

ENTREVISTA COM O SOCIOLINGUISTA FRANCISCO MORENO FERNÁNDEZ

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INTERVIEW WITH SOCIOLINGUIST FRANCISCO MORENO FERNÁNDEZ

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RESUMO: Trata-se da entrevista que Sandes, Manjón-Cabeza Cruz e Molina Ortés fazem com um dos ícones da sociolinguística hispânica, Francisco Moreno Fernández. Desde 1995, o entrevistado é diretor do projeto internacional *PRESEEA* (Projeto para o Estudo Sociolinguístico do Espanhol da Espanha e da América) e possui mais de 200 publicações entre livros, capítulos, artigos e resenhas. Embora grande parte de sua pesquisa esteja relacionada com a dialetologia e a sociolinguística hispânicas, Moreno Fernández também trabalha nos âmbitos da semântica e da lexicografia e, ainda, na área de ensino de línguas. Na entrevista, o premiado sociolinguista trata de diversos aspectos como seu início como pesquisador, sua linha de pesquisa, questões relativas à área no contexto espanhol e fora do país, controvérsias e coincidências nas discussões entre autores, bem como sobre a importância da sociolinguística para o ensino de línguas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Francisco Moreno Fernández. Entrevista. Sociolinguística e ensino de línguas.

RESUMEN: Se trata de la entrevista de Sandes, Manjón-Cabeza Cruz y Molina Ortés a uno de los íconos de la sociolingüística hispánica, Francisco Moreno Fernández. Desde 1995, el entrevistado ha sido director del proyecto internacional *PRESEEA* (Proyecto para el Estudio Sociolingüístico del Español en España y América) y tiene más de 200 publicaciones que incluyen libros, capítulos, artículos y reseñas. Aunque gran parte de su investigación está relacionada con la dialectología y la sociolingüística hispana, Moreno Fernández también trabaja en los campos de la semántica y la lexicografía y, además, en el área de enseñanza de lenguas. En la entrevista el galardonado sociolingüista aborda varios aspectos, como su inicio como investigador, su línea de investigación, cuestiones relacionadas con el área en el contexto español y en el extranjero, controversias y coincidencias entre las discusiones de los autores, así como sobre la importancia del sociolingüística para la enseñanza de lenguas.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: Francisco Moreno Fernández. Entrevista. Sociolingüística y enseñanza de lenguas.

ABSTRACT: This is the interview that Sandes, Manjón-Cabeza Cruz and Molina Ortés do with one of the icons of Hispanic sociolinguistics, Francisco Moreno Fernández. Since 1995, the interviewee has been director of the international project PRESEEA (Project for the Sociolinguistic Study of Spanish in Spain and America) and has more than 200 publications among books, chapters, articles and reviews. Although much of his research is related to dialectology and Hispanic sociolinguistics, Moreno Fernández also works in the fields of semantics and lexicography and also in the area of language teaching. In the interview, the award-winning sociolinguist deals with several aspects such as his beginning as a researcher, his investigative line, issues related to area in the Spanish context and abroad, controversies and coincidences in the discussions between authors, as well as on the importance of sociolinguistics for the teaching of languages.

KEYWORDS: Francisco Moreno Fernández. Interview. Sociolinguistics and language teaching.

Introduction

Francisco Moreno Fernández⁴ was born in Mota del Cuervo (Cuenca), Spain. He holds a doctorate in Hispanic Linguistics from the Complutense University of Madrid (1984) and a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sociology from UNED (2010). A renowned Spanish dialectologist and sociolinguist, he is a professor of Spanish Language at the University of Alcalá (Spain) and a recipient of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the University of Heidelberg (Germany), where he currently resides. In addition to having been awarded several prizes for his scientific work, he is a correspondent academic of the Cuban Academy of the Spanish Language (2012), the Royal Spanish Academy for Castilla-La Mancha (2016), the Royal Spanish Academy for Latin America (2017), the Chilean Academy of the Language (2017), the Mexican Academy of the Language (2018), academic number of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language (2017) and *honoris causa* doctorate by the Ricardo Palma University (Peru) (2017).

As a professor in Spanish institutions and around the world (Brazil, USA, Sweden, Chile, among others) and as academic director of the Instituto Cervantes from different places (Spain, São Paulo, USA, among others) and of the Comillas Foundation (2006- 2008) records

⁴ Web page: <http://www.linguas.net>

Curriculum:

<https://www.linguas.net/Espaciospersonales/EspacioFranciscoMorenoFern%C3%A1ndez/Curr%C3%ADculum/abid/76/language/es-ES/Default.aspx/>

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his research in important materials on the Spanish language, regarding the teaching of sociolinguistics as a whole. Regarding your research in general and applied linguistics of the Spanish language, it is important to highlight the direction of the international project PRESEEA (Project for the Sociolinguistic Study of Spanish in Spain and America) since 1995, the coordination of the Linguistic (and ethnographic) Atlas of Castilla -La Mancha (1988-2003) and the direction of the project Sociolinguistic integration of the immigrant population in Spain (2006-2009), among others directed to the dialectology and sociolinguistics of Spanish.

