

Constructing reality in bicultural communication: Catalan ways of speaking Spanish

Robert E. Vann

Western Michigan University

Abstract

The present investigation examines cross-cultural linguistic practices and socioculturally constructed realities in Barcelona, Spain. I argue that Catalans have developed ways of speaking Spanish that generate profits of cultural distinction (Bourdieu, 1991) in the linguistic and social markets. Qualitative data reveal patterns of cultural and linguistic Other in speakers' concept of self, in their linguistic consciousness, and in the sociolinguistic norms of their community. The analysis demonstrates that cultural differences relating to visceral attitudes and feelings relate to patterns of language variation in intercultural communication, indexing intercultural conflict at a very subtle level. These "acts of identity" (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) appropriate linguistic stereotypes as resources to construct distinct cultural realities.

Introduction

Recent work in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and the political economy of language has employed qualitative analysis to address the relationship between cross-cultural linguistic practices and socioculturally constructed realities (see Bauman & Sherzer, 1991; Boix Fuster, 1993; Ernst-Slavit, 1997; Woolard, 1985). The present investigation utilizes habitus theory as developed in Bourdieu (1991) to address cultural and linguistic aspects of the Spanish of Catalonia, one of several regions of Spain that boasts a bilingual, bicultural population. Catalan is a co-official language in Catalonia, yet Spanish is the only language that is official throughout the whole country, and as such it is often the language of intercultural communication involving Catalans and other Spaniards. In such communication, Catalans sometimes speak Spanish in a style that reflects their distinctive cultural

history. This investigation provides a case study of a complex relationship between this practice or "way of speaking" (Bauman & Sherzer, 1991) and its cultural symbolism in Catalonia. The analysis discusses qualitative data that reveal patterns of cultural diversity pertaining to notions of self and other, linguistic consciousness, and sociolinguistic norms in the community investigated.

In a recent article, Johnstone and Bean (1997) make the convincing argument that the idiosyncrasies of self-expression are crucial to our understanding of linguistic variation. These authors sustain that individual analyses of ways of speaking can bridge traditional sociolinguistic work and contemporary ethnographic research about language use in post-modern societies. They state (p. 236) that "individuality mediates between social facts and linguistic ones ... it is an essential part of how the details of variation come to be." One qualitative theory of individual linguistic behavior is habitus theory, first proposed in Bourdieu (1977). Habitus theory is a well-elaborated social theory that views linguistic practice as a power struggle to impose varying definitions of reality. In this struggle, linguistic resources are not distributed equally among all individuals, so agents have different degrees of symbolic capital to wield. This paper uses habitus theory to elucidate individual social and linguistic aspects of the Spanish of Catalonia. After briefly describing the sample of the investigation, I present the data and the qualitative analysis.

SAMPLE

Two pre-existing social networks were examined for this investigation: one group referred to itself as "Català-lite" (32 members) and the other group identified with "Català-heavy" (26 members). Age, sex, and SES were very similar in each network; consequently, cultural and linguistic variation observed during fieldwork could likely be attributable to other variables. Through participant observation as well as recorded interviews, the investigator was able to note the informants' daily interactions and the language they used. From these qualitative observations, several informant profiles have been prepared as part of an analysis of reality construction in bicultural communication.

Before examining the informant profiles, consider the background of the two social networks. The majority of the informants in the first network were upper-middle class individuals who had met at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. Though many of them had studied together at a school where classes were given exclusively in Catalan, they almost always spoke Spanish together outside of school. The average age of the 18 women (69.23%) and 8 men (30.77%) in this social network was 24.31 years. At the time of the fieldwork, most informants were either working as professionals or pursuing advanced degrees. They dressed accordingly, often wearing blazers and slacks, or blouses and pants.

Many lived in affluent neighborhoods of Barcelona, such as Pedralbes, Sarrià, and Gràcia. Most informants in this group considered themselves Català-lite, which presumably means that these people see themselves as Catalans, but do not want to be seen as radical or associated with separatist Catalanists.

