

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPACE IN ROMANCE LANGUAGES DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *Romance Languages' open in vanguard provides a most felicitous conclusion to study into the attributes of space-language-people relations, since in those relativizes the components question the origin of the Romance Languages themselves. Discussing this problem in terms of space implies abundant aspects from early cultural proves of above mentioned languages' development to postmodern media and society, in the context of Europe's historical changes. Such a debate must take into consideration the loss of identity as a necessary step in the regaining of a new self from the relation to alterity.*

Keywords: *cultural consciousness, history, historical linguistics, Romance languages, surveillance society.*

Preliminaries

As long as a linguist knows that precise things, things known as valid, may be amended any time, new evidence appearing, the arguments of the present article are threatened by the same frailty and they are constrained to find highlights, not definitions. Any literary or non-literary text modulates during history like a score, offering with every reading a new resonance and another echo. It may occur in all eras, but it is not the same "object".

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With the studies applied to neighbouring areas, the evolution of Romance Languages knows some phases, from their outlining in Latin till nowadays - in a period in which cultural syncretism is already at maximum speed. Thus, the concept of intertextuality in literature can also be used, with particular responsibility, it's true, and only up to a point, in the case of Romance languages, too.

The analysis and the prospects of any means of communication must start, linguistically speaking, with the identification of the types of signs that the referred means uses. The linguistic environment (whether we are talking about grammar, literature or media) uses a system that includes both visual signs and aural signs (sonorous sounds). Of visual signs, some are iconic and, at least apparently, denotative - for example, images of people and places.

In contemporary culture, cultural studies is one of the best methods of research concerned with the perception of texts in society and with the 'interpretations' which may be applied by the emitter/receiver of the message as it is. The double-coding allows us to read the present in the past as much as the past in the present.

Reflexive Space

Thus, the evolution of Romance languages crosses a few stages, stages that are similar to those followed by the evolution of literature. In both cases we speak about a return to history as a starting point (the study of Latin, of the Roman Empire as the cradle of global civilization, culture and language and that of the historical continuum of postmodernism, the relation between the past and the present: explosion of parody, pastiche and nostalgia, together with the concept of 'enigmatic allegory' which uses partial memories and creates simulacra of meaning. In both cases, we treat about a return to content: the subject matter is extended from autobiography (of people) to high and popular culture. As the real language could not exist as a

continuum process of speech of a single speaker, any act of speech being a monological fragment of a conversation, the literary narrative is not only the author's speech, but it forms the dialogical stylistic structure. Contemporary linguistic is an outcome, a consequence of the development of philosophy of language. Most developmental figures of modern philosophy made their debut as philosophers of language, as Walter Benjamin wrote: "languages are not strangers to one another"¹. But this focus on language left its mark on how today's specialists think about the cultural evolution – and this is not necessarily a good thing. What are the effects and the implications for the individual and the society? While the project in itself may seem formidable by its mere dimensions, it is undertaken with the awareness of the inescapable subjectivity of all linguistic endeavours. This is used positively, taking it to refer to the combination and conceptual background that any investigation of linguistic production seems to require. Words represent the world, as some of our frames of mind do: thoughts, beliefs, and desires. The general premise of this study is that the relation between linguistic and space is meaningful, productive and one of the best ways to attempt the understanding of the contemporary culture, in terms of a mutual, permanent and open relation between linguistics, space and culture.

Cultural consciousness is embellished through exposure to a bunch of target-language media as well as through the bleeding of regularity in linguistic reconstruction. The reconstruction of the Consonantal system of the Romance languages, one of the triumphs of comparative and historical linguistics in last centuries, allows us a glimpse into the society of this European people and examine the way in which

¹ Benjamin, Walter. "Paris: The Capital of the Nineteenth Century", in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 103.

populations and languages have co-evolved. Through comparison of modern and ancient languages, we can explore the basis of this reconstruction – through the comparative method of historical linguistics - as well as the culture and society, as it relates to language. For instance:

The phonetic features of Vulgar Latin which are found in the writings of poets as Vergil (*Aeneid*): - the silencing of “final *m*”, the disappearance of the “initial *h*” and that of the “final *s*”.

