Strengthening identity: differentiation and change in contemporary Galician

Kabatek, Johannes

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich
ZORA URL: https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-84802

Originally published at:
CHAPTER 13

Strengthening identity: differentiation and change in contemporary Galician

Johannes Kabatek

13.1 Introduction

The resurgence of minority languages and regional varieties in Europe during the last few decades is a phenomenon that can be observed generally, but the particular historical circumstances in Spain have created social and political conditions that have led to an extraordinary blossoming of the regional languages. The Catalan, Basque and Galician regionalist movement received important impulses as a consequence of the 1978 constitution, where the 'other Spanish languages' became co-official within their respective historical territories. In Galicia, the local language could count on a high percentage of speakers, a relatively low degree of dialect differences, and a certain literary tradition, but there existed neither a generally accepted standard language nor an urban middle class using the autochthonous language, as, for example, in Catalunya. Only a small group of urban intellectuals tried to cultivate Galician as a language for everyday urban purposes; and Galician tended to be spoken only by lower classes and in 'the world of peasants and fishermen' (see Monteagudo and Santamarina 1993: 117 and passim).

The new legal situation of Galician created the necessity of quickly elaborating a standard language for official purposes. In 1983, a standard language corpus proposed by Galician linguists was made official by law and implemented by all the possible means of modern language planning such as mass-media, education and administration. This proposed standard plays an important part in the creation of what could be called 'new urban Galician' or 'Galician koine'. The increasing use of Galician by urban speakers led to a convergence or 'koineization' process that consists not only in the acceptance or rejection of proposals concerning the form of the standard language, but also in a complex social discussion and in a filtering process that separates dialect elements from those regarded as being part of the koine. This chapter will attempt
to show how some of these filtering processes can be observed in present usage and to what kind of effects they lead, describing some differences between the explicit criteria of language planners and the implicit and explicit criteria of the speakers and giving the concrete example of some linguistic changes resulting from the process of a basically spoken, dialectally marked language becoming elaborated and standardized.

13.2 A brief history of Galician

Galician is a Romance language that used to be regarded traditionally as a dialect of Portuguese spoken on Spanish territory. Historically, it was the basis of Portuguese, and Portuguese is the result of the contact between old Galician and the Mozarabic dialects spoken, above all, in Lisbon. While Portuguese became the language of the independent Portugal, Galicia was separated from the south and stayed under Leonese and Castilian influence. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Galician was used for troubadour poetry and notarial documentation, and some of the important historical chronicles were translated from Castilian into Galician, but from the fifteenth century onwards Galician disappeared from written use and Castilian became the official and written language. During the following centuries, the established diglossic situation between Spanish and Galician became rather stable, but in the nineteenth century, as in the case of several European minority languages, a literary movement, the so-called Rexordimento, reactivated the use of Galician as a written language. A literary tradition with several ups and downs has been maintained up to the present day, but the majority of its representatives were members of the Spanish-speaking middle classes, cultivating only the written language without contributing to the creation of a spoken koiné.

In the 1970s, a discussion about standardization took place with several proposals postulating, on the one hand, direct or step-by-step integration into Portuguese, and, on the other, the creation of an independent standard based on dialect research, on former proposed standards and on the literary tradition. In 1983, this independent standard was made official. The goals of the standard have been defined by the language planners as ‘Koiné based on the spoken language, but de-Castilianized, supradialectal, with roots in tradition, coherent and in harmony with the neighbour languages’ (Normas... 1982: 8.). This means that the proposal is against the Castilianized Galician of the dialect tradition and against the hypercorrect separatism frequent in Galician literature. It fixes orthography and unifies morphological forms, but proposes only a frame that has to be filled by the speaker’s own activity. A main criterion is ‘purification’ from Spanish elements: as a result of centuries of contact with Spanish as a prestige language, Galician dialects have adopted much from the Spanish lexicon and, in areas with intensive contact, grammar; in the last few years, even the phonetics have been affected by Spanish. This is especially the case since, after the moment when Galician was made the official language, a considerable number of speakers with Spanish as their mother tongue adopted Galician either partially, for professional purposes, or generally, and thereby initiated several interference processes. Another tendency of the standard is not to proscribe features regarded as typical Galician such as, for example, the highly stigmatized gheada and seseo or certain morphological and syntactic characteristics. Nevertheless, implicit and explicit discussion in the community about the inclusion or exclusion of elements in the koiné had led in many cases to an exclusion of these features and to their attribution to dialectally marked speech.

