefits the dialects, while enriching the standard language. Every dialect can participate in the elaboration of linguistic norms. The supraregional language gains in stylistic options, while also motivating the speakers of every dialect to feel at home in and identify with the common standard language.

Polymorphism, a complement to compositionality, allows dialectal regions to opt out of proposed norms if social causes make the introduction of a common standard problematic. Regional words and forms can be declared regional standards (e.g. *traure* and *treure*, both 'to pull out, take out'). Polymorphism brings no linguistic enrichment; it is a compromise imposed by social conditions. From a strictly linguistic point of view, polymorphism has a negative impact, since it detracts from the ideal of a biunivocal relation between form and communicative value; that is, that a value be expressed by means of only one form, and a form be the expression of only one value. However, from a non-linguistic point of view, polymorphism has its positive side. It goes hand in hand with linguistic variety, which is usually considered a richness. But members of a society with more than one linguistic norm have to learn to tolerate variety within the common language, just as we are tolerant with people who are different from us in non-linguistic areas. Polymorphism, from a certain point of view a potentially negative factor, can help —if treated right— to reinforce mutual respect in a linguistic community.

Just like compositionality, polymorphism allows speakers to subscribe to supraregional standards, since regional features, of sociolinguistic importance, are not disallowed.

For an example of negative aspects of polymorphism in standard Catalan, let us look at the morphology of verbs. Although most of the verb forms are the same in all Catalan dialects, several forms show the traditional subdivisions of the linguistic territory. The eastern dialect

has introduced the vowel *i* as a sign of the subjunctive (*que jo treballi, que jo digui*), while Valencian conserved often the old forms (*que jo treballe, que jo diga*). Furthermore, Catalonia and Northern Valencian have changed the first person of the present indicative (*jo penso*), while the Balearic Islands and most of the Valencian region continue using the traditional forms (*jo cant, jo cante*). This second difference has led to very important modifications in the third conjugation and in some verbs of the second conjugation, causing the replacement in the Catalan of Catalonia of the /k/ in forms such as *jo preferesc, jo nasc* by *jo prefereixo, jo neixo*. This evolution has led to a change in the present subjunctive, which passed from *que jo preferesca* to *que jo prefereixi*. Finally, Valencian has substituted for classic forms of the past subjunctive (*que tu diguesses*) forms that, in general, coincide with those of the past perfect of the indicative (*que tu digueres* or *que vares dir*).

During the *Renaixença*, people used verbal forms which were, in general, the old written forms; therefore, there was unity. However, eastern Catalonia introduced, beginning with Pompeu Fabra, many forms taken from the colloquial language of the Barcelonese high society. This impelled speakers of Valencian and of Balear to act likewise, planting the seeds of many problems for linguistic unity in our days. Bibiloni (144) thinks that "the regional fragmentation of Catalan verbal morphology is one of the biggest stumbling blocks for the standardization of a unified language". As a matter of fact, these variations make it impossible to use schoolbooks published in Catalonia in the autonomous region of Valencia.

Today, nearly a hundred years after Fabra, it is practically impossible to reopen discussions of linguistic decisions taken in eastern Catalonia. But it is also unimaginable that the Valencian society accept the verbal forms of central (or North-Eastern) Catalan. Any sociolinguistic planification has to face the fact that the regional morphological differences in the conjugation are unlikely to go away and that, therefore, by necessity, besides Catalonia's forms, the Valencian and Balear verbal forms have to be granted the same normative status.

2. VALENCIAN AND STANDARD CATALAN FROM TEODOR LLORENTE TO JOAN FUSTER (1850 TO 1980)

In contrast to the pan-Catalan norm, Valencian linguists (e.g. Polanco, "*La normativa*" 129) usually judge standard Catalan unsatisfactory for the Valencian people, because Valencian was hardly been taken into account when those norms were established in 1913. It must be said that

the main responsibility for this situation lies with Valencians themselves. Linguistic norms are made by the pertinent legislative institutions; but what will be considered 'standard' is determined by the educated speakers from the dominating social class speaking the dominant dialect. But Valencian has had few prestigious writers during the years 1850 to 1960.

