

A REALIDADE E O PADRÃO NAS ESTADIAS DE ESTUDANTES IRLANDESES DE ERASMUS: “NO ENTENDÍ NADA. AHORA, ESTOY ACOSTUMBRADO A ESTA DESESPERACIÓN DE LA «S»¹”

LA REALIDAD Y LA NORMA EN LAS ESTANCIAS DE ESTUDIANTES ERASMUS IRLANDESAS: “NO ENTENDÍ NADA. AHORA, ESTOY ACOSTUMBRADO A ESTA DESESPERACIÓN DE LA «S»”

THE REALITY AND THE STANDARD IN THE STAYS OF IRISH ERASMUS STUDENTS: “NO ENTENDÍ NADA. AHORA, ESTOY ACOSTUMBRADO A ESTA DESESPERACIÓN DE LA «S»”

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RESUMO: São analisados relatos sociolinguísticos de estudantes ERASMUS da Irlanda na Universidade de Almeria (Espanha), mostrando a adequação de uma perspectiva metodológica do múltiplo e do plural a partir de abordagens biográfico-linguísticas. Com isso, pretende-se promover um cenário de ensino mais atento ao plurilinguismo como uma grande plataforma para maior domínio linguístico na ELE e, em geral, em qualquer LE ou L2.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Relato sociolinguístico. Programa ERASMUS. Plurilinguismo. Variação sociolinguística. ELE (espanhol como língua estrangeira).

RESUMEN: *Se analizan relatos sociolingüísticos de estudiantes ERASMUS de Irlanda en la Universidad de Almería (España), mostrando la idoneidad de una perspectiva metodológica de lo múltiple y plural a partir de planteamientos biográfico-lingüísticos. Con ello, se pretende fomentar un panorama docente más atento al plurilingüismo como gran plataforma para un mayor dominio lingüístico en ELE y, en general, de cualquier LE o L2.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Relato sociolingüístico. Programa ERASMUS. Plurilingüismo. Variación sociolingüística. ELE (español como lengua extranjera).*

ABSTRACT: *This study analyses some sociolinguistic accounts by Irish ERASMUS students at the University of Almería (Spain). It shows the need and suitability of a more plural and varied methodological perspective based upon biographical and linguistic approaches. This is intended to foster a teaching panorama that grants a higher regard to multilingualism, as it result as a crucial experience for a higher linguistic command in ELE (Spanish as a foreign language) and in general any LE (foreign Language) or L2[u1] (Second Language).*

¹ Extract from a sociolinguistic history of an Irish student from ERASMUS at the University of Almeria.

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KEYWORDS: *Sociolinguistic account. ERASMUS program. Multilingualism. Sociolinguistic variation. Spanish as a foreign language (ELE).*

Introduction

The well-known European academic exchange program ERASMUS was created in 1987, with very rapid development, to the point that today it is part of the almost obligatory imagination of many European university students. There are no excess studies related to this program (GONZ-LEZ, 2020), although these gaps have been partially overcome over the years, tending in its beginnings to study more its quantitative aspects. About the ERASMUS program, it was emphasized that "the information that [...] exists is statistical, at the institutional [...] level, or informative, focused on students, but with data on the city, campus, etc., something very general and with excessive information"³ (BARRAJÓN *et al.*, 2016, p. 1746). This information, which was never conjunctural or anecdotal, I consider to be the result of the image of Spain and its universities as a tourist destination (see for language tourism IGLESIAS, 2018), largely based on the projection of a very diverse heritage, services effective and pleasant destinations, humanly and climatically. This is certainly not bad, but, as will be seen, it can work at the expense of paying less attention to many sociolinguistic and academic aspects that could at least be mitigated.

It should be noted, in line with other contexts, that this program has fully implemented the role of English in the EU “come lingua franca nella progettazione europea” (FLORINDI, 2016, s / p), observations that will reveal important aspects in this work. In that sense, this concern was observed with the distance between a Europe of more plurilingual “linguistic cultures” (GARCÍA MARCOS; FUENTES GONZÁLEZ, 1997) and another that, in fact, tends to Anglo-monolingualism as an ideological form of monolingual multilingualism (MEURER, 2019). Meanwhile, this growing Anglo-monolingualism seems to be canceled in many situations of business, work (ALARCÓN, 2005) or academic (MARTÍN ROJO; RODRÍGUEZ, 2016, p. 125-127), in which languages are linguistic capital and its diversity is celebrated.

Within the linguistic-philological qualifications, the situation has its particularities. In this work I will focus especially on the analysis of the role, sometimes contradictory, that ERASMUS plays in the field of ELE. Based on the specificities found, I propose to do analyzing socio-linguistic reports written voluntarily by students from Ireland at the University

³“la información que [...] existe es, o bien estadística, a nivel institucional [...], o bien divulgativa, enfocada al alumnado, pero con datos sobre la ciudad, el campus, etc., algo muy general y con excesiva información”.

of Almeria (UAL) that point out the most important events, both endo- and exolinguistic. That is, with the alternative narratives that these sociolinguistic records can present, we could create teaching opportunities, as we are very determined by the bureaucratic-administrative performance and not so much by the personal aspect of education (BRUNER, 1999 [1997], p. 52-58): we can stop thinking of figures to read the writing and the lives of the students themselves.