The Galician koinéization process is thus a combination between the acceptance and rejection of elements contained in the standard proposal, the inclusion or exclusion of elements contained in the dialect tradition and of the introduction or rejection of elements of the contact language, the Spanish varieties. This process is represented in Figure 13.1.

13.3 Changes in progress

I will choose three examples to illustrate some of the tendencies observable in contemporary Galician. In all three cases, changes can be observed over the last few years. These can, of course, also be just short-term evolutions without long-term consequences. But this is a general problem of the study of change in progress: only the nature of the present developments can be indicated, but no prediction for the future can be made. We can only conjecture that probably some of the actual tendencies will be consolidated in the future.

13.3.1 Inflected infinitive

Common to Portuguese (P) and Galician (G) is the possibility of inflecting personal endings on the infinitive forms.
sometimes with a high frequency: scientific articles, solemn speeches, essays, certain types of literary text, official documents, etc.

Resuming, we could say paradoxically that a feature that is disappearing from spoken Galician as a consequence of Spanish influence reappears in elaborated and written Galician due to the same influence: the absence in Spanish and the desire to save or to recover ‘typical Galician’ features produces a revival in written language that eventually could also become the basis for its recovery in spoken Galician.

13.3.2 Clitic positions

A similar tendency can be observed in certain cases of clitic positioning, where the Galician system allows more than one possibility. The rules for clitic positions were about the same in Old Spanish and Gallego-Portuguese, but Spanish changed from the thirteenth century onwards (see, for example, Barry 1987, Luna Trall and Parodi 1974), according to a general Romance evolution preferring preverbal positioning in main clauses. Galician, on the other hand, normally retains the postverbal position and only changes the clitic position in subordinate clauses or, under some special circumstances (e.g. focus, negation), in main clauses (cf. Campos 1989).

(2) Span.: Me dijo que se llamaba Pepe.
(3) Gal.: Dixome que se chamaba Pepe.

He told me his name was Pepe.

Strongly Castilianized speakers usually have difficulties with the differences in the use of the clitics, and Spanish interference has damaged the traditional Galician system in the mixed hybrid of so-called Chapurrao, a language mixture between Galician and Castilian spoken in small towns and, partly, in the cities (cf. García González 1976). Language planners and prescriptivists have intervened against this tendency and have tried to re-establish the traditional Galician usage still intact in Galician dialects. The correction leads to countless hypercorrect uses by strongly Castilianized speakers, but in general the traditional system is still quite stable and easily re-established even by ‘new Galician speakers’ with a Spanish mother tongue.

However, language planning does not intervene where the Galician system – according to dialect research and to normative proposals – offers more than one possibility: in this case, the speakers themselves have the choice, as in the following examples:

(4) Gal.: teño que dicilo
(5) Gal.: teño que o dicir
(6) Gal.: teño que dicir

(8) Span.: lo tengo que decir

I must say it.
TAMING THE VERNACULAR

In this and in similar cases, Galician allows three different positions of the clitic, of which only one coincides with Spanish, whereas in Spanish another position (8) is possible. In spoken rural Galician, (4)–(6) are generally used, probably with different pragmatic functions, but in more Castilianized Galician, the variety tends to be reduced to the use of (4), the only form that coincides with Spanish. For reasons of economy, the ‘common core’ between the two languages is preferred, a well-known strategy of bilinguals and a general tendency in language contact and language learning (cf. Weinreich 1953: 24). But in the last few years, a revival of (5) can be observed in elaborated, written texts, whereas in urban spoken Galician the form is almost non-existent.12 Like the inflected infinitive, it has thereby become a sort of marker of a more elevated style. The general tendency is again, as in the first example, the preference for and resurgence of a disappearing dialect feature in written and elaborated texts.