In contrast, many members of the other network considered themselves Català-heavy, implying more of a Catalanist identity or ideology. Most members of this network were friends from the University of Barcelona Central and from a religious and cultural youth group in Sant Andreu that focused on the problems and aspirations of young Catalans. The average age of the 20 women (62.5%) and 12 men (37.5%) was 24.38 years. These informants almost always spoke Catalan together. Their families were of comparable wealth to those of the Català-lite group; yet, their behavior and appearance were very different. Many let their hair grow very long, and they often wore jeans with holes and patches, long skirts, or torn tee shirts, in a style characterized by one informant as "Kumbayá," presumably referring to the hippie-like appearance of such people. Many informants in this social network described themselves as Catalanists who do not like to speak Spanish and who feel that they do not speak Spanish well. Most would like to see an independent Catalonia, though not through violent measures.

Data and analysis

Four informant profiles are presented below as part of an analysis of cultural diversity in Catalan ways of speaking Spanish. Each profile uses informants' own words to develop an understanding of the Catalan linguistic habitus in its relation to linguistic and social markets. The profiles highlight acute notions of Other in speakers' concept of self, in their linguistic consciousness, and in the sociolinguistic norms of their community. These notions lay the foundation for the production and interpretation of different linguistic acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) in intercultural communication involving Catalans and other Spaniards.

The first informant, whom I will call David, is 22 years old, born and raised in Sant Andreu, a traditionally Catalan neighborhood of Barcelona. David's father, an industrial engineer, has always spoken both languages to David at home and David's mother, a housewife, has only spoken Catalan with him. David has always spoken Catalan with friends and in school. David's comments set the stage for the present discussion by illustrating generalized notions of Other in speakers' concept of self, in their linguistic consciousness, and in the sociolinguistic norms of their community.

D=David=S1-5, R=investigator; Català-heavy group, individual interview; page 7, lines 19-41; June 13, 1995:

R: Bueno, a ver, ¿qué te parece el castellano de Barcelona, ahora que estamos?

D: Pff. Es un poco un castellano, a ver, ¿cómo te lo explico?... Es un castellano imitado ¿no? Un castellano que... que la única gente que habla castellano es la, la gente de fuera. Yo puedo hablarte castellano pero no, no te hablaré castellano. Lo que te estoy hablando ahora no es castellano.

R: Pues, ¿cómo? ves el castellano de Barcelona?

D: Pues... bueno, es un castellano, un castellano un poco mestizo... Es un castellano cogido y inculcado aquí ¿no? No es un castellano que ha crecido aquí, o sea se ha puesto un poco así como pancha, ¿no? Aquí se habla el castellano porque se tiene que hablar castellano, porque se ha tenido que hablar castellano en en algún momento...

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R: Well, let's see, what do you think about the Spanish of Barcelona?

D: Pff. It's a little bit, well, how can I explain it to you? It's an imitated Castilian, you know? A Castilian that... the only people who speak Castilian are outsiders. I can speak to you in Spanish but I wouldn't be speaking Castilian. What I'm speaking to you now is not Castilian.

R: How do you see the Spanish of Barcelona?

D: Well... it's kind of a mixed Spanish... It's a Spanish taken and inculcated here, you know? It is not a Spanish native to this area, I mean it has been put here like a kind of a growth, you know? Spanish is spoken here because you have to speak Spanish here; we've all had to speak Spanish at some time.

As is evident in the excerpts from my conversation with David, he has clear views on the linguistic patterning of self and Other. He is very conscious of who speaks Spanish, how they speak it, and when they speak it. David feels that there are two forms of Spanish spoken in Barcelona: "true" Castilian, Spanish spoken by Spaniards, and "pidgin" or "imitated" Castilian, Spanish spoken by Catalans. This basic division is further explored in the following profiles.