In general, this new student linguistic life must be developed in an urban environment, whose Spanish (Eastern Andalusian) is basically characterized, in its phonic level⁴ for: 1) The loss of /-s/, so characteristic of the entire southern Iberian peninsula linguistic domain, in Almería is partially attenuated in the maximum communicative tension, that is, that there is a tendency to replace the /-s/ in more formal styles, even in situations medium tension; 2) The other implosive consonants maintain this attenuation, but decreasing their percentages and with a greater inclination for aspiration to the detriment of the opening and elongation of the anterior vowels; 3) Distinction is the priority variant of the /s/ - /θ/ explosive opposition, followed by ceceo located in the lower socio-cultural strata and neighborhoods; there is neither sesseo nor the aspirated variant, which is, however, registered in other areas of the province; 4) The same sociolinguistic conditioning of the ceceo is reproduced in terms of the fricativization of /ê/; 5) The rotacisms of /r/ - /l/, implosive and grouped in the syllable tension are exclusive to the low socioeconomic classes and need changes according to the communicative tension, although the fall of /-r/ in the infinitives, especially followed by the unstressed personal pronoun, be well established across the sociolinguistic spectrum; 6) In relation to the /-d-/ of the participles, its loss, so widespread in the Spanish-speaking world, but with restrictions on formal uses; and 7) Some phonetic phenomena traditionally linked to the lower strata, such as vowel exchanges /i, o/ > /e, u/, highly stigmatized, have no presence in the Spanish city (GARCÍA MARCOS, 1993, p. 562-564).

The role of stays in language development in L2 or LE

Both in academic bibliographic circuits and in the common hegemonic discourse on language learning, it is customary to consider that any stay in the country whose language is studied is very positive, and this from several points of view: linguistic-acquisitive, intercultural, political, economic, personal development, etc. However, a detailed observation

⁴ Que, como você verá, é muitas vezes notado por sua dificuldade em entender.

of the stays put on the table both unexpected and unwanted aspects. Thus, Santiago Guervós and Fernández González (2017, p. 74-80) describe the impulse of the linguistic stay industry that, in any case, must force teachers to think contextually and to de-dramatize attitudes.

If we delve into some aspects, it is known, for example, that British university students often reinforce their stereotyped perceptions or that stays for work purposes generate more favorable judgments about the country of arrival than academic stays (COLEMAN, 2001, p. 65). In another sense, for professional purposes, Pérez Vidal (2007, p. 25) has no doubt that stays abroad are positive and necessary, since

[I]’estudi sistemàtic dels efectes i beneficis de les ES ens permet comprendre com ens comportem en circumstàncies de canvi de context cultural i lingüístic. Els elements que configuren les estades a l’estranger interactuen amb el nivell de llengua a l’inici de l’ES, amb les característiques de personalitat i amb la capacitat de relacionar-se i d’establir contactes amb parlants de la llengua dels aprenents. Finalment, l’ES permet obtenir la pràctica lingüística necessària per fixar formes gramaticals. Aquesta cadena de factors interrelacionats afectarà de manera decisiva l’èxit de l’ES, en contrast amb un context d’aprenentatge a l’aula al país d’origen durant el mateix període de temps.

Séré (2006, p. 108), in turn, highlighted the eminently positive character of the ERASMUS program, with its contradictions based on a poorly defined framework of action, more potentiating "language learning than inclusion in society", with interactive models in which there is a “mass of natives who try or fail to penetrate”⁵.

It was also emphasized that there is a great contrast in studies on the effect of input on pronunciation, in such a way that “the amount of input in the natural context has, in most cases, been the time spent in a country where the target is spoken”⁶ (RECAJ, 2008, p. 30), calculation that, since now, comes from the effort to standardize and correlate the length of stay with the 'logical repercussions' in the acquisition of LE or L2. In both cases, this "natural context" is generally much richer than indicated by these earlier perceptions. However, the images of the language industry have developed this theme a lot, to the point that the metaphor of "immersion" in the natural context has also migrated to more artificial and didactic environments (FUENTES GONZÁLEZ, 2015).

Pinar (2015, p. 13-51) and Lindqvist (2017, p. 28-30) analyze the role of stays through a series of factors, which again emphasizes the disparity in results. On the other hand, the study by Barrajon *et al.*, (2016, p. 1746), dedicated to students of Hispanic linguistic-philological

⁵ “masa de los nativos en la que no intentan o no pueden penetrar”.

⁶ “la cantidad de input en el contexto natural ha sido en la mayoría de los casos la duración de la estancia en un país donde se habla la lengua meta”.

disciplines, is particularly interesting for the work that appears here, as it discovers very common aspects, such as the difficulty in trying clearly enunciate a series of genuine academic routines from our university tradition and culture, certainly very variable and full of uncertainties, such as the relations between teachers and students or the assessment methods and criteria, as well as very interesting practices, such as those of linguistic volunteering (also in BOLADERAS TACHÉ, 2005).

Pozo-Vicente and Aguaded-Gómez (2012, p. 441), while at the same time highlighting the divergence in results, emphasize the ERASMUS program's ability to motivate the acquisition of intercultural skills, since "it not only encourages learning of the foreign language, but it also promotes [...] understanding and cohesion among members belonging to different cultures, raising European citizenship among the student population"⁷.

In different works ⁸, Meunier (2010; 2011; 2013; 2018) stresses that sociolinguistic awareness and attitudes - influenced by prediscursive frameworks, sometimes authentic 'toxic ideas' - usually operate by categorizing and essentializing languages, their speeches, their accents and classifying their speakers, also through models of linguistic correction that feed on the exemplarity of the native speaker (almost ideal speaker-listener). In any case, it will be seen later in more detail, the field of sociolinguistic work, not only quantitative, sociolinguistic perception or evaluation (beliefs, awareness and attitudes) will be of great benefit in this work. (FUENTES GONZÁLEZ, 1996; 1996a; GARCÍA MARCOS, 1999; GARCÍA MARCOS; FUENTES GONZÁLEZ, 1997; GARCÍA MARCOS; MANJÓN-CABEZA CRUZ, 1989; MANJÓN-CABEZA CRUZ, 2018).