He has more than 200 publications (books, chapters, articles, reviews). A large part of them are related to the fields of dialectology and Hispanic sociolinguistics, such as the known pieces of works *Principios de Sociolingüística y Sociología del Lenguaje* (1998; 4ª ed. 2009), *Las variedades de la lengua española y su enseñanza* (2010) and *Sociolingüística cognitiva* (2012), and recent ones, *La maravillosa historia de la lengua española* (2015), *A Framework for Cognitive Sociolinguistics* (2016), *Tras Babel. De la naturaleza social del lenguaje* (2018). In addition, he also worked in the field of semantics and lexicography with the publication of dictionaries, and, in the field of language teaching, directed educational projects, teacher training and production of teaching materials, published books such as *Qué español enseñar* (2000), *Adquisición de segundas lenguas: variación y contexto social* (ed. 2000), *Producción, expresión e interacción oral* (2001), *Las variedades de la lengua española y su enseñanza* (2010) e escreveu inúmeros artículos e os capítulos «Spanish» e «Instituto Cervantes» of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*.

Due to his vast and significant production, besides his participation in more than 70 national and international congresses, with lectures, communications, round tables and panels, Moreno Fernández is known as one of the great sociolinguists of the Spanish language around the world.

Professor, we thank you very much for your participation in this interview and we would like to know a little more about your work on the theme developed in this issue.

Interview

1. At what moment of your studies did you have contact with sociolinguistics?

My first contact with sociolinguistics took place during my university studies. Therefore, I speak of the early 80s, sociolinguistics did not exist as a subject in the study plans of Philology in Spain. As we know, there were subjects in the History of the Spanish

Language and Spanish Dialectology, but not Sociolinguistics itself. Let us think that the first influential works of William Labov, mentor of this field in its modern formulation, were disseminated outside the United States throughout the 60s.

2. Which professor(s) guided you to it?

The professor who most influenced my inclination to sociolinguistics was, without a doubt, Manuel Alvar, with whom I studied the subjects of Hispanic Dialectology and Linguistic Geography at the Complutense University. Then, through Alvar, I had the good fortune to meet Humberto López Morales, who definitely encouraged me to follow the path of sociolinguistics, as well as Ángel López García. In the mid-80s, I won a Fulbright scholarship that took me to the United States, more specifically to Albany, at New York State University, where Arnulfo Ramírez and Francine Frank were professors. Both opened me up to other horizons of sociolinguistics, such as its application to teaching, in the case of Ramírez, or feminist studies, in the case of Frank.

3. What were the readings that substantiated your trajectory? How have you developed your research in sociolinguistics and what evolution has your investigative trajectory had in this field?

*Manuel Alvar published, in the early 70s, the book *Niveles socioculturales en el habla de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria*, where the principles of a social dialectology and a sociolinguistics were taking its first steps. This was a fundamental read for my new interests. Also, in the 70s, the Project for the Study of the Cult Standard of the main cities in the Hispanic world (PILEI) was taking shape. But, definitely, the reading that most influenced me, from a methodological perspective, was *Estratificación social del español de San Juan de Puerto Rico*, by Humberto López Morales. I remember that in December of 1983, at the Symposium of the Spanish Linguistic Society, Humberto López Morales approached me and said: “This book of mine just came out in Mexico. I have only three copies and I want one to be yours”. The enthusiasm I could feel at this moment is easily imaginable. Then came the readings of the first Labov and the researchers of the Canadian school: Cedergren, Poplack, Sankoff... These works were very attractive to me because of the method, although at that moment I missed many details of the sociolinguistic analysis of English, which I had to learn little by little. Accustomed to studying a language like Spanish, with its important consonant variations, that “great vowel displacement” thing or the copula elisions, seemed distant to*

me. Maybe that's why I started to make sociolinguistics accessible to students of Hispanic origin.

