Monocentrism *vs.* pluricentrism in Catalan [1]

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the problem arising from the application of the monocentric versus the pluricentric codification models to language structures in Catalan language and, particularly, in the Valencian territory. Although some examples will be given from spelling, phonetics or morphology, we shall focus on lexis, as it is the area most perceived by speakers, and therefore that most visible to public opinion. The source material comes from historical, and especially from contemporary text corpora, which allows us to make a contrastive – both qualitative and quantitative – study of the use of certain lexical options, of their specialization in more or less formal contexts, and of the positive or negative prejudices they may have caused among users. It is our belief that bearing these factors in mind is very important for the selection of materials in our corpus. We shall now analyze each of the positions that may be observed among Valencian on the model for the Catalan standard.

Keywords: Catalan language, codification, monocentric, pluricentric, Valencian territory

1. Introduction

Catalan is a language that extends over a wide territory of eleven million speakers, in four European states, mainly Spain (Catalonia, Valencian region, eastern part of Aragon, Balearic Islands and the Carxe area in the province of Murcia), but also France (Department of Eastern Pyrenees or northern Catalonia), Andorra and Italy (the city of Alghero, in Sardinia). Although this would lead one to expect a pluricentric model, it has not been state borders that have given rise to the most extreme approaches between the non-dominant varieties (NDV) and the dominant variety (DV) (Muhr 2004), but the internal borders between autonomous regions in Spain, especially between Valencia (NDV) and

Catalonia (DV). Indeed, the *effective* codifying bodies for the Catalan language are located in the capital cities of these regions, which are at the same time the largest cities in the Catalan-speaking area. One of such bodies is the Philological Section of the Institute of Catalan Studies (*Secció Filològica de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, IEC), which since the moment it was created (1911), considers that it caters for the whole of the linguistic territory, following a *monocentric* approach. However, the normative approach it proposes has changed from a *unitarist* one in the early times to a *compositional* one in the late 20th century, accepting a great number of phonetic, spelling, lexical and grammar variants of the great territorial varieties (*polimorphism*). Another normativizing body is the Valencian Academy of the Language (*Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua*, AVL), created more recently (2001) with the aim of catering for only one part of the linguistic territory, the Valencian community, although it recognizes that it is part of the Catalan linguistic domain, and which proposes a *pluricentric* codification model, following that existing between Portugal and Brazil for the Portuguese language:

> En relació amb el model de codificació de la llengua [...] Hi ha models de codificació que tenen un caràcter molt centralista [...] i n'hi ha d'altres, encara, que respecten les diferents modalitats dins de la unitat (com és el cas del portugués de Portugal i el del Brasil). Esta última possibilitat, atesa la rica tradició lingüística i literària del valencià dins de la llengua compartida, és la que l'AVL considera com la més adequada per al nostre idioma, ja que permet respectar la diversitat dins de la unitat. El que es proposa, per al conjunt de la llengua, és, per tant, una codificació policèntrica alhora que convergent.

> [Concerning the language codification model [...] There are codification models which have a very centralistic nature [...] and there are still others which respect the different varieties within a single language (as is the case with Portuguese from Portugal and from Brazil). This latter possibility, given the rich linguistic and literary tradition of Valencian within the shared language, is the one the AVL considers most suitable for our language, because it respects diversity within unity. Therefore, what we propose for the whole of the language is a policentric codification, but also a converging one]

> [*Dictamen sobre els principis i criteris per a la defensa de la denominació i l'entitat del valencià.* Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua, 2005: p. 23, § 7; http://www.avl.gva.es/img/Edicions/ AcordsGenerals/NOMENTITAT.pdf

The AVL has not been the first, nor the only normativizing body which claims, from the Valencian region, an equal participation in the development of the standard for the Catalan language. Indeed, similar proposals had been made by the Interuniversity Institute of Valencian Philology (*Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana*, IIFV), created at the University of Valencia in 1978 by the Valencian philologist Manuel Sanchis Guarner. This linguist advocated, in his contributions, the development of a "policentric but convergent codification", and such has been confirmed by the IIFV in its *Guide for Language Use* (*Guia d'Usos Lingüístics* (2002: 11, 18-19, 22; http://www.ua.es/institutos/inst.filovalen/ Guiausos.pdf), and the same has been proposed, as we have seen, by the AVL.