Thus, when reaching the linguistic destination, the student's experience is often paralyzed when he hears speakers who do not use the forms prescribed by normative grammar, strongly aimed at the ideal of the didactic standard, even if these ERASMUS students use the pragmatic-discursive conventions of the new students with who met: they are more influenced by their strongly nomadic didactic traditions than by the most common linguistic practices in the incoming community. They must transform themselves into linguistic mutants, with identity tensions, immobilized by their previous learning but impelled to move in the face of new surroundings. Sometimes they float with great anguish through different rules and positions, which could alleviate - originally - a dialectical approach to "epilinguistic discourse".

⁷ "no solo fomenta el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera, sino que además promueve [...] el entendimiento y la cohesión entre miembros pertenecientes a diferentes culturas, lo que da conciencia de ciudadanía europea entre la población estudiantil".

⁸ For reasons of space, more specific studies are not discussed here that aim to meet the needs of ERASMUS students' arrival. In any case, see, as an example shows, Vázquez (2006).

In view of this scenario, the new 'erasmus generation' must be responsible and aware of their role in building a more civic Europe, promoting more tolerant attitudes towards linguodiversity. A multilingual view would be more malleable than tyrannical models of language proficiency. For now, these prescriptive principles, as we shall see, are challenged by the set of characteristics of true multilingual competition (GONZÁLEZ PIÑEIRO; GUILLÉN DÍAZ; VEZ, 2010), as may be the partial and imperfect nature of the skills, or the principle of the common imbalance of these skills, which, by the way, are not unrelated to native speakers considered cultured.

Another important block of reference works in this study is the group dedicated to the Andalusian varieties of Spanish, especially with regard to works dedicated to /-s/ (LAMÍQUIZ IBÁÑEZ, 1976; SALVADOR, 1977; LÓPEZ MORALES, 1984; GARCÍA MARCOS, 1987; MÉNDEZ GARCÍA DE PAREDES, 2008; MOYA CORRAL, 2011), which, as is known, is not exclusive to southern Spain, as it is also found in other areas of the Spanish-speaking environment (LÓPEZ SERENA, 2011).

Analysis of sociolinguistic reports: Irish Erasmus students at UAL

Methodological aspects

Often a multiple methodological approach is proposed when analyzing contact situations (linguistic and cultural). Galindo and Díez (2016, p. 2182), both for questionnaires and for other procedures, consider that data collection is not so easy, which results in the need to collect qualitatively experiences during a student's stay, expanding them through interviews with teachers, program administrative staff and host families. Pozo-Vicente and Agudaded-Gómez (2012, p. 441) start from a broad model, based on a quantitative and qualitative methodology. The instruments applied are the interview questionnaire and the discussion forum. Séré (2006) and González-Monteagudo (2015, p. 262-264), from their perspective, emphasize the great potential of biographical interviews, essential tools for analyzing mechanisms of individual and collective learning of a language and its cultural universe, or how learning ideas develop and transform identity, life project and cultural capital.

Lima (2014, p. 47) defends a socio-interactionist perspective to better outline the theoretical and methodological aspects of interculturality and intersubjectivity in language teaching. Thus, it should not be ignored that the teacher is a privileged interlocutor due to the communication established with his students: with news, motivating and significant also for him, so that the teaching of languages constitutes a permanent interpersonal and intercultural

process in the classroom and also in life (LIMA, 2014, p. 55-56). With all this, research through linguistic autobiographies is showing promise, as it activates aspects of observation that are often overlooked or invisible (CARMONA YANES, 2018; WEXELL-MACHADO; ALCARAZ; BENÍTEZ, 2019).

In the specific case of this work, this teaching dialogue is assumed first with the idea of better access to the personal sociolinguistic framework that Erasmus students present during their stays. It is a work that can be considered exploratory, since we can only expect a series of guidelines that, in the continuation of these studies, can lead to a more complete and comprehensive overview. It is also important to emphasize that this study is shaped by my observation - participatory and continuous - of the development of the ERASMUS program at UAL since 1993, which reiterated some aspects. For example, the shared feeling that among students there is a strong gap between 'autochthonous' and 'international' (reiterating the above by SÉRÉ, p. 108). In addition, the strictly linguistic proficiency level of Spanish is affected by certain pragmalinguistic factors, such as volume of voice, excessive familiarity and interactive "disorder" (according to foreign students), as well as by a very negative attitude of Erasmus students towards listening to Spanish in Almeria.

In view of all this, I will give an example, as a case that in many class discussions is usually presented: a student is in her apartment. The intercom rings. She asks "¿Sí?" or "¿Quién es?". Answer: "Open!". Foreign students often point this out as an aggressive imperative (¡Open!); however, Almeria's students do not consider it in any way, but as an effective intervention. This different view means that different cultural models act, in this case, courtesy (BORREGO NIETO *et al.*, 2016, p. 367-380), which I understand to be an excellent excuse to unveil ethnocentrism (linguocentrism, from now on) with which each person often values communication factors.

With all this context, I thought of hearing and reading the students' own voice, through sociolinguistic interviews, discussion groups, or so-called linguistic biographies, oral histories or ethnographic magazines, because interpreting, recording and learning to listen and read stories is empathy with those who produce them. However, this methodological richness was, in the last analysis, very inefficient, as it was an impulse to obtain an abundant number of stories, however few sociolinguistic interviews or recorded sessions of discussion groups.