-Some writers involuntarily place in their texts vulgarisms – religious writings, of which I recall *Vulgate* or *Peregrinatio Aetherae ad loca sancta* (texts in which the demonstrative ILLE stands out, pronoun which somehow announces the Romanian postponed article. These enclitic definite articles are believed to have been formed, as in other Romance languages, from Latin demonstrative pronouns.

Returning to the conceptual background of space, we must ask ourselves how are the ideas of space presented, formed, and circulated. Sentences are simultaneously informed by and forming spaces. They do not only represent, but also contribute to the emergence of our notions of space, of the senses that we attach to the spaces that we inhabit. Who creates and selects the information presented in the publishing? The personalization process appears to be ambiguous insofar as it is rooted in the set of fluid mechanisms – as languages are- utilized by the power apparatus as a means of controlling (starting with Roman Empire till nowadays, in terms of space and through media channels, the ego consumes its own existence through media). Reciprocally, our views on space underlie both the form and the content of language and society’s development. This mechanism reminds of what Foucault named

"surveillance society"². The symbolic version of linguistic space is defined as springing from the sense of belonging to place, of participating of the self as embedded in the natural order that is characteristic for Latin's time, but it survives in various forms in today's linguistics. The supremacy of Latin language as a world language was a relic of the age when Roman Empire was an important world power. It is remarkable that today, despite clear idiomatic and spelling differences, European custom, and diverse political constitutions, there is general consistency in Romance Languages.

Taming the language

As the Romance Languages world became more organized, as communication developed, as more people became educated, as trade intensified, as the ability to read and write became essential, as competition grew, as travel became practicable, it became evident that discipline and consistency in the language were not only desirable, but necessary. Writers realized that there had to be no doubt about meaning, and elimination of doubt could be made possible by observing a certain consistency.

The "rules" of each language developed from Latin have evolved from the speakers of the language through custom, usage and logic, even if at times the logic appears to be curious:

lat. FACTUM fr.<<fait>> (ct -> it)

it. <<fatto>> (ct-> tt)

sp. <<hecho>> (ct-> ch)

port. <<feito>>

cat. <<fet>>

rom. <<fapt>> (ct_> t)

² Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, <http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html>

lat. NOCTEM fr. <<nuit>>
it. <<notte>>
sp. <<noche>>
port. <<nuite>>
cat. <<nit>>
rom. <<noapte>>

The same situation is to be found in Spanish, where “initial Latin f” becomes an “h”.

lat. FACEO, -ERE sp. <<hacer>>
lat. FORMOSUS sp. <<hermoso>>
lat. FARINA sp. <<horina>>
lat. FERVEO, -ERE sp. <<hervir>>

There has been an urge, especially important in linguistics, to distinguish between shades of meaning. There has been, above all, the unconscious human desire for orderliness, for a certain kind of discipline which has embraced the other desirable qualities of communication in their languages between their borders. As Ralph Waldo Emerson, in *Letters and Social Aims*, truly said: “Language is a city, to the building of which every human being brought a stone”³. By the time that Romance Languages started to develop, Latin was still the language of the learned, and most of the early printed books were in Latin. Then, with the influx of other languages, came the development of Romance Language (the Portuguese language, the Spanish language, the Catalan, the Galician, the French, with its “d’oc” and “d’oil” dialects, the Italian language – with its Northern dialect, influenced by German, and its Central-Southern dialect, the Dalmatic - which today no longer exists - and the Romanian language.

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte, New York: Library of America, 1983, p. 495.

In spite of the evolution of rules in spelling there are anomalies which cannot be satisfactorily explained. Some irregularities are legacies of the past, perhaps results of writers' or printers' carelessness which, unnoticed at the time, have been assimilated into the each Romance Language or because of the languages' development itself. Thus, linguistics developed the theory of lateral areas, theory according to which the more we are located in the centre of Europe, the more diversity is increasing, lateral areas being more conservatives.

e.g.

lat. formosus (“which has a noble shape”) – *rom. <<frumos>>*,
but lat. <<bellus>> – *it. <<bello>>*, *fr. <<bel>>*)

One important consequence of the historical and cultural context of the Romance Languages' development (as raised of the extension of the Latin's domination) was the imposition between speakers and the “empire”, and through the “empire” I mean the social order and space, seen as ordered whole.