Another factor which explains why Valencian carried so little weight in the standardization of contemporary Catalan is the belief that Valencian is the variety of Catalan which is most influenced by Castilian. I have commented elsewhere (Saragossà, *Criteris* 69) that it makes little sense to talk about degrees of imperfection of dialects; such questions have never been dealt with satisfactorily. People usually point to the 'faults' of Valencian, but forget about its positive qualities. For example, Valencian pronounces the final consonants (*pont, alt, fort, camp*, infinitive endings in *-ar*, against */pon, al, for, cam/*, infinitives in *-a*, in many other Catalan dialects. Also, Valencian offers a more 'traditional' plural formation in cases such as *hòmens, tèrmens*, against *homes, termes*; or *els impostos, els discs* versus *els impostos, els discos*, which sound like Castilian. According to communication theory, the former are the more 'efficient' pronunciations.

In the sixties, a social process began, mostly within the University, which rejuvenated and expanded Valencian consciousness. This movement, however, did not try to rectify the deficiencies of Valencian as standard language. People's ideas about language are more influenced by what they read than by consciously analyzing the linguistic structure of what they hear. We tend to reproduce orally the forms we have assimilated orally, whereas we reproduce in the written register what we have learned from the written language. The intellectual formation of a people is made basically by means of books. In the case of a socially marginated language, such as Catalan, the written language has more intellectual importance than the oral language. This situation can impact negatively upon the recovery of Valencians as a people. Since today most literature with prestige is produced in Catalonia (and some in Majorca), with many more books in general published in Catalonia than anywhere else, it is possible that Valencian authors will abandon any attempt to enrich standard Catalan by using in their works Valencian words and forms. This results in a linguistic self-margination, since books written by Valencian authors in what —maybe unconsciously— they consider 'supra-regional' Catalan will instinctively be considered 'foreign' by most Valencian readers.

That this process is already a reality has been shown by Polanco ('*La normativa*' 131) in an important work which, however, has not been little noticed by linguists. Along the same line, Casanova (1990)

has compiled a list of 800 traditional Valencian forms, words and expressions which contemporary educated Valencians no longer use actively.

3. HOW PEOPLE SPEAK AND HOW THEY IDENTIFY WITH THE STANDARD LANGUAGE: THE NORMATIVE PROCESS AND SOCIAL EXIGENCIES

After the foregoing observations, it should have become obvious that standard Catalan should fully incorporate linguistic characteristics of Valencian. This is required by a basic principle of language standardization and responds to a social demand. The standard language has to be as close as possible to the colloquial language. As I have shown above, and explained more fully elsewhere (Saragossà, *Criteris* 2.4.3), this goal was fundamental in Fabra's normativizing ideology.

Also from a social point of view Valencian variants of Catalan must be allowed, and be present, in the standard language. Most of the works I have consulted¹ consider it a necessity that the speakers of a language should be made to feel at home in what official institutions offer them as 'their' language. If people cannot identify with the official norm, any linguistic normalization becomes impossible, with grave social and cultural consequences. If the standards for written Catalan are too removed from colloquial Valencian (see Polanco, *La normativa* 133-134; Casanova, *El lèxic* 66), negative effects are inevitable, aggravated by demagogical campaigns against valencianism, called pejoratively 'catalanism'. Therefore, Polanco ("Reflexions" 39) recommends that the linguistic norm be as close as possible to actual usage, in order to avoid crossing the threshold of "linguistic irritability" (the *llindar d'estridència*) of Valencians — threshold which, given the prevalence of linguistic prejudices, is very low these days.