The next informant, whom I'll call Montse, is a 21-year-old woman born and raised in Barcelona. Catalan was the only language she spoke at home. Montse's parents are both Catalan; her father is a bank director, and her mother is a housewife. Despite the traditional Catalan family in which Montse was raised, her education was almost exclusively imparted in Spanish until she reached college, where she is taught in Catalan as part of a major in Catalan philology. Consider Montse's concept of self and Other:

M=Montse=S1-12, R=investigator; Català-heavy group, individual interview, page 2, lines 11-15; June 20, 1995:

M: Considero que Cataluña es diferente de España y entonces-

R: ¿En que sentido?

M: En el sentido que quizás es un pueblo m? abierto hacia, hacia Europa o... Y, y no sé. La lengua es diferente, la cultura también, el modo de pensar... Incluso el sentido del humor es diferente.

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M: I consider Catalonia to be different than Spain and so-

R: In what sense?

M: In the sense that maybe, as a people, we're more open towards Europe or something. And, I don't know. Our language is different, our culture as well, our way of thinking... Even our sense of humor is different.

In our discussion of Catalan ways of speaking, Montse offered the following comments regarding linguistic consciousness:

page 6, lines 10-16:

R: Y luego pues esto lo que te he ido examinando aquí, lo de *ir* y *venir*, *traer*, y *llevar*, *este*, *ese*, y *aquel*, y *aquí*, *ahí*, y *allá* y todo esto ¿también te parece que varían en el castellano de aquí... por el catalán

M: Sí. Sí, porque nosotros decimos mucho eh "este este cartón, aquella silla," pero en cambio no diría "esa silla" porque en catalán yo tengo *aquest*, *aquella* o *aquest*, *aquell*. No digo, no hay un intermedio entre el *este* y *aquel* que sería *ese*. Por lo tanto, yo, el *ese* no lo, no lo utilizo. En cambio, los castellanos sí: "ese balcón."

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R: And then as far as the things I've been examining here with *go* and *come*, *bring* and *take*, *this*, *that*, *yonder*, and *here*, *there*, *yonder*, and all that, do you also think that these words vary in local Spanish... because of Catalan?

M: Yes. Yes, because we often say things like "this box, yonder chair," but on the other hand I wouldn't say "that chair," because in Catalan I only have *this* and *yonder*. I don't say, there is no intermediate term between *this* and *yonder* like *that* would be, so I just don't use *that*. But the Castilians do use it: "that chair."

After defining her concept of self = Catalonia and Other = Spain, Montse went on to detail several ways that Catalan people have of speaking Spanish that reflect their bilingualism. She is aware that she speaks differently than monolingual Spanish speakers and believes that such is the case because her Spanish is linguistically influenced by Catalan. Yet, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985, p. 247) have commented that one must view all linguistic tokens as socially marked, that is, "as being used by an individual because they are felt to have social as well as semantic meaning in terms of the way in which each individual wishes to project his/her own universe and to invite others to share in it." For Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, words are symbols "by which we define ourselves and others" (p. 248). This idea is developed further in the next profile.

María is a 26-year-old woman born and raised in Barcelona, as were her parents, a doctor and a nurse. María's father is more fluent in Catalan than in Spanish, but he has always spoken Spanish with María because María's mother is a monolingual speaker of Spanish. María learned Spanish before Catalan, and, with the exception of college, Spanish is the language in which she was educated. Despite her Spanish language background, María considers herself Catalan because she was born in Catalonia. Her career in trade marketing provides María with daily exposure to people from various parts of Spain and affords her a broad linguistic perspective. Consider María's comments regarding sociolinguistic norms in the community.

Ma=María=M1-12, R=investigator; Català-lite group, individual interview; page 9, lines 5-33; June 27, 1995:

R: ¿Qué te parece de las palabras que hemos visto, si entran esto, si entran estas palabras en juego para, para decir si alguien es catalán o no? O sea, si alguien dice "Bueno, ya vengo, y traeré a mi novia y la fiesta ¿donde es? ¿En tu casa? Pues aquí estoy en dos minutos," o algo así, ¿a ti te sugería que esta persona a lo mejor es catalana?