Hence this work discusses a corpus of five stories written by the students themselves (from the 2016-2017 to 2019-2020 courses). Such stories were written voluntarily. As inhibition in these cooperative tasks is common in these cases, a set of guidelines was foreseen so that - as far as possible - possible *horror vacui* were eliminated. In short, these guidelines

invited us to write experiences related to your stay: free extension⁹, written in a personal style, reflecting the most important linguistic-experiential situations during your stay, without necessarily adhering to a specific linguistic plan; requesting a description, too, of para- and non-verbal aspects; concrete experiences on types of language; also about cooperative situations that may or may not have been encountered by indigenous peoples; about their changes of opinion in relation to the initial expectations and the reality found and whether this previous view was maintained or strengthened; equally, about the languages used in everyday interaction; what resources they used to understand and make themselves understood; and, finally, a brief self-assessment of the linguistic aspects of (self-) improvement or a general assessment of the stay.

Thus, five of the six students in Ireland during the period indicated¹⁰ that delivered their report, which in turn came from a corpus of 43 reports, if we add those from students from other countries (as mentioned, from the European Union and China). Precisely, I decided to highlight the analysis in the reports obtained from Irish students due to the specificities presented, to which it must be added that the receiving university itself (the one in Almería, Spain) does not require a specific level of proficiency in Spanish, even if one assumes a given level to engage in Hispanic Philology studies¹¹. In fact, from my own teaching experience with these students¹² I can point out that their level of proficiency was insufficient, sometimes notoriously insufficient, which also started to draw attention to the rest of the students, who often explained these deficiencies by the self-sufficiency produced by the English language as L1, an international language par excellence.

As stated above, among the corpus compiled so far compiled, I dwell, for its particularities, on five reports from students in Ireland, as they foster significant experiences and reflections different from the rest (mainly students from the European Union and China), especially because Irish students are more prone to experiential achievement, and not so much linguistic *stricto sensu*. That is, they feel a great feeling of success as women who are beginning to be independent and manage their general autonomy fully, an aspect that is not always present

⁹ No report exceeded 1200 words.

¹⁰ All students took courses in the first four months (from September to February).

¹¹ It is worth noting that this "*de manga ancha*" academic policy is being questioned by teachers, to the point that some agreements have been canceled, due to the lack of minimum proficiency in Spanish by some international exchange students.

¹² Future work could investigate all these aspects with the variable of students from Ireland in other types of studies, since in many of them the teaching is carried out in the English language, as a measure of the Plurilingual Development Plan of the University of Almería.

in other reports by students of different nationalities and that, when present, is not perceived so intensely.

With circumstances of their own, these Irish students have adapted to their new context of life by working as English or *au pair*¹³ teachers and traveling a lot, which serves them to explore various Spanish accents. Especially in the first moments, great support was given to gestures, which Patricia¹⁴ appreciates a lot because

*due to my basic level of Spanish, at the beginning, I learned the importance of body language to understand a message; because I think learning a language is one of the most important elements and it is very useful. When I don't understand a person who speaks too quickly, through body language I could understand almost everything.*¹⁵

Margaret also values the gestural emphasis "to explain things", although she was unlucky enough to discover that "some people simply repeated it in the same way. They did not speak more slowly or explained it in another way, which sometimes made it difficult to communicate with them", explaining that "the majority of Spaniards in Almería are tolerant of Erasmus students, perhaps because Zapillo [the city's populous neighborhood, by the sea] in Almería has many Erasmus students in this region". This series of drawbacks is sometimes resolved with a certain linguistic inbreeding, as many have spent "most of the time [...] speaking English to Irish and British friends", a comfort zone that, I understand, is amplified by the general demand for experiences in English, since it is the international language for *antonomásia* (see also, MITCHELL; McMANUS; TRACY-VENTURA, 2015). In any case, this use of English as a refuge has strong nuances of identity, as they feel judged when they speak Spanish. The discomfort, moreover, even made them feel stupid to clear up misunderstandings with the Spaniards "They will speak as quickly as the first time. They don't try to slow down to make things easier".

Due to the significance of the content, I will continue to follow a) the "big bump" of the arrival; b) in academic activity; and c) in the 'absence' of /-s/, themes that, as you will see, are interrelated.

¹³ Unlike most Polish students, who worked with children, this task was an excellent opportunity for them to increase their knowledge of the Spanish language and culture; Instead, Irish students looked after children so they could learn English (FUENTES GONZÁLEZ, 2020).

¹⁴ I hide the location of the students, changing their names.

¹⁵ *[d]evido meu nível básico de espanhol, no início, aprendi a importância da linguagem corporal para entender uma mensagem; porque eu acho que aprender uma língua é um dos elementos mais importantes e é muito útil. Quando eu não entendo uma pessoa que fala demasiadamente muito rápido, através da linguagem corporal podia entender quase tudo*

The experience in Almeria: the arrival as a big bump

For the five students, the experience proved to be a rite of passage, anchored in the explicit recognition that they arrived with a low level of Spanish. Patricia felt she had been

a memorable year of my life and I think the Erasmus program is one of the best cultural programs out there, as it offers a wide variety of activities and there is a mixture of cultures and diversity from around the world... which was the first time that I lived alone and outside my home, and I learned many things, I learned to wash clothes, dishes [...] It was an essential opportunity to see another culture and the differences and similarities between ours, sometimes there were a few things, but it was not a problem.¹⁶

Maria also emphasizes overcoming the initial problems, after a first separation from her environment and loved ones:

I remember that when I went to the airport I cried so much, I had absolutely no idea how much of an incredible year my Erasmus would be [...] First I went to Almeria, I had several problems. [...] It was the first time in my life that I had to fix things myself. I don't have my mom and dad with me to save me. At first it was very difficult, especially as I had to communicate these problems using a different language. But I am grateful for these difficult times, because they made me grow up as an independent and responsible young woman.¹⁷

Deirdre's account presents a continuing desire to travel. She does not remember the problems at the beginning; instead, highlights the appreciation of continuous and positive contrasts, from Madrid to Almería, and from both cities to India¹⁸, emphasizing gastronomy and museums as cultural antonyms.