In fact, this goal is an old one in the movement of valencianism. Josep Giner² thought that one of the conditions necessary to regain the consciousness of Valencians as a people is that linguists of the region elaborate themselves standards for their language, without rejecting the advantages of coordination and interpenetration with other variants of Catalan. Unfortunately, Giner did not have much influence on the valencianism of the sixties and seventies. However, luckily, in the previous decades he had a decisive impact upon a Valencian who

¹ Fuster (13), Polanco (*La normativa* 133-134; *Reflexions* 38-39), Casanova (*Elements* 113; *El lèxic* 66, 71 and 79), Pradilla (199 and fn. 41).

² About J. Giner, see the lengthy introduction by Antoni Ferrando to a reprint of most of his articles (*Obra filològica* (1931-1991). Valencia: Editorial Delmes, 1998) and the dossier dedicated to him in the journal *Alba* 12 (1997).

became very influential: the grammarian and writer Enric Valor (†2000). Besides Giner, there was the figure of Manuel Sanchis Guarner (†1981), whose grammar from 1950 was at the time not taken into account as much as it deserved. Educated Valencians of the sixties followed much more the inspiring essayist Joan Fuster (†1992) than the three 'local' linguists Giner, Sanchis Guarner and Germà Colón. Today, finally, these three personalities have found many followers.

Some other positive changes have been observed. For example, Casanova (*Elements* 117 fn.) notices that "lately, editors and publishers from Catalonia respect much more Valencian and Balearic forms and words". In the sphere of linguistic legislation, there has also been an important change: the Philological Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans has accepted the proposal of Valencian linguists to include 620 lexical items in the new *Diccionari de l'Institut* (DIEC). I do not know if the ideology behind establishing lexicological norms has changed, but there is no doubt that Valencian words have become much more visible. Finally, there is now also increased collaboration between writers from all Catalan phone regions. Some Valencian contemporary authors have dedicated much time to observing and studying traditional written and modern colloquial Valencian and to learn how to use it in their works (for instance the novelists Toni Cascarilla and Joan Oliver's). There are also positive trends in the field of 'valencianist' literary criticism and in linguistic research. What is still lacking is coordination of all these efforts to offer the modern Valencian society what it needs. But many disturbing factors remain; some we have already commented upon; others we will mention in the next section.

4. OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS WHICH CONDITION THE INTERACTION BETWEEN COLLOQUIAL VALENCIAN AND STANDARD CATALAN

The situation Valencian finds itself in vis-à-vis standard Catalan cannot be separated from certain social factors. Social factors determine the way Valencians feel and think about language. We have to look at the basic characteristics of the valencianism which was shaped during the sixties. It is important to analyze how contemporary valencianism judges the Valencian literature of the *Renaixença* and of the first half of the twentieth century. It is also necessary to study the role language plays within general Valencian politics. Finally there is a certain linguistic regionalism in Catalonia, which should be studied and compared with valencianism. However, space does not allow us to develop here these topics of an historical and a social nature. I refer the reader to chap. 5 of my forthcoming book entitled *El valencià del futur*.

5. THE FUTURE OF VALENCIAN WITHIN STANDARD CATALAN

The general social background

Since the ways a language is used depends very much on extralinguistic factors, we should present first a survey of today's sociolinguistic situation in Valencia, before talking about Valencian within standard Catalan. In the last forty years, the Valencian people have gone from one extreme to the other, from short-sighted localism to ideological and linguistic positions which alienated them from the consciousness of being a people with its own traditions. This zigzagging can not be considered a chance phenomenon. The valencianism of the sixties and seventies, during the final years of Franco's long dictatorship, believed in the possibility that the restauration of freedom and return to normalcy would follow the same route in all three *Països Catalans*, that is Valencia, the Balearic Islands and Catalonia, leading to a *rapprochement* which, if not politically, at least linguistically, would have been close to unity (a unity Madrid would have considered intolerable). Instead, the events of the eighties have demonstrated that such hopes favored the formation of antivalencian demagogical and extremist social movements in questions of language. They went further than valencianism in political and ideological respects, as can be seen in the electoral success of González Lizondo. The depth of the success of a social movement can be measured, in my opinion, by looking at how a society has changed the way it looks at itself. The appearance of violent antivalencianist social events pushed the Valencian society to distance itself from its own language, leading to an increase of castilianization (see Pitarch 165; Pradilla 167, 177 and 184).