From this it may be deduced that there is a certain ideological opposition between the codifying process carried out by the IEC, from Barcelona, and the AVL, from Valencia. The conflict started as early as the late Middle Ages (15th century) when the two main cities and the territories they represented struggled to give different names to the whole of the language, based on their respective demonyms (*Catalan* and *Valencian*, respectively). Later, with the disappearance of the state and the court of the Crown of Aragon, which protected the Catalan language, an onomastic particularism prevailed, which since the 16th century evolved towards linguistic secessionism. Although in various degrees depending on the territory, Catalan was progressively dominated, and even replaced by Spanish in formal environments. This influence of Spanish weakened the maintenance of the Catalan standard, which during the Middle Ages had developed and expanded mainly through literature, religious preaching, and scientific and legal-administrative language. Such weakening of the reference model favoured dialect diversification and Spanish interference (especially regarding lexis and syntax). This was increased in the 19th and 20th centuries with the spread of compulsory schooling and of the mass media in Spanish.

In the early 20th century, this tendency towards separation was reversed, with the proposal of a unitarian codification by the IEC. In the Valencian Community there were, on the one hand, voices clearly advocating a return to the former unity, and on the other, a certain reluctance, or even refusal, based on the limited role of the Valencian variety in the new codification. It cannot be ignored that each position has deep underlying ideological differences, related to the national identity of each group: thus, the secessionist group (according to whom Valencian is a different language) is closer to Spanish, Castillian-identity nationalism, whereas those supporting the unity of the Catalan language, belong ideologically to a Valencian-Catalan nationalism.

Leaving the secessionist position aside, given its lack of scientific basis, and given the fact that its social influence has greatly decreased over the last years, this paper aims to examine the problem arising from the application of the monocentric versus the pluricentric codification models to language structures in the Valencian territory. Although some examples will be given from spelling, phonetics or morphology, we shall focus on lexis, as it is the area most perceived by speakers, and therefore that most visible to public opinion. The source material comes from historical, and especially from contemporary text corpora, which allows us to make a contrastive – both qualitative and quantitative – study of the use of certain lexical options, of their specialization in more or less formal contexts, and of the positive or negative prejudices they may have caused among users. It is our belief that bearing these factors in mind is very important for the selection of materials in our corpus. We shall now analyze each of the positions that may be observed among Valencian on the model for the Catalan standard.

2.   Unity of the language above all (monocentrism)

This attitude is the one most committed to the preservation of the unity of the Catalan language, even if it means having to exclude typical Valencian forms from the common standard; this is why we have labelled it as "monocentric". Supporters of this position show some reluctance towards, and even refusal of, traditional Valencian vocabulary which is perceived as dialectal or colloquial (*aplegar* 'arrive', *avant* 'forward', *palometa* 'butterfly', etc.), and sometimes archaic (*fraula* 'strawberry'), and prefers to use variants which are more widespread in Catalonia, or disseminated from Barcelona, even if they have no tradition in Valencia (for the above examples, respectively, *arribar, endavant, papallona, maduixa,* etc). We cannot ignore the great expansion of these vocabulary items among Valencians, to the detriment of the corresponding Valencian forms, and the negative influence exerted upon the intergenerational transmission of the traditional language model. This attitude resembles the first option listed by Muhr (2004) for the codification of non-dominant varieties ("Leave everything as it is – may be codify the variety but don't make too much fuss about your own variety as the unity of the language and the participation in a large language is the dominating objective"), and it corresponds to the attitude defined by Clyne (1992: 459) as most common among the élite groups of non-dominant varieties (NDV), i.e. choosing the forms from the dominant variety (DV) because they perceive that the local forms have a marked social or dialectal character. This may lead to distancing between popular speech and that used by those who have acquired their standard through school or academic institutions, as is the case in the Valencian Community (Segura 2003; Baldaquí 2006). However, there are many Valencian writers who, like Austrian writers in Germany (Muhr 2004: § 3.4.), have embraced the standard from Catalonia in order to be able to publish in Barcelona and obtain greater dissemination for their works. In this way, such Valencian writers disseminate the Catalan forms in the Valencian Community, which eventually gives these forms a badge of approval as Valencian ones for readers not versed in dialectology, i.e. the vast majority. We shall return later to the phenomenon of levelling and of interdialect borrowing.