4. From your first researches, what do you remember with special affection or aversion?

In fact, no research has aroused my aversion, either among the former or among the latter. All research is a stimulus and an opportunity to learn. For a researcher, few things are as exciting as raising research questions and reflecting on how to approach them, and then paying attention to them. I keep a special memory of my fieldwork to do my doctoral thesis: the hypothesis approach, the elaboration of the questionnaire, its handmade manufacture, the search for interviewees, the contact with people... In addition, I wanted to carry out the analysis with the help of the computer science of the time. To do so, I had to resort to the Complutense Calculation Center and, finally, to that of the University of Tokyo, where my friend Hiroto Ueda jointly carried out all my collected materials. This first experience as the computer world had a great impact on me. Then I realized what I had assumed in the first half of the eighties: to combine sociolinguistic and pragmatic criteria regarding colloquial speech acts (greetings, goodbyes, invitations...). At that time there was no history in Spain of dealing with these aspects from a quantitative perspective. So much so that a member of the jury who judged my thesis even told me that it was not Linguistic. At that time, this judgment affected me a great deal because a novice scholar always aspires to stand out from a supposed orthodoxy, although, in time, you realize that orthodoxy is not as important as originality, innovation or curiosity. After my doctoral thesis, my first major project was the Linguistic (and ethnographic) Atlas of Castilla-La Mancha, which I carried out with Pilar García-Mouton and which opened a remarkable space to the linguistic dimension; so much so that, even today, we have explored the materials gathered in all their possibilities. The human experience of carrying out field research of many years, with hundreds of interviewees, leads to an incomparable learning.

5. Where can Hispanic sociolinguistics be located? Trends... groups...

Hispanic sociolinguistics has been growing at the pace of general sociolinguistics, in interests, trends, methods... It is a discipline that has been strongly based in Europe, where it occupies a respectable space; certainly much more than it does in the United States, almost monopolized by a formal linguistics of generativist cuteness that looks with disdain at

researchers of social bias. It has also gained strength in Ibero-America, due to the influence received from American and Spanish sociolinguistics. In Spain, for decades, there have been many trends in sociolinguistic study: some inclined to bilingualism and ideology, others interested in the intersection between the geographical and the social; others focused on the study of variation and change. Part of the personal approach relates precisely to the creation of a large research network, called PRESEEA, carried out with Carmen Silva-Corvalán and Humberto López Morales (Project for the Sociolinguistic Study of Spanish from Spain and America), made up of teams from more than 40 communities in which hundreds of researchers have participated and which has produced a large number of studies and books, as well as numerous master's degrees and doctoral theses.

6. Are there sociolinguistic journals in Spain or in Hispanic-America?

In Spanish-speaking countries, there are journals, some important, that publish works of sociolinguistics: Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, Lingüística Española Actual, Revista Signos, Lengua y Migración... They are not exclusively sociolinguistics journals, but they open space for this discipline. The same happens with other journals, such as the Revista Internacional de Lingüística Iberoamericana. At this time, the publication most concerned with sociolinguistic aspects of Spanish, though not only, is the bilingual journal Spanish in Context, whose headquarters are in the Netherlands, but we publishers are divided between the United States, Spain and the United Kingdom. In any case, the editorial panorama has changed a lot in recent years. Now, the sociolinguistics of Spanish is also carried out by international journals, mostly of British or American origin, but of multinational dynamics, in which they publish Spanish-speaking specialists from any country, in English.

7. Do you believe that sociolinguistics is being sufficiently represented in your University's study plans? How? On what levels? Undergraduate or Master's? How has this presence evolved?

I am currently working mainly at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, where I run a newborn Center for Ibero-American Studies. In Heidelberg's Romanesque Philology study plan, the presence of Sociolinguistics as a subject is minimal, not to say non-existent. I hope that my presence at this university will have some effect in this regard. As for the University of Alcalá, in Spain, with which I continue to maintain a close formal and affective bond, Sociolinguistics has a consolidated presence, both in the line of variation studies and in line

with the sociology of language. The Hispanic Studies Undergraduate study plans include subjects with a sociolinguistic content, as well as Postgraduate studies. In the same way, the theses and dissertations elaborated on this matter were and still are numerous, lately very interested in questions of sociolinguistic integration of the migrant population, as well as of application to the teaching of languages.

8. A question for the controversy: there are their attitudes among Hispanic (and non-Hispanic) sociolinguists because some think that sociolinguistics supposes an epistemological break with the previous linguistics, while others think that it is a consequence of dialectology, what do you think about it?

Sociolinguistics has always shown a continuous and innovative face. Let us remember that Labov's first sociolinguistics tried to offer an alternative to the concept of "rule" of generativism, but in order to improve the model, not to replace it. Things have finally led to a progressive detachment from both schools. However, as a sociolinguist, I must take one of William Labov's first manifestations: all linguistics are social by definition; that is, all linguistics must be sociolinguistic. It is clear that language has a biological and neurological dimension, but its understanding is incomplete without the social dimension. Even cognitivism has proved compatible with sociological approaches. As for dialectology, this is a clear background to which sociolinguistics has contributed and enriched to the extent that such enrichment has come to be understood as a process of epistemological substitution. However, the geographical dimension of language, the one of greatest interest for dialectology, has not lost its identity and today is manifesting itself in dialectal studies approached from different perspectives, theoretical and methodological. Today, dialectology continues to be made, but not with the methods of comparisons, historicism or structuralism, but with those of current trends. All this is a reflection beyond "linguistics", in general, of a progressive accumulative knowledge. There is a dynamic of research paradigms that are progressively overlapping and succeeding. In this succession of paradigms, sociolinguistics has expanded the limits of its sphere of interest and sought more and greater interrelations with other fields of knowledge.