13.3.3 ‘Solidarity pronoun’

A third case is the so-called ‘solidarity pronoun’, a feature regarded as ‘typical Galician’, which consists in a use of dative clitics with a purely dialogic function: the clitic refers to the partner(s) in communication (the examples are extracted from Álvarez et al. 1986: 174–5):

(7) Meu pai vai che
‘My father goes to worse, for the age not dat. pron. (2. p. sing.) has remedy.’
My father is getting worse, for there’s no remedy against age.

(8) Pois o que é a min nunca che me
gave (he/she) anything.’
‘Well, as far as I am concerned he/she never gave me anything.

Galician grammarians distinguish between the ‘solidarity pronoun’ and the ‘dativo de interesse’ or dativos etnicos, using the first for a pronoun referring only to the interlocutor and the second for a contextual reference to a person concerned by the action. Both cases are somehow similar, and in many examples they are not really separable. It might thus be better to subsume both under one deictic function that can refer both to cotextual and to contextual or situational relations. In this way, dative pronouns can also be combined and refer to different persons, as in (9), where the first pronoun (che) refers to the interlocutor, the second (lle) to a third person concerned by the message (the son whose cow has died) and the third pronoun refers to the sender himself as interlocutor and as someone concerned by the message (the father of the son whose cow has died).

(9) Morréuchelle
a vaca do meu fillo,
the cow of my son.’
My son’s cow has died.

This clitic use can be genetically related to the Latin ethical dative, but the function can be found in many languages and dialects, being generally considered as a typical element of spoken language or intimate speech.14 It does not exist in standard Spanish, and so authors like the novelist Miguel Delibes use it as a marker to characterize colloquial, vulgar speech.15

Galician, with a continuous oral tradition and lack of standardizing influences almost until the present day, conserves a high number of possible uses and combinations of this feature. The early Galician authors of the ‘Pre-rexurdimento’ at the beginning of the nineteenth century exaggerated the use of the ‘solidarity pronoun’.16 This can be explained in two ways: on the one hand, the first texts were often dialogues, and they tried to represent the ‘typical’ elements of popular, spoken Galician; on the other hand, the absence of this element in Spanish made the already Castilianized authors of the nineteenth century consider the ‘solidarity pronoun’ as a typically Galician element and to use it as a marker of distance between Galician and Spanish,17 comparable to the case of the current tendencies mentioned in 13.3.1. and 13.3.2.

In the present koinization process, language planners have tried to ‘save’ the solidarity pronoun in the standardization process by not proscribing it and introducing it, for example, in didactic texts for language learners.18 But a general tendency seems to be to omit its use in ‘formal’ texts. There is a simple reason for this: many of the new, standard-oriented texts do not have a direct dialogic function, and the omission of the ‘solidarity pronoun’ is thus preconditioned by the objective characteristics of these texts. Nevertheless, as a consequence, it is disappearing also from standard-oriented dialogues, and thereby becoming an element generally excluded from the koiné. The non-existence in the contact language might play a further part, for Spanish seems to act here as an example for a standardized koiné.

13.4 Attitudes

Since there are obvious differences between spoken and written usage in the case of the three examples, it seemed interesting to ask speakers
involved in the Galician koineization process directly about these features. During a series of interviews about metalinguistic questions, I asked 30 such informants (speakers from the Galician radio and TV, Galician teachers and students of Galician philology) to comment on examples containing inflected infinitive forms, different clitic positions as in 13.3.2 and ‘solidarity pronouns’. All three features seemed generally to be highly stereotyped. Asked about an example with the inflected infinitive, the 30 informants generally showed positive attitudes. For all the informants, with only one exception, the feature was well known and metalinguistically stereotyped. Four of them stated that they tried to employ inflected infinitives consciously in order to contribute to their recovery. One informant, a student of Galician philology, said she hardly ever used them in spoken language even though her parents still used them frequently, but she tended to use them more often in written language. The more Castilianized the speaker’s background, the more positive were the attitudes towards the inflected infinitive. Only in the case of an extremely Castilianized informant did the feature seem to be unknown. Some of the informants with a clear Galician dialect background showed less positive attitudes and characterized the exaggerated recovery of the feature as artificial, even if they also admitted using it in written language.

