

Language Loyalty and Linguistic Variation

J. C. Holmquist. Dordrecht: Foris, 1988. Pp. x + 149. ISBN 90-6765-269-5 (cloth): Dfl. 78. ISBN 90-6765-270-9 (paper): Dfl. 48.

Holmquist's book is a sociolinguistic study of the speech of Uceda, in the province of Cantabria (northern coast of Spain). His stated goal is to test the hypothesis that 'loyalty to dialectal rather than Standard Castilian speech may serve as a measure of integration into the traditional way of life in the Cantabrian region' (p. 1). Holmquist concentrates on a single linguistic feature — 'the U' — which is common among some Uceda residents. 'The U' actually represents various degrees of closure of back vowels, but its most obvious manifestation is pronouncing (u) for word-final *o* of Standard Castilian. Thus, the word *mucho* would be realised as (múço) in Standard Castilian, and as (múçu) in traditional Uceda speech. In his analysis of the *montañés* dialect as spoken in Uceda, Holmquist also examines a number of other linguistic features. In Chapter 7, use of the *u* is associated with phonological features (such as the aspiration of 'h' in words like *fuella* and *hoya*), syntactic features (such as deletion of *de* in phrases like *la hermana Francisco* (rather than the Standard Castilian *la hermana de Francisco*)), lexical particularities (like the archaic *mosca de miel*) and morphological features (the 'neuter of material' used for generalised (non-countable) nouns such as *la maíz* and *el azúcar*).

Holmquist examines the speech of Uceda as a whole and in its individual and demographic-group varieties. He relates use of 'the U' to demographic groups (more vowel closure among older informants, owners of mountain animals, men, supporters of the Socialist party, and farmers). His study is based on numerous stays in Cantabria over several years, but especially in 1978. This long contact with the population of Uceda, and his active pursuing of his randomly selected informants (about 10% of the residents) represent two of the strongest features of Holmquist's field survey.

The first of the nine chapters introduces the study, its aims, and methodology. Chapter 2 describes the *montañés* dialect. Chapter 3 provides information about the demographics, geography, history, economy, and day-to-day life of Uceda. Somewhat surprisingly, Holmquist also includes two paragraphs about his survey methodology (selection of informants, time and location of interview, questionnaire format) in this chapter, entitled 'Life in "La Montaña"'. Chapter 4 ('Listening to the People'), with its personal testimonies, includes some of the most interesting sections of the book. As in Chapters 6 and 7, Holmquist departs from the purely statistical analysis of his data and relates individual testimonies that elucidate informants' attitudes towards, and awareness of, the particularities of their own dialect. Chapter 5 stresses group use of 'the U'. Holmquist uses age, profession, ownership of mountain animals, sex, and political preference as independent social variables, and closure of the word-final back vowel as his dependent variable. Chapter 6 provides more personal testimonies about language use and stresses deviation from linguistic norms. Holmquist demonstrates, for example, that old people tend to use the 'U' more than young people. Nevertheless, his oldest female informant (86 years old) showed a strong aversion to 'U' use. Chap-

ter 7 is perhaps the most thought-provoking section of the text. Holmquist relates use of the 'U' to other features of Ucieda speech (aspirated 'h', metaphony, certain syntactic particularities, and others). At the end of the chapter, he suggests (p. 94) 'the development of a new non-standard, or non-Castilian, prestige model for speech in Ucieda'. This new model may be related to 'a general non-standard speech'. This non-standard language phenomenon may also belong to 'a more nebulous domain of general popular culture'. Holmquist maintains, however, that hypotheses about generalised non-standard language and popular culture remain tentative and preliminary.

Chapter 8 continues correlating various linguistic variables, and presents further evidence of a non-dialectal, non-standard speech model. Chapter 9 ('Conclusion') includes more information about Holmquist's participant-observer status, his evaluation of the validity of his own data, and of the future prospects of *montañés* speech.

Holmquist's text is generally well-researched and well-documented. While Penny (1990) questions Holmquist's knowledge of medieval and Latin American Castilian language patterns, my queries stem from information that Holmquist did not provide in sufficient detail. Discussion of the interview situation, the questionnaire, and informant selection appears in four different chapters, but especially in the conclusion. However, more information is needed on how Holmquist obtained his interviews, who was present during the interview, and how accurate his informants' self reporting was. I have stressed the possible biases associated with third-party effects (the influence upon the interview of the presence, or absence, of other persons besides the chosen informants) and interviewer effects (bias based on interviewer demographics, attitudes, accent, and/or inadvertent behaviour) (O'Donnell: 1989). Practical problems keep many field researchers from using several interviewers with different demographic characteristics (thus minimising interviewer effects), and Holmquist himself admits his status as 'an outsider with relatively high social standing' (p. 121). Furthermore, he states that because of his particular status, 'in many cases the *U* and other dialectal features have probably not been used as frequently in speech with the interviewer as they would be used with residents of Ucieda' (p. 131). He correctly stresses the *relative*, not *absolute*, value of his data, however: 'Their language use, as recorded here, can be characterized as an expression of linguistic allegiance at a particular point in time, filtered by a particular set of circumstances' (p. 131).

As for the questionnaire itself, Holmquist states that 'a number of items involved things rarely named in normal conversation' (p. 81). Furthermore, he claims that 'volunteered responses were recorded first. If the informant did not initially supply the *montañés* word, he was asked for it' (p. 81). Several questions arise about Holmquist's choice of specific lexical items, his formulation and testing of the questionnaire, and when informants had the occasion to volunteer responses. How common were the local lexical variants he sought? Was volunteered information elicited during the 'conversation in the form of life stories' described on page 29? Did the interviewer use local speech forms in trying to elicit other local variants? Studies of survey research methodology have demonstrated how subtle variations in question order and question wording can have significant

effects on informants' responses. Did Holmquist initiate and pursue the 'life story' portion of the interview the same way each time? If not, how did his different procedures affect his data? More information about his methods of data collection might have answered these questions.

A book review, by its nature, tends to concentrate more on questions and caveats than on compliments. Still, as someone who prefers the participant-observer method of data collection to the study of someone else's linguistic survey, I appreciate Holmquist's willingness to let his informants talk through his text. The long quotations with transliterated approximations of local pronunciation provided a vivid picture of the sociolinguistic realities of Uceda. His correlation of data across variables is complete, and his writing style (especially in the introduction and conclusion) makes the text accessible to those with only a basic understanding of phonetic and sociolinguistic terminology.

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References

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 Penny, R. (1990) Review of Holmquist. *Hispanic Linguistics* 4.

Gaelic — A Past and Future Prospect

Kenneth MacKinnon. Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1991. Pp. 207. ISBN 0-85411-047-X (paper): £7.95.

In this volume Kenneth MacKinnon, who has played no small role in the effort to evaluate the present-day position of Scottish Gaelic, and to provide thereby a well-informed basis for support measures, reprints an updated version of his 1974 book *The Lion's Tongue* and adds as much again in new material. One of the two new sections deals with the struggle of Gaelic speakers to find a place for their language in education and communication, and to achieve official recognition for Gaelic as one of Scotland's national languages. The other new section assesses the viability of Gaelic and discusses strategies for ensuring its survival.

The 1974 book and the corresponding first section of the new book represents a long retrospective on the Gaelic language, tracing it from its firm establishment in Argyll at the beginning of the 6th century up to the beginning of such modern-day developments as the broadcasting of Gaelic programmes for schoolchildren, initiated in 1970. Only the first two of the seven chapters in this section of MacKinnon's book make cheerful reading. The third chapter, covering the second half