3.   Defence of Valencian forms within the Catalan standard (pluricentrism)

The following attitude is a decidedly pluricentrist one, promoting the presence of the Valencian variety within the unity of the Catalan language. However, these groups do not only demand the inclusion of a significant number of morphological and lexical features within the Catalan standard: they also demand the recognition of the name "Valencian", alongside "Catalan", in order to refer to the language as a whole. The first demand would require a revision of the standard currently in force supported by the IEC, whereas the second one would inevitably be the result of a political agreement between the two most important Catalan-speaking communities. As may be deduced from our introduction,

this is the approach by the AVL, and more specifically, by a number of scholars related to the Academy, its publications and other activities. The position of this group of scholars is based on a certain feeling of unfairness towards the Catalan standardization process, for having ignored many Valencian variants. Some of the demands by these scholars are, concerning spelling, a modification whereby -x-, and not -s-, would be used for all inchoative verb forms in Valencian (reflecting actual pronunciation): *patixc* instead of *patisc*, *patixca* instead of *patisca* ('[I] suffer', '[he] should suffer'), and not only in certain cases, as currently accepted, *patixes, patix*, etc ('[you] suffer, [he] suffers'), as accepted by the AVL (Saragossà 2007: ch. 6). Concerning phonetics, it is proposed that the Valencian pronunciation of the *–itzar* suffix, with [z], in words like *analitzar* or *organitzar*, should be the standard one, considering that the affricate pronunciation, with [dz], as in other Catalan varieties, is considered "strange" (Saborit 2009: 115-116).[2] Regarding lexis, the "non-Valencian nature" is pointed out of words like *aviat* ('soon'), *endarrere* ("backwards") or *feina* ("work"), and it is suggested that one should exclusively use the corresponding "Valencian" forms *prompte, arrere* or *faena*, respectively, which are also considered correct in Catalan (they are accepted by the *Diccionari* published by the IEC). Also, it is argued that some words which are identical to the Castilian (or Spanish) ones should also be admitted as genuinely Valencian, such as *almorzar, mentira* or *rabo*, which are not admitted by the Institute of Catalan Studies (DIEC 2007), but the Valencian Academy does accept them (DOPV 2006) (Reig 2005). Pradilla (2008) has warned about this trend, especially as far as the AVL involvement is concerned, because it may eventually favour the interests of the Valencian group opposing the unity of the language (secessionism). This attitude may be identified with the second option mentioned by Muhr (2004) for non-dominant varieties in standarization processes: "Properly codify your variety according to the real use, irrespective whether this changes the language or even creates a new language."

It is necessary to briefly consider the difficulties that may arise concerning the practical feasibility of a standard for Catalan in the Valencian community that excessively departs from the general model. It might be expected that an increase in specific features might reduce the real possibilities of dissemination (advertising, cultural market, social marking) of a language which is still subject to a minoritization process and is under a serious threat of substitution, especially in Valencia. Also, it should not be forgotten that the dissemination of the standard based on the IEC proposal (already with important adaptations to Valencian usage) carried out over the last thirty years has entered both the formal and the spontaneous expression of schooled generations; among these speakers, the influence of school and the media is much stronger than the transmission of the model from older speakers (Segura 2003; Baldaquí 2006).

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2. The *Proposta per a un estàndard oral de la llengua catalana. I. Fonètica* (p. 18), by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, considers that both [dz] and [z] are common to all varieties of the language.