In the case of the clitic positions, six of the 30 informants evaluated (5) and (6) as atypical elements of the written language. Several informants stated that they normally used (4) in spoken language. However, in written texts, after reflection, they would consciously introduce (5) from time to time. Three of the informants with a stronger Spanish influence stated that (5) should be preferred, arguing in several cases that one should use a feature distinct from Spanish. Some of the informants, especially five of those with rather clear Galician backgrounds, evaluated the form as ‘artificial’ and typical of the new texts of highly Castilianized speakers.

The reactions to a sample with ‘solidarity pronoun’ were also different according to the level of the speaker’s degree of Castilianization. Galician mother-tongue speakers and those in close contact with popular Galician tended to evaluate the use of the ‘solidarity pronoun’ as ‘normal’, ‘simply Galician’ or ‘typical of dialogues’, specifying, in some cases, that it would not be an adequate element for elaborated texts. The more Castilianized the informants were, the more positive was the reaction to the example: it was evaluated as ‘nice’, ‘typical’, ‘authentic’, with reactions frequently accompanied by a smile, especially by those informants with little contact with popular Galician. At the same time, however, the speakers with very positive attitudes didn’t use this element themselves in standard-oriented texts: an element associated with originality, intimacy or local colour is automatically excluded in texts where this kind of connotation is to be avoided. It seems, somehow, to correlate with several other ‘typical Galician’ or almost exotic stereotypes which are evaluated by new speakers as sounding ‘nice’ or ‘authentic’, but that are thereby also limited to speech marked as dialect and excluded from the koiné. In this case, the part played by the contact language does not lead to a reinforcement of the divergent elements, but to an acceptance of the contact language as a model for the Galician koiné.

13.5 Conclusions

The three examples show how, in contemporary Galician koineization, a selection or filtering process of elements for different discourse types is taking place. The possibility of conscious reflection and discourse planning seems to play an important part in the creation of the new, elaborated texts, and strategies of conscious intervention are, at least in part, responsible for the general fact that languages change when passing from oracy to literacy (cf. Schieben-Lange 1983: 83, Kabatek 1994), or when new, elaborated or written texts are created in languages with primarily spoken traditions; and these changes may have a later influence on spoken varieties, too.

In the concrete case of our examples, conscious reflection is influenced or determined by the presence of a closely-related contact language acting in two ways on speakers while they are creating new texts. On the other hand, it acts as a model language in which the new discourse types already exist and where selection and filtering have already long since taken place. On the other hand, however, a desire to stress the particular characteristics of Galician and to differentiate the two contact languages makes the speakers intervene against the pure adoption of the Spanish model for Galician texts. This creates negative differentiation interference and leads to a proliferation in elaborated texts of distinct forms such as those described in 13.3.1 and 13.3.2. The term negative interference was introduced by Coseriu in 1977 and refers to an interference type that leads to ‘negative realizations’ or ‘non-realizations’ of elements of one language because of the presence of another. There are two types of ‘negative interference’, one that consists in the preference of common elements between the two languages (overlap) and the non-realization of the distinct elements, and another consisting in the preference for the distinct elements (differentiation) and the non-realization of common elements, for different reasons. Both types can appear combined in one text, affecting different elements or different levels of the language (for an exhaustive study see Kabatek 1996).

The ‘determining influence’ of interference in the cases described above is evident, even if the contact language does not appear directly in the resulting texts. This phenomenon seems to appear due to rather
infrequent, extraordinary historical circumstances. Anyway, in many historical processes of koinization, standardized, written and elaborated contact languages (such as, for example, Latin for the Romance languages) might have acted on the new texts in a similar way.