Margaret tends to give more importance to language learning, as she decided to stay

a whole year, because my level of Spanish is not very good, and I thought that studying a year abroad could help me improve my language standard. When I first arrived in Almería, my host picked me up at the airport. He spoke only Spanish and little English. Since I had not reviewed any Spanish since my tests

¹⁶ *um ano memorável da minha vida e eu acho que o programa Erasmus é um dos melhores programas culturais que existem, pois oferece uma grande variedade de atividades e há uma mistura de culturas e diversidade de todo o mundo... que foi a primeira vez que morei sozinha e fora da minha casa, e aprendi muitas coisas, aprendi a lavar roupas, pratos [...] Era uma oportunidade essencial para ver outra cultura e as diferenças e semelhanças entre as nossas, às vezes tinha umas coisinhas, mas não era um problema.*

¹⁷ *Lembro que quando fui ao aeroporto chorei tanto, não tinha absolutamente ideia nenhuma quanto de um incrível ano meu Erasmus chegar a ser [...] Primeiro fui para Almeria, tive vários problemas. [...] Foi a primeira vez na minha vida que tive que consertar as coisas por mim mesmo. Não tenho minha mãe e meu pai comigo para me salvar. No começo foi muito difícil, especialmente porque eu tinha que comunicar esses problemas através de uma linguagem diferente. Mas eu sou grata por esses tempos difíceis, porque eles me fizeram crescer em uma jovem independente e responsável.*

¹⁸ Comparison that the student makes because of her trips to that country.

*in May 2017, I knew I was already falling behind. I found listening and understanding the language difficult at first.*¹⁹

Anne, on the other hand, suffers a tremendous linguistic shock, in the sense that, since the beginning, her

*experience so far here was not what I expected. To begin with, the language here is very difficult to understand. I learned before coming to Almería that people here don't speak the Spanish that I learned at my university. However, I didn't expect it to be as different as I found it when I got here. I don't know if that will offend someone who lives in Almería, but I've always been told that the best and most beautiful Spanish you hear is in Madrid. The language in Almería is difficult to understand and it is difficult to adapt to it when my teachers at home spoke basic Spanish very well for us in the classroom.*²⁰

As you can see, Irish students, to a greater or lesser degree, even negotiate and reconfigure their identities as apprentices during their stay in Almería, effectively managing intercultural encounters, which Galluci (2011) observed between British erasmus during a year of stay in Italy. In the same way, these students, in general, seem to present as a consequence an attitudinal structure identified - also - in future Spanish professors from the neighboring University of Granada, when they project an ambivalent vision of the Andalusian: very positive about their general social uses and their landscapes, but internalizing the stigmatization of “many Andalusian linguistic traits, which lead to associating the Andalusian with a low socio-cultural level or belittling him to the category of jargon”²¹ (MANJÓN-CABEZA CRUZ, 2018: p. 175).

Academic activity

All Irish students orient their stories to overcome difficulties; they highlight the problems of his university activity: the voluminous paperwork, the lack of understanding of the contents, the excessive duration of the classes, also the English of Almería (in their view,

¹⁹ *um ano todo, porque meu nível de espanhol não é muito bom, e pensei que estudar um ano no exterior poderia me ajudar a melhorar meu padrão de idioma. Quando cheguei pela primeira vez a Almería, meu anfitrião me buscou no aeroporto. Ele só falava espanhol e pouco inglês. Como eu não tinha revisado nenhum espanhol, desde minhas provas em maio de 2017, eu sabia que já estava ficando para trás. Achei escutar e entender o idioma difícil a princípio.*

²⁰ *experiência até agora aqui não era o que eu esperava. Para começar, o idioma aqui é muito difícil de entender. Aprendi antes de vir para Almería que as pessoas aqui não falam o espanhol que aprendi na minha universidade. No entanto, eu não esperava que fosse tão diferente como o encontrei quando cheguei aqui. Não sei se isso ofenderá alguém que mora em Almería, mas sempre me disseram que o melhor e mais bonito espanhol que você ouve é em Madrid. A língua em Almería é difícil de entender e é difícil se adaptar a ela quando meus professores em casa falavam espanhol básico muito bem para nós em sala de aula.*

²¹ “muitos traços linguísticos andaluzes, que levam a associar o andaluz a um nível sociocultural baixo ou a menosprezá-lo à categoria de jargão”

terrible), but -equally- the immense linguistic and literary learning and the benign climate It's brilliant. Understanding is blocked at the beginning, especially because, both Irish and other students, point to the difference between the Spanish previously learned and what they find in Almeria, a real mismatch. Patrícia writes that

in the beginning [...] i didn't understand anything, i was lost and all Spanish students spoke very fast compared to the Spanish i had learned. I went to class a little disconcerted and confused since it didn't have much to do with what I had learned. Later, in the second quarter, a classmate, a friend of mine, explained the difficulty to learn Spanish here, it was the Andalusian accent [...] but as time goes by things changed, I started doing jobs and learned a lot of vocabulary and new phrases. In Ireland, learning the Spanish language through English or «Spanglish» doesn't make sense, but it was easier. There is no better phrase that explains the experience of learning another language than "learning to survive".²²

Mary also felt "lost in every class" when she started the course, overwhelmed by the hardness of her learning. Determined to fix it, she took private Spanish lessons and improved significantly, more in comprehension than in production, given that the second semester was "much easier because, although I am not fluent, I can understand a lot of things and I feel much more comfortable with the language".