Ma: ¡Hombre! Claro. Si oigo a alguien hablar así ¿que si pienso que es catalán ¡Claro! ... Creo que es difícil que una persona que no sea catalana, aunque se haya criado aquí, hablara así. Pero esto, insisto que, sigo con mi teoría, sigo con mi teoría. Una persona que no sea catalana pero que viva aquí y se quiera hacer la catalana puede utilizar cualquier código, sea intentar marcar mucho su acento [sic] como intentar mezclar... o sea una persona no catalana, puede utilizar diferentes códigos. El más habitual, para mi gusto, es eh, el mezclar o el intentar hablar mucho catalán, o introducir catalanadas en su castellano.

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R: What do you think about the words that we've seen? Do these words enter into play to tell if someone is Catalan or not? In other words, if someone says "Well, I'm coming, and I'll bring my girlfriend, and where is the party? At your house? Well, I'll be here in two minutes." or something like that, does this suggest to you that the person may be a Catalan?

Ma: Man! Are you kidding? If I hear someone speak like that, do I think they are Catalan? Of course! ... I think that it would be hard for a person who is not Catalan to speak that way, although he or she may have been raised here. That's why I insist that, well, to continue with my theory: A person who is not Catalan, but who lives here and wants come off like a Catalan, can use any code, be that trying to heavily mark his or her accent, mix languages ... a nonCatalan person, can use, can use different codes. The most common, for my taste, is, uh, for a person to mix, or to try to speak a lot of Catalan, or to introduce Catalanisms into his or her Spanish.

page 10, lines 1-13:

Ma: Palabras mezcladas es muy típico también. Lo que pasa es que no sé en qué círculos te estás moviendo pero, si te vas a, a barrios de gente más, gente que ha venido de fuera—no te voy a poner ningún ejemplo pero—yo que sé, cualquier barrio más, un poco más periférico, con gente que ha venido de fuera a trabajar, esa gente habla mucho con mezclas, o sea.

R: Y mezclas ¿traduciendo las palabras o metiendo las catalanas? O sea mezclas como *ya vengo* o mezclas como *barrecha* cuando-

Ma: Mezclas como *barrecha*, o sea... Mira, esa es una buena puntualización, ¿ves? Yo creo que un catalán catalán catalán te dirá más eh, pues, eh, "Te traigo esto a tu casa en cinco minutos," y una persona que no sea catalán catalán posiblemente, pues te dirá "Con todo esto, podemos hacer una *barrecha*."

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Ma: Mixed words are pretty typical too. What happens is that I don't know what circles you move in, but, if you go to the barrios where the immigrants live—I'm not going to give you any concrete example—but, I don't know, any peripheral neighborhood, with immigrants who have come looking for work, those people often use a lot of mixing in their speech.

R: Do you mean mixing by translating the words or by borrowing the actual words from Catalan, that is, mixing like *ya vengo* or mixing like *barrecha* (a Catalan word that actually means "mixture").

Ma: Mixing like *barrecha*, I mean... Look, that's a good point, you see? I think that a Catalan Catalan would be more likely to say "I'll bring this to your house

in five minutes," and someone who is not so Catalan might say "With all this we could make a *barrecha*."

María's comments establish a very interesting dynamic between Catalan linguistic habitus and social and linguistic markets. As Bourdieu (1991, p. 54) has stated, "to speak is to appropriate one or other of the expressive styles already constituted in and through usage....These styles, systems of differences which are both classified and classifying...mark those who appropriate them." Individuals will, at times, consciously adopt the speech patterns of groups with whom they desire to be associated.