A third observation can be derived from the above: some elements seem to be excluded from the koiné for objective reasons or because of the communicative characteristics of elaborated texts. This is what happens to the Galician ‘solidarity pronoun’ or ethical datives, where the exclusion from standard-oriented texts marked by distance between the interlocutors can be explained by the function of the element itself, which because of its dialogical characteristics remains only in the orally-marked nonstandard dialects. This might be an explanation for the obvious historical parallelism in the evolution of this or similar features in different languages. On the way towards literacy, the languages move from the so-called ‘pragmatic mode’ towards the ‘syntactic mode’, excluding certain deictic elements as a result of standardization and leaving them behind in their spoken, nonstandard varieties.

Notes

1 Article 3 of the Constitution says: ‘Castilian is the official language of the state. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it. The other Spanish languages will also be official in the respective Autonomous Communities according to their statutes.’


3 It might seem surprising to differentiate between ‘standardization’ and the somehow ambiguous term ‘koinization’ (see Siegel 1993: 5–6). Different proposals have been made to distinguish between a consciously elaborated standard and the much more complex and – at least partly – implicit processes of linguistic convergence that create a common language or koiné and that separate elements regarded to be ‘dialectal’ and those accepted in standard oriented texts (see the distinction between different notions of ‘standard’ in Stein 1994: 1–4). This process includes questions of the acceptance or rejection of the proposed standard (cf. Haugen 1966) as well as ‘reduction, levelling and simplification’ (Trudgill 1986: 106–7) and also new creations, filtering, differentiation between varieties and fixing of ‘normal’ usage including ‘normal’ selection and frequency of elements.

4 The first impulse for a romantic Neo-Galician movement was given by the French invasion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which provoked Galician resistance, also expressed in popular texts. From the second half of the century onwards, a consolidation of a poetic movement took place with authors such as Pintos, Rosalia de Castro, Manuel Curros or Eduardo Pondal. Several grammars and dictionaries had been published by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1905, the Galician Academy was founded, and various movements attempted to establish the use of Galician at different levels of society. In 1936, Galician was almost officialized, but the Spanish Civil War and the Nationalists’ victory interrupted the potential development of the minority languages in Spain during the Franco era. In the 1950s, editorial activities reactivated the written language and in the 1960s, a chair for Galician was created at the University of Santiago and the language became more and more a symbol for a youth movement and for anti-Francoist opposition.

5 The avoidance of the phonetic features commonly called gheada and sesco in standard oriented texts by speakers who dialectally show these characteristics is a well-known tendency, even if the language planners do not proscribe them directly. Most speakers’ consciousness of these features characterizes them as part of ‘intimate’ speech not adequate for ‘distant’ texts. Álvarez et al. (1986: 27) consider gheada as a possible element of standard pronunciation: ‘lo fenómeno da gheada foi recollido no galego estándar, como pronuncia alternativa ó sistema de non gheada’ (The phenomenon of <gheada> has been included in standard Galician as an alternative pronunciation to the system without gheada.) Later, one of the authors stressed the importance of social acceptance of the standard and, therefore, seemed to consider gheada as not conforming with the standard: ‘é un feito que a xeneraldade da poboación ten unha mellor consideración da pronunciación con /g/, e parece claro que un modelo exemplar de pronuncia ten que estar asentado no recoñecemento social’ (‘As a matter of fact, people generally estimate more highly the pronunciation with /g/, and it seems to be evident that a standard model for pronunciation must be based on social acceptance’) (Regueira Fernández 1994: 54–5).

6 ‘Implicit’ means by using or not using the proposed elements in discourse, ‘explicit’ means by metalinguistic reflection or discussion about the elements.

7 Inflected infinitives have been observed in several Romance dialects (see Maurer 1968: 70–6) and in other languages. The genesis in Romance has been investigated by Meier (1950). In the Galician dialect of Rianxo, even the inflection of gerund forms has been observed (see Carballo Calero 1974).

8 See Gondar 1978: 143–4. The occurrences of inflected infinitives in Sephardic Spanish can be explained by Portuguese influence.

9 Gondar 1978: 155. It would have been interesting to specify the grade of Spanish influence in the respective authors and to see if the use of the inflected infinitive correlates with other criteria such as the different text types (dialogues vs narration, etc.).
TAMING THE VERNACULAR

10 In scientific articles, examples such as the following (extracted from a sociolinguistic study published in 1992) can be found frequently: 'os mozos e as mozas empregaran o castelán nun intento de sobrevalorárente, de facérente superiores, de seren máis desexables', with three repetitions of infinitive inflection.