Margaret felt great insecurity, probably supported by previous opinions, such as the speed of the Spanish speaking, attributed even more to the surrounding Andalusian environment²³, but, for the most part, he was able to follow the lessons, even though he didn't understand a few words: "I was able to put some of the words together and find out what they were trying to say. The more I went to college, the more I got a little better and I got used to Almería-Espanhol [Almeria's Spanish]". It is very interesting to appreciate how this student distinguishes what certainly occurs in her country, the situational linguistic differences:

I also noticed that the language spoken at the University is different from the language I hear from people sitting in cafes, restaurants or even in stores. For example, I think the language spoken at the University is more formal in its

²² *no começo [...] não entendia nada, estava perdida e todos os alunos espanhóis falavam muito rápido para o espanhol que eu tinha aprendido. Fui para aula um tanto desconcertada e confusa já que não tinha muito a ver com o que eu tinha aprendido. Mais tarde, no segundo quadrimestre um colega de turma, amigo meu, me explicou a dificuldade para aprender espanhol aqui, era o sotaque andaluz[...] mas à medida que passa o tempo as coisas foram mudando, comexei a fazer trabalhos e aprendi muito vocabulário e frases novas. Na Irlanda, aprendemos a língua espanhola através do inglês ou «spanglish» não faz sentido, mas era mais fácil. Não há melhor frase que explique a experiência de aprender outra língua do que "aprender a sobreviver".*

²³ Lamíquiz Ibáñez (1976) has already highlighted - in the analysis of a contrasting study of the orality of educated people in Madrid and Seville, that, although in 30 minutes of recording, Seville respondents would say 500 more terms than those interviewed in Madrid, Sevillians, among those terms, issued an average of 250 words, compared to 400 of Madrid. In other words, the Andalusian people repeated many more words and expressions, feeding a more fluid speech.

*approach. [...] In my opinion, I think the language used by people in stores or restaurants is more expressive, in a way. Their body language is relaxed, their speech rate is stable, which makes it easier for me to understand and the language itself seems more informal.*²⁴

Anne, for her part, tends to write about issues of identity, the feeling of ridicule when she feels misunderstood when speaking Spanish, or when she tries to understand it. So much so that at the beginning she regrets the low level of English in the Almerian environment, also of the university faculty, to find, then, the advantages of feeling compelled to speak Spanish.

Deirdre, again, evokes the idea that “Spaniards are known for speaking fast”. But remember, in front of a teacher who “spoke very quickly and I found it extremely difficult to understand what was said”:

*on the other hand, there were other teachers who spoke at a normal and constant pace. I was able to follow what they were saying. In certain situations, I learned that I was using words incorrectly, either by pronunciation or because I was using different words for the wrong situations.*²⁵

Previous ideas, sometimes very prejudiced, also determined in Patrícia that

*[o]ne of the most fundamental differences was the pronunciation here. I visit[ed] other places in Spain during my stay and it was obvious that people in Andalusia and Almeria speak a little differently. Here, the rhythm was faster and more varied, and the sounds were varied. At my university, I met a girl who studied at UAL last year and told me to prepare because it is very difficult to understand and be familiar with the lifestyle of people here in Almeria. [...] In addition, the Irish woman from last year said she missed so many subjects, because college was so difficult. It was making me fail before I reached Almeria.*²⁶

The ‘absence’ of /-s/

²⁴ Também notei que a língua falada na Universidade é diferente da língua que ouço de pessoas sentadas em cafés, restaurantes ou mesmo em lojas. Por exemplo, acho que a língua falada na Universidade é mais formal em sua abordagem. [...] Na minha opinião, acho que a linguagem usada por pessoas em lojas ou restaurantes é mais expressiva, de certa forma. Sua linguagem corporal é relaxada, a velocidade de sua fala é estável, o que torna mais fácil para mim entender e a linguagem em si parece mais informal.

²⁵ por outro lado, tinha outros professores que falavam em um ritmo normal e constante. Eu era capaz de acompanhar o que eles estavam dizendo. Em certas situações, aprendi que estava usando palavras incorretamente, seja por pronúncia ou porque estava usando palavras diferentes para as situações erradas.

²⁶ [u]ma das diferenças mais fundamentais foi a pronúncia aqui. Visit[ei]²⁶ outros lugares na Espanha durante a minha estadia e era óbvio que as pessoas na Andalusia e Almeria falam um pouco diferente. Aqui, o ritmo era mais rápido e mais variado, e os sons eram variados. Na minha universidade, conheci uma garota que estudou na UAL no ano passado e me disse para me preparar porque é muito difícil entender e estar familiarizado com o estilo de vida das pessoas aqui em Almeria. [...] Além disso, a irlandesa do ano passado disse que perdeu tantos temas, porque a faculdade era tão difícil. Isso estava me fazendo falhar antes de chegar a Almeria.

