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Investigating pan-Romance prepositional adverbials

A methodology for field research in Romance

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Complex adverbials built with the pattern ‘Preposition + Adjective (PA)’ such as Portuguese *em especial* ‘especially’ or Romanian *de sigur* ‘for sure’ display a remarkable frequency and pan-Romance consistency. Nevertheless, this pattern has been largely neglected by research. The ‘Third Way’ project intends to fill this gap, arguing that PAs are a relevant third way of constructing adverbials, aside with short adverbs and adverbs in *-mente*. It subjects prepositional adverbials to a historico-varietal analysis in a comparative pan-Romance approach to trace their trajectory from Latin up to now. This article presents an enquiry design for field research that allows examining the adverbials’ current usage and ongoing change in substandard varieties of all major Romance languages. The results are meant to help reconstruct the diachrony of PAs in Romance, especially in view of the spoken vernacular tradition.

Keywords: prepositional adverbials, Romance languages, historical sociolinguistics, field research, methodology

Introduction

Complex adverbials built with the pattern ‘Preposition + Adjective’ (in the following: PA-pattern) like Catalan *d’ordinari* ‘ordinarily’, French *en bref* ‘soon’, Italian *invero* ‘really’, Portuguese *em especial* ‘especially’, Romanian *de sigur* ‘for sure’ or Spanish *por lo serio* ‘seriously’, display a certain frequency and pan-Romance consistency (Hummel, 2019a/b). Nevertheless, PA-patterns have been largely neglected by research in grammar, where they tend to be seen either as lexicalised adverbial locutions or as ‘simple’ (and thus less important) paraphrases for ‘true adverbs’ (see state of the art in Hummel *et al.*, 2019).

The ‘Third Way’ project titled *Prepositional Adverbials from Latin to Romance*,¹ intends to fill this gap. It subjects a selection of prepositional adverbials (with adjectival basis) to a historico-varietal analysis in a comparative pan-Romance approach to trace their continuity and variational trajectory, from Latin up to the 21st century. The project uses several methodologies such as diachronic research on texts and diachronic reconstruction (e.g. Porcel Bueno, 2021, 2022). For the phenomenon’s continuity in modern Romance, it also uses enquiries with speakers to retrieve present-day data. It is on these enquiries’ methodological aspects that this article focuses on. ‘Third Way’ project members undertake a series of enquiries which provide primary access to speech data that is difficult or impossible to obtain from existing texts. This applies even more to a project of pan-Romance scope, since it requires collecting original, reliable and strictly comparable data for different languages.

The existence of PA-patterns in all Romance languages and in most of their *dialects* (a term used in this article to refer to any variety of a historically standardised language) points to a common origin, rather than language-independent innovations. The project more precisely forwards the hypothesis according to which this phenomenon is of vernacular origin, formed in Late Latin or even earlier, and has been preserved (and further developed) in all Romance languages. In other words, the PA-pattern constitutes a pan-Romance ‘third way’ for creating adverbials, aside from adverbs in *-mente* as in (Sp.) *brevemente* ‘briefly’, and short adverbs as in (Fr.) *parler bref*, literally ‘speak short’ (cf. Hummel *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, according to first insights (Hummel, 2019a/b; García Valle, 2010), PAs are frequently used during the first centuries of writing in Romance until the modern language period, where they undergo marginalisation as standardisation imposes norms for writing.

Now, if standardisation is responsible for marginalisation, PAs might have been better conserved in specific varieties, notably in ‘peripheral’ conservative varieties or sociolinguistically ‘low’ varieties, and/or in informal or oral speech in standard languages. The project, therefore, proceeds by sampling data from peripheral diatopic varieties that are likely to preserve old traditional usages, selected from all major Romance languages. This choice may also allow questioning whether PAs’ are part of the scholarly tradition, of rather written conceptualisation, better represented in situations of formal communication, or of the vernacular tradition – of rather oral conceptualisation, associated with informal usage (cf. Koch/Oesterreicher, 2011). The research aim is hence both historico-

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varietal – measuring the pattern’s trajectory and continuity – and sociolinguistic, as it attempts to understand the reasons for its usage.