11 In the official Bible from 1989 (Santiago: SEPT; translated from the original texts by a team under the direction of A. Torres Queiruga and X. Fernández Lago), countless examples can be found. To cite one of them: in Matt. 13, 15, e.g. the translation says: 'e pecharon os seus ollos, para non veren cos ollos, nin oíren cos oídos, nin entenderen co seu corazón nin se converteren', with four inflected infinitives, where former Galician translations only used one inflected infinitive (convertiense in the version of Sánchez de Santamaría and Louis Bonaparte 1861; convertiren in the version of Gómez Ledo 1974) and Portuguese Bibles, such as the translation of P.A. Pereira de Figueiredo or of P. Matos Soares, do not employ any inflected infinitives.

12 About the categories of distance and intimacy see Koch and Oesterreicher (1985).

13 Again, as in the case of the inflected infinitive, examples such as the following (extracted from an article about nineteenth-century Galician published in 1994) can be found frequently: hai que a buscar, sen lle adicar, de se decatar, sen se admitir, teremos que nos enfrentar, where spoken urban Galician would prefer buscała, adicarle, decatarse, admitirse and enfrentarnos.

14 Similar functions exist in Greek, Latin, the other Romance languages, German (see Abraham 1971), Basque and other languages. Some Latin grammarians denounced the ethic dative as an element of vulgar speech and bad style. In the Romance dialects, it is a widely spread feature, but in the standardized literary languages it has a tendency to disappear, as Meyer-Lübke (1899: III.395–400) already observed.

15 See M. Delibes, Los Santos Inocentes, Barcelona 1981: 23, 24, 35, 47, 70, 71 etc., with examples such as 'la milana te tiene calentura' or 'también te tienes coraje, Faco'.

16 In some of the early nineteenth-century texts edited by Mariño Paz (1992), a 'solidarity pronoun' appears in almost every sentence, e.g. in the Conversa entre os compadres Bártolo e Mingote, first published in 1813, or in the Prozas de Galicia and in many other texts. In the Old Galician translation of the Cronica General from Castilian, in one case a 'solidarity pronoun' is introduced by the translator in a dialogue (Cast. ca ellos non an y culpa ninguna vs Gal. ca ellos nó che am y culpa nè húa).

17 This has been observed by Mariño Paz (1992: I.699).

18 See, e.g. the dialogues in the textbook by Colectivo Albariza: Edigal, 4 vols, Santiago de Compostela 1985.

DIFFERENTIATION AND CHANGE IN GALICIAN

19 It is of course problematic to use introspection questions for the evaluation of a speaker's activity (see Seliger 1983). But at the same time, the questions about stereotyped features, where a conscious intervention takes place, are the most reliable, for they do not refer to spontaneous judgements, but to features that are already themes of metalinguistic reflection.

20 The questions were part of an exhaustive study about the Galician koinéization process (Kabatek 1996), where the linguistic behaviour and some pronunciation features of the 30 informants were correlated with their linguistic biography, their general linguistic attitudes and their metalinguistic evaluations and opinions on concrete linguistic questions.

21 Of course, in concrete historical cases it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between influences from outside and objective, 'inner' communicative needs. In the case of 13.3.5, a combination of both the communicative conditions of the new texts and the non-existence of the element in the contact language seems to determine the exclusion of the element.

22 The 'solidarity pronoun' could also be regarded as a grammaticalized element of 'involvement', see Cheshire (in this volume).

23 See Givón (1979: 98–109) and Bühler (1934: 366–84). For another case of multiple deixis conserved in nonstandard language see Melchers (in this volume); for the relationship between standard and varieties see the general reflections by Wanner (in this volume).

References


TAMING THE VERNACULAR


Luna Traill, Elizabeth and Parodi, Claudia 1974. Sintaxis de los pronombres átonos en construcciones de infinitivo durante el siglo XVI. *Anuario de Letras* XII: 197–204.


DIFFERENTIATION AND CHANGE IN GALICIAN