In the quotations from my conversation with María, one can observe a progression in the social and cultural meanings of Catalan ways of speaking. In the first quotation, one can observe how the way in which Catalan people sometimes use Spanish deictics has become a linguistic stereotype. María then distinguished this way of speaking from other linguistic stereotypes associated with immigrants and Catalan "wannabes." For María, a "true" Catalan person, born in Catalonia, would be more likely than a "wannabe" to generate profit in the linguistic and social markets through transfer or interference, whereas the conscious accommodation strategies of "wannabes" might more often be realized through other linguistic stereotypes such as codemixing or accent. In this regard, María touched upon how the stereotypical use of deictics in Catalan Spanish has been reinterpreted as a linguistic resource by certain individuals. These individuals mark themselves as members of a certain speech community, through shared linguistic practices. Furthermore, María metalinguistically marks her own social position, values, and prejudices by her linguistic characterization.

The final profile describes Rosa, a 27 year-old woman born and raised in Barcelona. At home she has always spoken Catalan with her bilingual parents. In school and with friends, Rosa has always used both Spanish and Catalan. Rosa works as a freelance translator in Barcelona, and is thus consciously aware of Catalan ways of speaking Spanish and the associated benefits in social and linguistic markets, as she explains.

X=Rosa=M1-26, R=investigator; Català-lite group, individual interview; page 5, lines 45-49; July 15, 1995:

R: ¿Y cuando alguien habla así... o sea para ti, te sugiere que es, que es bilingüe o catalano-hablante al menos?

X: Sí... se identifica... Hay algunos que, hay algunos... algunos, algunos casos en que es un... Y lo sabes en seguida ¿no?

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R: So then, when someone speaks like that, does it suggest to you that the person is bilingual or at least a Catalan speaker?

X: Yes. The person identifies him or herself. There are some cases where you... You just know right away, you know?

page 6, lines 7-21:

R: Sí, si tú le dices a tu amigo en Madrid, "Mira qué tiempo hace aquí en Madrid," porque...

X: Me dirá, "¿Cómo que *aquí* si estás *allí*?" o o "¿Dónde est? tú?" o algo así ¿no?

R: Y si dices "porque este fin de semana quiero venir a visitarte."

X: Claro me dirá "¿Cómo que *venir*? si estás *allí*" ¿no? "No no, puedes *ir*"

Él él él, lo verá mucho mucho antes que yo. Yo, a lo mejor pues lo sé, pero por... como continuamente estoy cambiando de idioma pues... Puede suceder que... que se me cuele alguna palabrita de estas.

R: Pero, o sea aparte de de ti misma, o sea los catalanes aquí lo dicen mucho ¿no?

X: Sí mucho, esto, esta frase, estos dos que has dicho por ejemplo son...

R: Por ejemplo.

X: ... Clásicos.

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R: If you say to your friend in Madrid, "Look what good weather it is here in Madrid" because-

X: He'd say "What do you mean *here* if you are *there*?" or "Where are you?" or something like that, you know?

R: And if you say "because this weekend I want to come visit you."

X: Then he'd say "What do you mean *come* if you're *there*?" You know? "No no, you can *go*." He'd pick up on it much earlier than I would. Me, well I probably know it, but since I'm continuously changing languages, you know, I could let one of these words slip out.

R: But besides you yourself, the Catalans here say things like that a lot, right?

X: Yea, a lot. That phrase, those two that you just mentioned, for example, are-

R: For example?

X: Classics.

page 8, lines 20-24:

R: ¿Y qué?

X: Bueno y que sí. Marca, marca, marca que eso es un idioma. O sea que, es una manera de demostrarle a los demás que eso es un idioma ¿no? Y que, que "¡Mira! ¡Mira si es un idioma que hablamos distinto!" ¿no?

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R: And so what?

X: And that matters! It marks a way of speaking. I mean, it's a way to show other people that that's a way of speaking, you know? And that, "Hey! Look how we speak Spanish differently!" You know?