It must also be added that, during this period, there has been sizeable exchange or lexical borrowing between different dialects: *estri* ('utensil') or *xai* ('lamb') has spread all over Catalonia from the north-east of this area; *tardor* ('autumn') or *eina* ('tool'), originating in Catalonia, have almost replaced in the Valencian region forms like *primavera d'hivern* or *aïna*, although these words (it must be admitted) had almost disappeared from this region. *Melic* ('navel'), which in principle is more typical of Western Catalan and Valencian, has become general instead of *llombrígol*. Certainly, it must be recognized than the greater cultural dynamism and the demographic weight of Eastern varieties gives them a greater projection; therefore, it is Balearic and Valencian speakers who have a greater competence, even if it is a passive one, regarding their knowledge of the Catalan varieties, than the other way round (i.e. than Catalans regarding Balearic and Valencian varieties). The exchange through the creation of a common communication and cultural space would be the most suitable way of increasing the multilectal competence of speakers from the whole of the Catalan language domain, together with the intensification of the dissemination of the general, restricted standard ('regional') and of inter-dialect contact and levelling.

Also, it must also be remembered that codification entails *per se* the choice of certain linguistic traits within a geographical space which is not necessarily a uniform one. The notion of a specific codification for Valencian means, even within Valencian itself, giving priority to some forms over others. Here, in the case of lexis, there are synonym pairs like *abadejo* and *bacallà* ('cod'), *rent* and *llevat* ('yeast') or *roig* and *vermell* ('red'): the first item in each pair coincides with north-eastern Catalan, whereas the second item coincides with eastern Catalan. As for *avui* and *hui* ('today') or *sortir* and *eixir* ('go out'): the two first items coincide with the rest of Catalan (eastern and western) and the second items are typical of central and southern Valencian; regarding *banyar* ('to wet') or *torcar* ('to wipe'), they correspond to Valencian and Balearic, whereas in Catalonia the prevailing forms are, respectively, *mullar* and *eixugar*, etc.

4.   Refusal of "Catalan" standard forms, considered "non-Valencian" (neither monocentrism or pluricentrism)

This is the attitude among those who, although they do not explicitly favour linguistic secessionism (at least, because they do not dare to say so), try to initiate a differentiation process between a language that they always called *Valencian*, and another which they never mention (Catalan), because even naming the word is taboo. This sector tends to avoid the use of a vocabulary which originally belonged to a formal register, had been lost due to progressive castilianization, and had been recovered over the past years through the teaching of Catalan at school (which they always call *Valencian*); this includes words such as *aleshores* or *llavors* ('then'), *caldre* ('be necessary'), *desenvolupament* ('development'), *despesa* ('expense'), *doncs* ('then, therefore'), *tanmateix* ('however'), etc. These sectors

promote, with not very clear criteria, the replacement of these words by paraphrases that avoid them, or by forms which they consider as allegedly "more Valencian". Without this vocabulary, which they brand as "Catalan", it is difficult to produce discourse in a learned register, and one is forced again to resort to castilianized words, or to paraphrases which inevitably reduce the lexical stock available and lead to a general impoverishment of the text (*en eixe cas, fer falta, desenrotllament, gasto, aixi, però,* etc.).

The political discourse does not show any preferences regarding spelling, phonetics and morphology, probably because the sector which we might consider half-way between this position and the clearly pro-Catalan one (see § 3), agrees with some of these spelling and morphological features. This includes graphic accent in a lexical series which is pronounced with open vowels in part of Catalan, and therefore is spelled with the so-called open or grave accent (*comprès* 'understood', *aprèn* '[he] learns', etc), whereas in Valencian the traditional spelling is with closed or acute accent (*comprés, aprén*). We also include here the demonstrative determiner *este* ('this one') in Valencian (as opposed to *aquest* in general Catalan) and the inchoative verb forms, with the *-ix-* infix in Valencian and *-eix-* in other areas: *patixes/pateixes* ('[you] suffer'). These latter features are not exclusive to Valencian, but they have been promoted as standard from Valencia, and not from the other areas where these features occur, like the western areas of Catalonia.