With a much greater emphasis than other international mobility students (see. FUENTES GONZ-LEZ, 2020), Irish students were totally opposed to the non-pronunciation of /-s/, which can be framed in a more general framework of teaching variation at ELE (GEESLIN; GUDMESTAD, 2008; SALGADO-ROBLES, 2011; GEESLIN, 2011; RINGER-HILFINGER, 2012). From the concept of language as a norm, they come from a learning system, like so many, governed by a prescriptivism and a dichotomous gap that excludes what is not included in the nomic set. That's why Margaret argues that

[en] my home university, I got used to Castilian, so starting University in Almería and getting used to Andalusian Spanish confused me a lot. I find it very difficult to understand things, and I still wonder if I heard the right thing that a Spanish person is saying [...] The most surprising linguistic surprise I have encountered is in certain situations, when a Spanish person is speaking, and they may not pronounce 's', because I am still confused when they are speaking. I always wonder if they are saying words and just not pronouncing the 's', or if I have never heard those words in Spanish.²⁷

Likewise, Deirdre notes that

many people, who were speaking in Spanish, did not pronounce the letter 's' in some words [...] It was confusing at first because I started to ask myself, if they were speaking words and not pronouncing the letter 's' over them, or if they used different words that I had not yet learned.²⁸

Patricia sums up her acoustic perception by saying that

most of the time the final "s" of a word does not exist, this "s" was an absolute minority in the community. The pronunciation in Almería is unique and special. [When] I arrived, a man asked me in a restaurant simply "[¿T]e gusta el pescado?" and I didn't understand anything. Now I am used to this 'desesperación' of «s».²⁹

²⁷ *[en] minha universidade de origem, eu me acostumei com castelhano, então começar a Universidade em Almería e me acostumar com o espanhol andaluz me confundiu muito. Eu acho muito difícil entender as coisas, e eu ainda me pergunto se eu ouvi a coisa certa que uma pessoa espanhola está dizendo[...] A surpresa linguística mais surpreendente que encontrei é em certas situações, quando um espanhol está falando, e eles podem não pronunciar 's', pois eu ainda fico confuso quando eles estão falando. Eu sempre me pergunto se eles estão dizendo palavras e apenas não pronunciando o 's', ou se nunca tinha escutado essas palavras em espanhol.*

²⁸ *muitas pessoas, que estavam falando em espanhol, não pronunciavam a letra 's' em algumas palavras [...] Foi confuso no início porque eu comecei a me perguntar, se eles estavam falando palavras e não pronunciando a letra 's' sobre elas, ou se eles usavam palavras diferentes que eu ainda não tinha aprendido.*

²⁹ *na maioria das vezes o "s" final de uma palavra não existe, este "s" era absolutamente minoritário na comunidade. A pronúncia em Almería é única e especial. [Quando] eu cheguei, um homem me perguntou em um restaurante simplesmente «[¿T]e gusta el pescado?» e não entendi nada. Agora estou acostumada a essa 'desesperación'²⁹ do «s».*

All of this, Anne associates with an unwillingness: “Here in Almeria, they don't like to pronounce the "s" in words. And I find myself learning the wrong Spanish. I'm starting to say 'gracia' and 'bueno d[í]a' in place of 'Buenos d[í]as'. This is not good for my Spanish”.

It is no accident that these assessments are implemented. At best, two positions can be observed for the phenomenon of *marras*. On the one hand, SALVADOR (1977) attributed to the consonant weakening in an implosive position a role that affected the opening, not only of the final vowels, but of the whole word, doubling them phonologically in open and closed; and, on the other hand, that of LÓPEZ MORALES (1984), to reexamine the question without drama, pointing out that it is the orational and widely communicative context that determines the number (plural or singular), for example, and not the mere presence-absence of mark of /-s/.

In both cases, the obstinate lack of recognition of the consolidation that this phonic fact has in the contrasting use of the Spanish language (MORENO FERNÁNDEZ, 2000, p. 53-54 and p. 85) draws attention, because it is assumed that the variation would be taught. I believe, on the other hand, that a discrete issue is to teach and practice it; and another to present it briefly and invite to take positive attitudes when we find them, as a form of respect for those who present it, because - in the first place - it is much more difficult to change the variation of the speaking communities than the attitude of the foreigner students. Thus, in the Spanish call of Eastern Andalusia, “despite its geographical differences, it constitutes a compact area [...] marked by its evolutionary character. This character is manifested by a set of features among which it is worth mentioning the leniency of the syllabic ending³⁰...”³¹ (MOYA CORRAL, 2011, p. 104), what Manjón-Cabeza Cruz (2018, p. 148) reiterates when pointing out that “there are also processes of external stigmatization, that is, there are phenomena that in Andalusia are not negatively valued, but on which negative assessments are considered by many users of standard variety, this is the case with the loss of /-s/...”³².

Precisely in Méndez García de Paredes (2008, p. 1372-1373), among others, the sense of norm as a recognized and common use of language is undone; that is, as a usual and / or customary practice; it is, therefore, “what is” and not “what should be”. In this sense, we have

³⁰ A sign of this weakening of /-s/ can be heard if we listen to Granada Luis García Montero, professor of Spanish Literature at the University of Granada and current director of the Instituto Cervantes. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDw44nWiDvk>. Access: Nov. 13 2019.

Also, it can be seen in the Grenadian Motril Luis Rubiales, president of the Real Spanish Federation of Soccer. Available at: <https://www.rfef.es/noticias/luis-rubiales-trabajemos-todos-supercopa-igualdad>. Acesso em: Feb. 10 2020.

³¹ “apesar de suas diferenças geográficas, constitui uma área compacta [...] marcado por seu caráter evolutivo. Este personagem é manifestado por um conjunto de traços entre os quais vale destacar a leniência da final silábica”

³² “há também processos de estigmatização externa, ou seja, há fenômenos que na Andalusia não são valorados negativamente, mas sobre os quais avaliações negativas são ponderadas por muitos usuários da variedade padrão. Este é o caso com a perda do /-s/...”

a centropeninsular model that admits diatopically marked forms, "due to the fact that Spanish has a relatively flexible pattern and allows the unblocking of some linguistic phenomena, establishing an oral Spanish for Andalusian"³³ (MÉNDEZ GARCÍA DE PAREDES, 2008, p. 1382). In this sense, Fuentes González (1996, p. 69-74) has already registered that the so-called /-s/ elision was an accepted variant in the city of Almería. Also, in a broader Andalusian context, García Marcos and Manjón-Cabeza Cruz (1989) reveal that for the younger Andalusian primary school it was unnecessary - and almost ridiculous - to force students to pronounce /-s/, which was, without a doubt, a symptom of the sociolinguistic acceptance of this phenomenon.