How can we then design enquiries that, from present-day usage in substandard varieties, allow drawing conclusions on the languages’ history? In order to answer this question, this article first of all briefly introduces the items and areas under scrutiny (Chapter 1–2). In a second step, it argues our major choices made in terms of research design (Chapter 3), speaker recruitment and community advocacy (Chapter 4–6), as well as data collection (Chapter 6). This presentation may appear “sequential” due to the need for efficiency even though the various phases of enquiries are of course in practice “cyclical, or perhaps ‘spiral’” (cf. Feagin, 2013, p. 20).

1. The items under scrutiny

The PA-patterned adverbials under scrutiny constitute a list of 25 pan-Romance items of Latin origin which are completed by dialect-specific items. The ‘25’ have been extracted from a list of more than sixty prepositional adverbials, originally identified in Spanish texts from the 11th century (cf. Hummel, 2019b, pp. 320–327): Spanish *a la brava, en breve, por las buenas, a ciegas, de cierto, de continuo, en corto, a derechas, de diario, en especial, en extremo, de fijo, en grueso, de improviso, de largo, a la ligera, de lleno, de malas, de ordinario, de pleno, a secas, de seguro, de seguido, en / por lo serio, a las / de veras*. These features, of Latin origin, are widely shared by all major Romance languages, as illustrated in the following examples:

Spanish	French	Italian	Portuguese	Romanian
<i>de cierto</i>	<i>de certain</i>	<i>di certo</i>	<i>de certo</i>	<i>cu drept</i>
<i>en serio, por lo serio</i>	<i>en sérieux, au sérieux</i>	<i>sul serio</i>	<i>em sério, ao sério</i>	<i>în serios</i>
<i>a secas, en seco</i>	<i>à sec, en sec</i>	<i>a secco, in secco</i>	<i>em seco</i>	<i>pe sec, în sec</i>
<i>de veras, a la veras</i>	<i>de vrai, pour de/le vrai</i>	<i>di vero (Old Italian) invero</i>	<i>deveras</i>	<i>de-adevărat(elea)</i>

Figure 1. Examples of prepositional adverbials in Romance, extracted from Hummel, 2019b, pp. 320–327

For each language, this set of data includes equivalents with etymologically related stems in synchrony and diachrony. The enquiries aim at testing their existence and features in present-day usage and at extracting hints on their evolution in different Romance areas. The selection of these areas is presented in the following.

2. Investigated areas

The areas under scrutiny are likely to preserve old traditional usages that have become marginal in standard as well as ‘vernacular’ features. They are ‘peripheral’ varieties in a global perspective (according to the gravity model), have been recognised for their historical conservatism, and are less exposed to normative pressure than ‘standard’ varieties. Investigations are realised in one area per language or, if relevant, in two geographically distant and distinct dialects of a language, depending on the fieldworkers’ networks – in coherence with the overall research question (cf. Chapter 4.1):

- French in Quebec’s most conservative area (Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean)
- Italian: a conservative variety East of Naples (Campania: Irpinian dialect of Montella)
- Portuguese: a peripheral variety in South America, Brazil (Bahía – south of Salvador de Bahía)
- Romanian: a conservative Dacoromanian area (Banat)
- Spanish: a peripheral variety in Spain (Granada’s *Montes Orientales*), a conservative rural area in Andalusia – and two varieties in South America (Mexico), belonging to the country’s two major dialect groups: Xalapa in Veracruz (‘Tierras bajas’, Gulf of Mexico) and Aguascalientes (‘Tierras altas’, north of Central Mexico).

The enquiries are realised from 2019 to 2022 by specialists in the respective varieties who are contractors of the University of Graz and trained in the method presented here: Adrian Chircu (Romania), David Porcel Bueno (Andalusia), Stefan Koch and Cesarina Vecchia (Campania), Melissa Gagnon under the direction of Inka Wissner (Quebec), Javier Martin Salcedo under the direction of David Porcel Bueno (Bahía) and – in Mexico under the direction of Martin Hummel: Miriam Reyes (Veracruz) and Rodrigo Flores Dávila (Aguascalientes). A second point of investigation was planned for Portuguese (in Rio de Janeiro) and for Romanian (in Maramures), but had to be abandoned due to the worldwide pandemics.