The supporters of this attitude, which we find it difficult to label as monocentrist or pluricentrist, because it consciously avoids mentioning other varieties of the language, are the Valencian regional government and the government media which depend on it, especially over the last sixteen years, where it has been governed by a right-wing party which is the heir to the Valencian bourgeoisie. Since the 19th century, this social class started an internal castilianization process which has led most of its members to express themselves now in Spanish; as a result, their national identification is with an exclusively Castilian Spain. It may be inferred, therefore, that neither the Valencian bourgeoisie nor its political representatives are not interested in the promotion of a Catalan language that they neither speak nor feel as theirs, and much less in openly admitting that such language (be it called Valencian, Catalan, or even if it left unnamed) was the one spoken and abandoned by their ancestors. However, and most importantly, the reason why they are not willing to promote a unitary Catalan language in the Valencian Community is because those in favour of this language and its promotion are usually identified with a nationalism opposed to Spanish nationalism, which is the one they defend. Thus, the greater the differences between the Valencian language and Catalan, the weaker the whole of the Catalan language will be, and the less successful it will be in its recovery. There are great similarities between this situation and that of the Serbo-croat language in the former Yugoslavia, since the present political leaders of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia have taken separate paths in each state, both concerning the creation of different linguistic forms (in neologisms, for example) and regarding the name of a language which they less and less want to be a common one.

The third option listed by Muhr (2004) for non-dominant varieties seeking standardization is partly coincident with this third attitude among some Valencians:

> Give up the idea of having a norm of your own as language in modern society is not a predominant feature of individual identity and foster multilingualism towards other languages instead. [...] And maybe you just wait a little while with language-planning measures (codification and measures to improve language awareness). Global TV-satellite networks will achieve the levelling of your norms without extra effort.

If we have read Muhr correctly, he is trying to include within this option the *laissez faire* group, i.e. it is not worthwhile worrying about codification (of your variety or language) because the power of the international media is so great that it will eventually shape your variety (or language). The difference between this and Muhr's description is that, in addition to a dominant variety (DV) and a dominated one (NDV), which is the Austrian case on which he bases his model, is that there is a third variable, the Spanish language, leading to a context of asymmetric linguistic and cultural interference which modifies the language structures of the Catalan used by Valencians.

As a rule, the languages analyzed by studies on pluricentrism are languages without competitors within their own territory, i.e. they are not subject to language conflict processes, and they do not have to share their territory with any other language dominating them. In other words, the models usually describe dominant varieties and non-dominant varieties, but not dominant languages versus non-dominanted or dominated languages. In our present case, Catalan in the Valencian Community, a twofold domination must be considered: the variety spoken in Catalonia, on the one hand, and Spanish, on the other. The combination of the two factors creates among bilingual Valencians who decide to use their own variety of Catalan, a double inferiority complex, and therefore, it makes them suffer a double *diglossia*. This latter notion was defined by Ferguson (1959) for those cases where the speakers of a variety considered inferior use such variety for their domestic life, and reserve the language they see as superior for more important uses, but always within the same language. The same notion was later expanded by Fishman (1967) in order to include those cases where the inferior variety belonged to one language and the superior variety belonged to another. Of course, the cases where the local variety is doubly submitted demand a more complex analysis.

In the specific case of Catalan, the historical processed we mentioned earlier has been conditioned by the development of language stereotypes which lead to the identification of *Catalan* with the dialect from Barcelona, and of *Valencian* with the city of Valencia and its area of influence. This would lead us to ignore the fact that the western Catalan spoken in Catalonia (in Lleida or Tortosa, for instance) is largely coincident with that spoken in the Valencian Community, especially in the northern part. There is the risk that language standards generated from Barcelona and Valencia, respectively, might eliminate the language continuum we have described here.