Given this social situation, the recuperation of Valencians as a people can not be done by asserting their rightful place in the *Països Catalans*, but must be achieved in the name of valencianity alone. Therefore, instead of diluting valencianity within catalanity, it is necessary to present to the 'man in the street' a project that is Valencian itself for reasons of geography, history, economy and culture; and Valencian also as far as the name of the language and the linguistic norms are concerned. Pradilla (164) recommends that the terms Valencian and Catalan be homologued in all its aspects, in order to forestall the appropriation of valencianism by the secessionist movement, which, demonizing Barcelona, pushes Valencia into the arms of Madrid. Indeed, on May 9, 1990, the Institut d'Estudis Catalans has modified its bylaws and declared 'Valencian' a synonym of 'Catalan'.

As for linguistic norms, Pradilla (199) points out the advantages for Valencian to continue adhering to the *Normes ortogràfiques de Castelló*,³ and this by all Valencian cultural organisms. These pan-

Catalan rules can be presented to the Valencian society as Valencian linguistic rules.

All this does not exclude coordinating Valencian linguistic endeavors and general cultural interpenetration with the Balearic Islands and with Catalonia. Quite the opposite: Valencians should see in this coordination a call to develop their own reality to its full potential, as is desirable from a social point of view. The basic difference with the ideology of the seventies is that the goal now is to establish three distinct but coordinated Catalan speaking people, not just one. But the recuperation of Valencians as a people is still an incomplete project. The sociopolitical ideology this goal is based on is not new, and it is more and more the ideology of political valencianism of the people elected to Valencian municipal governments.

The field of language

As far as language is concerned, I am convinced that Valencians can achieve the same progress if certain conditions are fulfilled, most of which have been pointed out by authors quoted in this article. In the first place, there is the need, as Lluís Polanco pointed out more than fifteen years ago, for a Valencian legislative institution whose aim would be to "establish linguistic norms and to have them applied" (*La normativa* 135). Obviously, in questions of language, this institution would have to be "coordinated with the other catalanophone regions, in a constant collaboration, much more intense than the one which took place during the process of codification". It should be observed that the situation Polanco hoped for fifteen years ago is very similar to the one existing between the many academies of the Castilian language.³

In order to avoid further politicising of the linguistic scene, the new Valencian legislative linguistic institution should follow clear and efficient criteria in order to achieve two goals. One would be to oppose the demagogical and manipulative statements circulating in opposition to the linguistic norms now in force. The other would be to make the normalizing linguistic process easier to follow by using objective and coherent methods, and efficient and enduring channels of communication. The new Valencian linguistic institution, provided

³ [Translator's note: The Institut d'Estudis Catalans established spelling norms in 1913. A delegation of Valencian intellectuals subscribed to these norms in 1932 in the city of Castelló. For more details see F. Pérez Moragon, *Les Normes de Castelló* (València: Eliseu Climent, 1982), and *L'Acadèmia de Cultura Valenciana: història d'una aberració* (València: Eliseu Climent, 1982).]

⁴ Pradilla (179-194) has studied the process which led to the approval of the *Acadèmia de la Llengua* between September 1997 and July 1998. When this article was written, the Valencian parliament had not yet chosen the members of this new Academy.

with sufficient human and financial resources, would have to tackle the lexical, morphological and other problems that have been dragged along in the language of cultivated Valencians for the last few decades (see Polanco, *La normativa* 136-137).