The choice of these varieties does not imply that they are considered ‘representative’ of the Romance languages, nor that the target items are well attested in these varieties or that the latter are coherent structural entities. Each of them has its own geographic distribution and more or less marked geographical differentiations. None of the selected varieties is an endangered language, according to Ethnologue (2023) – which would require specific field methods (cf. Repetti, 2018, 127–128). Their speakers are, therefore, not rare and their language attitudes are not characteristic of endangered dialects with strong language interference, fear of loss of language and identity and/or linguistic intervention. It is, consequently, appropriate to mobilise the state of the art developed in the field of standardised English and Romance varieties.

Of course, speakers of standard languages, who potentially use both the standard variety and a dialect (in the Anglo-Saxon sense) – as in this project’s target groups – still experience a ‘sociolinguistic conflict’ (Gadet, 2007). They tend to be attracted by two opposite poles due to generalised normative judgements and linguistic insecurity: the normative model (prestige, stability) and the need for membership in the group to which they belong (group identity, solidarity, proximity); it has been shown that this can lead to apparently contradictory behaviours: depreciation or even denial of dialects and linguistics items (also Wolfram, 2013, 559), implying negative stereotypes, but also their valuation and/or defence (Gadet, 2007), the latter manifesting endogenous norms and associations with pride and identity. The speakers’ judgement and attitudes – whose analysis relies on knowledge of their sociolinguistic profiles (Chapter 4.3) – also need to be considered for research design (Chapter 3), and, more specifically, for speaker sampling (Chapter 4), for the way the enquiries are presented to the informants (Chapter 5) and for appropriate elicitation techniques (Chapter 6).

3. Research design

The present project is far from being based on a widespread belief that enquiring speakers would give direct access to ‘their language’, or even to ‘the language of their community’. On the contrary, the information that can be obtained from speakers at a certain moment of time, within a specific speech event – in our case an enquiry (cf. Bres, 1999, p.75) –, in a specific logistical and institutional framework, calls for critical interpretation. Our method is based on the theoretical foundations and methodological findings of contemporary, particularly Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon sociolinguistics (Schilling, 2013; Chambers/Schilling, 2013; Chambers, 2013; Gumperz, 1989; Trudgill, 1974; Labov, 1972a/b). This discipline has determined fieldwork traditions in the different countries

of intervention, notably in sociolinguistics and dialectology (e.g. Silva-Corvalán/Enrique-Arias, 2017; Hernández-Campoy/Almeida, 2005; Blanchet, 2000).²

Numerous linguists insist on the fact that there is no single and ‘best’ way of doing enquiries (e.g. Schilling, 2013), as long as methods and modalities match the research question (e.g. Hernández-Campoy, 2014, p.9; Feagin, 2013, p.20). The fact that our object of analysis, prepositional adverbials, are grammar features that are rare in existing sources and potentially also in uncontrolled interaction, but also of possibly unconscious and vernacular nature, directly determines the enquiry’s design and the way of addressing informants (Chapter 3, 6). Considering our empirically-oriented socio-historical aim of pan-Romance scope, the elaborated method needs to allow testing

- the existence and vitality, in synchrony, of a series of prepositional adverbials (or, failing that, the existence of variants, synonyms and associated forms)
- their syntagmatic and paradigmatic features
- their variational features, notably possible change in progress, and
- their legitimacy (status).

Extracting such detailed information requires using explicit but cautious elicitation frames (Chapter 6) whilst interpreting answers according to a maximum of situational factors, including the informants’ profiles (Chapter 3–5).