Perhaps it is advisable to take into account a work by Simone (1997, p. 30-34), in which what he calls "Linguist Deformation" was found, which in his brain establishes that among linguistic forms there is a hierarchical relationship according to which non-variation (the *variandum*, the vanishing point, the language) is genetically primary, almost primitive and represents the unmarked term of the opposition of the codes, so that the *varians* (the variation) gradually move away from the non -variable. For this, certain typical stages, implicitly considered as "degeneración", that involve the loss or weakening of the traits of the *variandum*, deforming theory, because it assigns in advance a definitive label to each of the factors with which it faces, so that the *varians* are increasingly structured and worse articulated: "Consequently, in the end, the description of the *varians* [...] inevitably presents a description of a decline, [...] of simplification, [...] as an impoverishment"³⁴ (SIMONE, 1997, p. 32).

These phenomena of decay, loss, simplification, quick and careless pronunciations are often attributed to "local dialects and varieties, which, for reasons that are not really clear, seem *ontologically intended*"³⁵ to be pronounced quickly, simplified and intrinsically below the standard"³⁶ (SIMONE, 1997, p. 34), precisely what usually happens with the loss of Almeria and Granada.

Final considerations

The sociolinguistic accounts compiled by Irish students show that all linguistic activity is produced from tensions and contradictions. In this orientation, our students, opposing an

³³ "devido ao fato de que o espanhol tem um padrão relativamente flexível e permite o desbloqueio de alguns fenômenos linguísticos, estabelecendo um espanhol oral para o andaluz"

³⁴ "Consequentemente, no final, a descrição do *varians* [...]inevitavelmente se apresenta descrição de um declínio, [...] de simplificação, [...] como um empobrecimento"

³⁵ Destaque do autor.

³⁶ "dialetos e variedades locais, que, por razões que não são realmente claras, parecem ontologicamente destinados a serem pronunciadas de maneira rápida, simplificada e intrinsecamente abaixo do padrão"

unexpected sociolinguistic reality, tried to act, knowing how to correct, in many cases, from the canon previously assimilated and navigating with some efficiency between the dissidences experienced, mitigating their linguistic-communicative conflicts in order to orient them towards social meaning.

From the *in vitro* language to the *in vivo* language, its interactive movements show a good dynamism. I believe, therefore, that the autobiographical focus of sociolinguistic reporting can be very useful in research, since it forces us to see students as different individuals and to discover which variants and factors influence the learning process abroad, without reducing them to uncritical recipients of a *syllabus*. In this sense, the main factor discovered is their character as native speakers of English, which generates linguistic accommodation through it, instead of in Spanish. In fact, in other programs, Irish and British students came to ask that these subjects of the Spanish Philology course be taught in English. In a way, the previous one is related to a limited previous proficiency in Spanish, repeated over the years, due to a circumstance that generally determines a greater degree of rejection of the Spanish found in Almería than in other national groups of *erasmus* students. In other words, being a native English speaker offers the intrinsic advantages of being monolingual in many countries around the world, which discourages the capacity for an intercomprehensive effort when you start to become bilingual.

The narratives, as an expression of linguistic life, emphasize that the experiential and persevering search for meanings is a good incentive for linguistic acquisition-learning in a language that, like Spanish, is polycentric geographically and situationally, therefore Bustos Tovar (2013, p 22) recommends "normative pluricentrism versus artificial unitarianism"³⁷. Based on this assumption, the teacher should have extensive formation in this aspect and transport it to the classroom (GUAJARDO, 2009; DELGADO FERNÁNDEZ, 2013), not so much -I understand- to pour (teach) content sizes in a discreet container, but as a transversal attitude of respect for multilingual diversity, also intralinguistic (MAURO, 1977; FUENTES GONZÁLEZ, 1996a), undoubtedly enriched by more fertile patterns of contact with native speakers of the language and psychosocial factors that promote it (GEESLIN; GUDMESTAD, 2008).

The normativist structure has an old route and its Jacobin variation some centuries ago (FONTES GONZÁLEZ, 2017); however, all linguistic and cultural shocks, if not eliminated, could be greatly eased, if from the didactics of origin they had this multilingual awareness of

³⁷ "pluricentrismo normativo versus unitarismo artificioso"

the language, as a multiple reality, as an experience, and not so much as a subject (GONZÁLEZ PIÑEIRO; GUILLÉN DÍAZ; VEZ, 2010), which dogmatizes the concept of language as a series of categorical rules.

Santiago Guervós and Fernández González (2017, p. 209-236) are fully correct in pointing out the enormous socio-semantic density of the concept 'language', so it is necessary to constantly point out that variation and diversity are inherent - both between languages as within them-, which would suggest among the professors of ELE, and widely of LE the L2, an empathic management of certainties and directing them to modesty through observation rather than to arrogance by formation.

To that must be added, with Casals Andreu (2005), who should take advantage of the capital represented by foreign students in the destination to improve, in this way, the multilingual competence of the indigenous population, including in other languages and other intralinguistic varieties. In any case, we must avoid mobility that creates immovable attitudes and continue to inquire into all these issues with deeper and more comprehensive analyzes to reach more solid conclusions.

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