The modifications which have been made to higher forms of Valencian during the last forty years were not the result of debates and justifications. For example, from a strictly linguistic point of view, it should have been discussed which plural forms should be proposed as standard for all varieties of Catalan, *hòmens*, *tèrmenes* etc., or the corresponding forms without the *n*: *homes* and *termes*. This pan-Catalan point of view should never be lost sight of. However, standard Catalan has often enshrined popular evolutions of the central or north-eastern dialect, usually without considering the situation in other dialects and without inviting a debate if those regional evolutions should be judged positively or negatively.

In 1987, the Institut de Filologia of the University of Valencia organized *Jornades sobre la Llengua Oral als Mitjans de Comunicació Valencians* (ed. Ferrando *Elements*). Along the lines suggested by Polanco, participants compared the Valencian linguistic system with the norms of standard Catalan from the point of view of phonetics (Ferrando), syntax and morphology (Polanco), semantics and word formation (Casanova). However, after this promising beginning, the IFV has avoided exercising its intellectual and moral authority. This Institution should take advantage of its prestige and help Valencians with questions of a linguistic nature. It is true that the IFV does not have legislative powers, but nothing stops it from engaging in actions which are *de facto* linguistically binding. On the other hand, the number of teachers of Catalan has increased very much at Valencian institutions of higher learning over the last twenty years. Most of these people, I think, if asked by the IFV would offer their help in achieving its two most important and noble objectives: improving standard Valencian and helping the Valencian people identify with their language, through the Valencian institution which authoritatively and decisively regulates its social usage.

The fourth condition for the normalization of the social use of Valencian has been pointed out by Polanco (*Reflexions* 46), Casanova (*Elements* 113) and Lacreu (1990). It is the training of linguistic advisers and the empowerment of the offices of language consultants, who would evaluate written or oral linguistic performance in the media and provide guidance. The aim is not to establish an omnipotent institution.⁵ Far from it: the objective would be to coordinate writers,

⁵ [Translator's note: The apparatus of 'linguistic advisers' has for years been much criticized in Barcelona. Only lately have efforts been made to improve relations betwe-

correctors, teachers and linguists, the agents of the social acceptance of the Valencian/Catalan language.

In my opinion, valencianism has matured enough to engage in the social scenario I have presented here. If Valencians decide to do so, we will have to combat prejudices we now see on both sides: from those who are afraid that his road will lead to secessionism, that is to a split between Valencia and Barcelona, and from those who wish to make Valencian different from the rest of the Catalan language, be it at the expense of castilianising it even more and by rendering the Valencian sociolinguistic situation even more chaotic. The results of this enterprise justify making great efforts and taking obvious risks. Mistakes will be made, for sure, as in any human enterprise which tries to influence the evolution of a society. But if Valencians are able to practice self-criticism, we can learn from our errors. This attitude is not only at the basis of scientific methodology, it is also an immensely constructive way of working.

The linguistic program I outlined above is only one option Valencians can resort to. But we have to bear in mind that passivity favors the social expansion of the dominant language, Castilian, relegating Valencian to the position of a local dialect. We cannot leave things as they are. Breaking lose of the present social and political situation, we Valencians who are conscious of forming a people and wish to remain a people, need to act. We can only recover ourselves as a people if valencianism knows how to awaken, activate and organize the popular initiative. It wasn't that long ago—in the so-called 'Battle of Valencia' of today⁶— that valencianism lost its momentum. It is high time for a come-back, beginning with linguistic valencianism. Learning from old mistakes, we should proceed forcefully but prudently on the basis of reasoned decisions to linguistically, culturally (socially and politically) 'revalencianise' Valencia.

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en linguistic authorities (e.g. the Institut d'Estudis Catalans) and the 'professionals of the language'.]

⁶ [Translator's note: 'Battle of Valencia' refers to the discussions about the establishment of a new Language Academy, imposed by the Lizondo government. See fn. 4.]

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