Within this multilingual and multilectal context we have briefly described regarding the Valencian Community, an example can be given of the influence of Castilian Spanish on the Valencian variety, in an area which is usually not considered: the promotion of words which are "more transparent" for Spaniards because of their formal resemblance to their Spanish counterparts, e.g. *enfadar-se* (Sp. *enfadarse*, 'to get angry'), *flotar* (Sp. *flotar*, 'to float'), *obscur* (Sp. *oscuro*, 'dark'), etc., instead of more distant synonyms in Catalan (*enutjar-se, surar, fosc,* etc). In these process there are political, cultural and sociolinguistic factors which seriously compromise the feasibility of the standardization process of contemporary Catalan, because they make it difficult for Valencian speakers to identify with the language, which make them eventually shift into Spanish. We have already seen that the model promoted by the Valencian regional government prefers terms more similar to Spanish (*desenrotllament* instead of *desenvolupament* for 'development' (Sp. *desarrollo*), *este* instead of *aquest* for 'this one' (Sp. *este*), *gasto* instead of *despesa* for 'expense' (Sp. *gasto*), *fer falta* instead of *caldre* for be necessary (Sp. *hacer falta*), etc. In this respect one must also consider the contribution – now an involuntary one – of new speakers, the young Valencians who learnt an imperfect Catalan because they did not have a previous family and social transmission. When faced with different morphological or lexical options in Catalan, these speakers choose the ones most similar to Spanish, which is their first language: *flac* instead of *prim* (Sp. *flaco*, 'thin'); *mesclar* instead of *barrejar* (Sp. *mezclar*, 'mix'), *provar* instead of *tastar* (Sp. *probar*, 'taste'), etc. Given the increasing percentage of these new speakers within the Valencian Catalan-speaking population,[3] their influence is constantly expanding, especially because they have a great participation in the media. Even within this Spanish interference there is an intersection area between Spanish and the dominant variety of Catalan, which helps towards the introduction in the Valencian variety of non-traditional variants. These are usual words used in Catalonia (but not in the Valencian region), such as *tarda* instead of *vesprada* (Sp. *tarde*, 'afternoon'), *mullar* instead of *banyar* (Sp. *mojar*, 'to wet'), *abans d'ahir* instead of *despús-ahir* (Sp *antes de ayer*, 'the day before yesterday'), etc. (although this is not always the case, since in other cases the variant introduced from the dominant variety of Catalan is more different from Spanish, as with *samarreta* (Sp. *camiseta*, 'vest'), instead of the Valencian *camiseta*, which coincides with Spanish).

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3 The latest sociolinguistic survey (http://www.edu.gva.es/polin/val/sies/sies_fonum.html), carried out in 2010, shows an 4.6-point increase compared to 2005 regarding those who speak Catalan "fairly well", that is, those who do not speak it completely well, compared to a 7.7 point decrease of those who speak it "perfectly", also compared to 2005. The evolution is a negative one for the general figure of those able to speak Catalan in the Valencian Community (from 57.4% in 2005 to 54.3% in 2010).

5.   Conclusions

In this paper we have attempted to present the three main attitudes which, in our opinion, can be found in the Valencian-speaking community regarding the standardization of their variety of the Catalan language. The first two sectors described correspond to those working towards *normalization,* the usual term in Catalan sociolinguistics describing the goal of language planning processes. Each of these sectors has a main goal, which following Muhr (2004), would be (1): the unity of the Catalan language, a position which could be described as monocentrist, and (2): the agreement between the standard model and the language actually spoken, i.e. a pluricentric position. The third sector does not have any of these goals, simply because the Catalan language is not part of their initial agenda, but given the need to govern (because they represent the majority of Valencian society), they have chosen a strategy which does not lead to excessive susceptibility, neither among any of the sectors concerned with the promotion of Catalan, nor among their voters, for whom this is not an important issue.

Given the fact that only the first two options seek linguistic normalization, and that the difference between them weakens the recovery process, Muhr (2004) proposes the combination in language teaching of the two conflicting norms (that of the dominant variety and that of the non-dominant variety); however, this should be supported by a culturally progressive political class. Nevertheless, this is not a solution available to those Valencian working towards normalization from one or the other position because, as we have seen, the majority in power does not want to contribute to this task.

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