Some of the most important topics of Romance Languages' development include the ancient basis of human language: speech, of course, is far older than writing, and the development of the written language from the spoken in different parts of Europe is an absorbing subject; relations to cognition, communication (the Latin alphabet, now the most widely used in the world, is a derivative of Greek script); and social organization (Europe is a region of many histories and many traditions, birthplace and crossroad of cultures and artistic movements); sounds (forms and meanings in the world's languages; the reconstruction of linguistic history and the family tree of languages (the evolution of the main cultural paradigms of Romance languages viewed in a broader European context); dialect variation and language standardization. The focus is on the Romance languages and linguistics of Europe to provide people with the knowledge and skills required to handle the language and language-related issues typical of European

conditions: how and when social change can cause linguistic change. All these cover topics related to formal linguistics (as language in context, language and culture, borrowing, multilingualism, and cross-cultural communication in Europe) and happened in Europe.

Through a historical approach to tracing (and reconstructing) the nature of language contacts and development, over the course of human history, in terms of time and space we reach Saussure's explanation related to time and space: "a language spoken on a stretch of land, regardless of its size, differentiates itself because the contact between subjects speakers is so tight that they can maintain the initial linguistic unit. The distance that separates the inhabitants of a village/town of the locations of the other villages/cities disrupts the connections between them and maintains the unit"⁴ - hence the otherness of language theory.

The gradual emancipation of languages

Contacts between groups of people speaking different languages, motivated by trade, migration, conquest and intermarriage, are documented from earliest records:

During the Renaissance appeared allusions to matters that proclaim the appearance of Romance Philology. For Poggio Bracciolini, Italian, the Romance languages came directly from Latin (including the Romanian language). In Spain, Antonio de Nebija drafted a Latin-Spanish dictionary, followed by a Latin-Spanish vocabulary and wrote the first Spanish grammar, published in 1492 (*Arte de la lengua Castellana*). In France, Gilles Menage published in 1650 *Origines de la langue française*. But the one who made the connections between Romance languages, putting the basics of the Romance Philology, was

⁴ Saussure, *Ferdinand de, Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes*, Cambridge Library Collection – Linguistics, November 2009, p. 113.

Francois Raynouard. He was commissioned to collaborate at the 5th Edition of the dictionary of the Académie Française and realized that a seriously study of the French language required a thorough study of the ancient French documents and of the Old Provençal language. However, he committed a mistake: he held that the Romance languages were not a direct continuation of the Latin, and that from Latin would have developed a common language which could be identified with Provençal and that would be the basis of other Romance languages. But he was the first who exactly saw one important phenomenon of evolution within the Romance languages: the formation of the future tense with HABERE.

Valea cantare

Cantare habea = j'ai chanterai

At the same time, differences in socio-historical context have created different kinds of linguistic results. Some languages have been completely lost; new languages have been created, it is the case of Romance languages. In other cases, the nature and structure of language has been radically altered, because in language, as in life, things aren't equitable: it is told that every 14 days a language dies. By the next century nearly half of the roughly 7,000 languages spoken on Earth will likely disappear, as communities abandon their native tongues in favour of English, Mandarin, or Spanish.

The development of Romance languages introduced the basics of linguistic structure through a process whose aspects of language have proved to be relatively stable, and which are readily altered, under conditions of bilingualism.

Conclusions

So far, my research has led me to a vision of space as open-ended interaction between language and people. The re-subjectivization of space can be seen from several points of views. First of all, space can be an interaction always predetermined, although an interaction between language and subject speakers. Secondly, there is a relation between space and time and history. History remains privileged in its potential to disclose the cultural codes and conventions that regulate our spatial language development. This is the most important thing not only in the implementation of a language, but in re-territorialising and reinterpreting the old source.

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