Rosa's comments about identification and metalinguistic messages speak directly to language variation in intercultural communication. As Rosa put it, Catalans typically let Catalan ways of speaking Spanish "slip out", "identifying themselves" as she said, and the Madrileño is the first to notice. Considering Bourdieu's notion that social differences exist only for those inclined to perceive, recognize, and thereby establish them (1991, p. 237), in cases of intercultural communication (Catalan-Spanish), Catalan ways of speaking Spanish can contribute to different co-constructed social realities depending on the individual interlocutor(s).¹ Indeed, Bourdieu (1991, p. 39) has commented that "each recipient helps to *produce* the message which he perceives and appreciates by bringing to it everything that makes up his singular and collective experience" (italics in original).

Conclusion

In this investigation the metalinguistic comments given by the informants have been interpreted as an insight into their own perceived linguistic habitus. It is obvious that the informants profiled consider their Spanish to be different than that of other Spaniards, and it is. Yet, to date, the existence of Catalan Spanish as a distinct variety of Spanish has been very much ignored by Spanish dialectology despite the documentation of many other linguistic stereotypes associated with Catalan people when they speak Spanish (see Marsá, 1986, a thorough survey).² While the examples given in this study appear to be a marker of Catalan Spanish for my informants, other Catalan ways of speaking Spanish should be further investigated (Vann, 1998b); they too could function as strategic markers of Catalan identity or other practices of Catalan habitus.

Within the community investigated in Barcelona, one's linguistic dispositions can sometimes result directly in unconscious linguistic reactions; at other times, they can also lead to more conscious linguistic acts designed to distinguish the identity of speakers vis à vis their (potentially intercultural) interlocutors. Of course, both possibilities can result in the same interpretation on the part of interlocutors, regardless of the speaker's conscious intent or lack thereof (Vann,

1998a). Thus, this case study reveals patterns of cultural and linguistic behavior that serve to index intercultural communication and conflict at a very subtle level. Catalan ways of speaking Spanish generate profits of cultural distinction in social markets because they can reflect and constitute important sociocultural differences between Catalans and other Spaniards. These acts of identity appropriate linguistic stereotypes as linguistic resources to partially construct distinct cultural realities that can then be co-constructed by interlocutors. By clarifying aspects of the Spanish of Catalans and aspects of their habitus, the present investigation enhances our understanding of the sociolinguistic situation of Catalonia and may be of value to several related interdisciplinary fields of cultural study, including but not limited to sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, linguistic anthropology, and discourse analysis.

Notes

¹ The social reality co-constructed by the recipient will vary based on linguistic and social experience (Vann, 1995).

² One such feature is a marked accent in Spanish pronunciation, which may include any of the following notable features, to name just a few possibilities: Lowering (opening) of tonic mid-vowels /e/ and /o/; reduction of nontonic /e/ and /a/ to schwa; raising of nontonic /o/ to /u/; confusion of /s/ and /q/; and/or velarization of /l/. Another such feature is extensive codemixing and the use, in Spanish, of lexical calques from Catalan, such as adversative *por eso* from *per això* 'nevertheless', for example. Catalan Spanish also displays innovative syntactic features. One such feature involves norms for the usage of the subjunctive in Spanish. At times, after *si*-clauses and following temporal adverbs and certain verbs of emotion, such as *cuando* 'when', *esperar* 'to hope', and *temer* 'to fear', Catalan people use the indicative in Spanish where Castilian Spanish requires the subjunctive. Another such feature involves the use of *deber* 'to ought' in place of the future or conditional tenses in expressions of probability. Catalans also tend to use *haber de* 'to have to, to be supposed to' much more often than the preferred form of obligation in Castilian, *tener que*. This stereotypical feature of Catalan Spanish borders on the lexico-syntactic interface, as does the innovative use of the Spanish prepositions *en* 'in, on', *a* 'to, at', *por* 'for, through', *para* 'for', *sin* 'without', and *de* 'of, from' that also typifies the Spanish of some Catalans.

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