9. Another question for the controversy: there are scholars who think that the so-called third wave (attention to the specific speaker) may mean a return to paradigms of studies close to dialectology. What is your opinion on this?

Indeed, the third wave proposed by Penelope Eckert is more interested in the stylistic space and the figure of a speaker understood as a social actor capable of occupying different discursive positions within some concrete social and cultural spaces. The figure of the "speaker" in today's sociolinguistics has nothing to do with the figure of the speaker in traditional dialectology, especially in linguistic geography. Currently, a much richer and more complex concept is used. However, if dialectological works continue to have their meaning, it is because speakers, as individuals, also meet their conditions of value. However, the analytical treatment given to the figure of the speaker has changed radically.

10. Do you consider that there are areas for the study of variation that have not yet been developed or received little attention?

Dialectal reality and sociolinguistics are mutable because they are sensitive to social transformations. This means that with the studies of variation they can never be concluded. Personally, I am inclined to think that the field of communication in small and medium groups still contains many aspects to be discovered, which also affect variation, but not only that. The intersection of psychology, social psychology, sociology and linguistics should be a very fruitful space. I am referring, on the one hand, to the knowledge of what is called the "social brain" in all linguistic manifestations and, on the other hand, to the knowledge about the dynamics of networks and complex systems.

11. What do you think about the techniques and methods used in sociolinguistics? After nearly 60 years of initial studies, should they be modified, expanded or retouched?

The fact of dealing with real data, usually in important quantities, makes these disciplines always able to take advantage of the advances that informatics and statistics offer, as well as the techniques of transmission, storage and retrieval of large amounts of information. In my opinion, the development of artificial intelligence will open up a whole universe of possibilities for the study of linguistic variation and change.

12. Could you summarize any of your most recent research / publications? What are you dedicating yourself to now?

I currently devote most of my time to the work of creation of the Center for Ibero-American Studies, a commitment I made to the Humboldt Foundation and the University of Heidelberg when they awarded me the Alexander von Humboldt 2020 International Prize. But, of course, I will not abandon research. I am very interested in the sociolinguistic implications of the concept of identity, as well as the linguistic consequences of globalization. In a few months I will publish an essay reflecting on all of this. I am also interested in the sociolinguistic dimension of ageing and, at the same time, I try to advance and improve the methods of demolinguistics, which at other times I have carried out from a (macro) world perspective and which I now want to develop from a micro perspective. I will probably develop with the Heidelberg team about Spanish in Europe and more specifically in Germany.

13. Do you believe you formed a school: theses, followers, shared articles, etc.?

Nothing would displease me more than to create a school, since in a few years schools are relegated to a small number of lines of linguistic historiography or, at most, to a Wikipedia page. What is the Prague circle in linguistics or the Frankfurt school in philosophy today? They are stories. Whether it's called a school or not, I like to know that at the University of Alcalá you learn to do good sociolinguistics, whatever theoretical approaches they touch on at any time. Naturally, I like to share authorship with colleagues and friends, which I have been doing since my first publication on the names of a bird called conjugate, until the last articles written with Hiroto Ueda or Domnita Dumitrescu. I must confess, however, that what gives me the most satisfaction is receiving messages from many places in the world, especially from America, from students who say that my work has been useful to them, for whatever reason. I know that some of my books circulate in PDF and are distributed in the form of a free school network. I also know that this is not good for copyright, but as few get rich with linguistics, I prefer to take the satisfaction of having been useful to students.

14. Finally, this volume is dedicated to sociolinguistics and teaching, what kind of relationship is established between them, in your opinion?

Evidently, a very close relationship: if teaching is a little contextualized and sensitive to social factors, as it really is, sociolinguistics has a lot to say about it. In fact, some theories of acquisition have an important social foundation, as can be seen in the works of Vygotsky

or, in another line, in those of Schumann. A few years ago, I wrote an article on the approaches of sociolinguistics and language teaching that still circulates profusely, although it already requires an update.

15. Would you like to add any considerations or comments on the topic of the interview or sociolinguistics in general?

I would just like to encourage younger researchers, girls and boys who are interested in the real use of language, to adopt sociolinguistics. In it you will find a rewarding perspective, due to its proximity to issues that interest people and for its permanent renewal, as societies evolve and our knowledge of the language(s) advances.

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