In a second step, the enquiries aim at extracting relevant indications on the adverbials’ evolution. In his reference article on field research, Bailey (2018, p.284) points out that enquiries with speakers can be specifically conceived for ‘fundamentally historical aims’, the current speech in an area being considered as “a synchronic reflex of its linguistic and demographic history”. In its sociolinguistic component, the project indeed assumes that the status of the targeted PA-pattern, interpreted on the basis of the speakers’ assertions and attitudes, is determined by their experience in a socially stratified society, and that it provides indications on the pattern’s historical belonging not only to the dialect (elder speakers having passive knowledge on their usage up to the beginning of the 20th century), but also to the vernacular or scholarly tradition, based on their legitimacy. This presumes that it is highly improbable that (except in the case of explicit stigma-

2. For fieldwork methods in sociolinguistics, inherited from anthropologically and ethnographically oriented linguists, see Chambers/Trudgill (1998), Labov (1996) or Hernández-Campoy (2014, p.7). For a historical overview on fieldwork in Romance (lexical variation, historical phonology and more recently syntactic micro-variation and acoustic analyses), see the *Handbook of Dialectology* (Boberg/Nerbonne/Watt, 2018), notably Repetti (2018, 125–126) and Nerbonne (2018).

tisation or promotion) the general status of rare, generally unconscious grammar features changes drastically over time.

3.1 Data-collection methods for comparable language data in Romance

It is generally assumed that the speech type any kind of enquiry can elicit is *formal speech* (cf. Trudgill, 1974, p. 46). Since certain items tend to be rare in such a formal speech event, where (unconscious) normative pressure leads most speakers to avoid stigmatised features they believe to be inadequate (Chapter 4.1), enquiries are known for working best for frequently occurring linguistic forms, which is rarely the case of most syntactic structures (cf. Feagin, 2013, pp. 25–26). At the same time, an enquiry's formality varies, depending notably on the method of administration and protocol and on various techniques, in addition to situational factors and individual differences; indeed, some informants feel more or less constrained and inhibited than others (cf. Trudgill, 1974, p. 46).

Nevertheless, as a rare grammatical feature (cf. Gerhalter/Koch, 2020) which, in addition, is potentially vernacular and unconscious, the PA-pattern targeted here is prone to be particularly avoided in formal discourse and notably difficult to access through quick introspection as well as distant and direct questioning. Quantitative approaches such as modern crowdsourcing, notably used to analyse lexis and pronunciation, are known for their efficiency (Bailey, 2018, p. 289; Nerbonne, 2018, pp. 234, 238); However, they do not allow for the same degree of control in the data collection process as qualitative approaches do, notably in terms of data validity in case of unpredicted misunderstandings or interferences; on the contrary, face-to-face methods allow for maximum control and verification of specific points through interaction.

Amongst the three major field methods of administration, surveys – as used in traditional dialectology – are highly standardised and roughly allow for greater breadth of coverage of populations and features, whereas sociolinguistic interviews allow for high-quality analyses of a reduced number of features that might be rare in everyday usage and need controlled elicitation; *in fine*, ethnographic-linguistic (participant) observation are equally preferred to observe frequent language phenomena that tend to appear only in less-controlled interaction (cf. Schilling, 2013, 68).³ Since strict protocols “tend to dampen the spontaneity of

3. For the wide span and history of data collection methods, going from 18th/19th-centuries traditional long distance surveys like Grégoire's studies on French dialects or Wenker's studies on Germany, to qualitative face-to-face surveys and recent electronic surveys, see Schilling (2013, pp. 66–68); Águila Escobar (2012); Macaulay (2018, pp. 249–250); Hernández-Campoy/Almeida (2005, part. p. 127).

the interview and of the speech” (Nerbonne, 2018, 235), altering the experiment results (Hernández-Campoy, 2014, 7), researchers can either replace the formal interview, or “change the structure of the interview situation by one means or another” (Labov, 1972a, 209). Sociolinguistic interviews, developed by Labov (1972b, 1976), still are “the chief method of data collection since the inception of variationist sociolinguistics” (Schilling, 2013, 69); they are in a way situated between surveys (too rigid for our purpose) and observation methods (cf. 2013, 68) – which are extremely time-consuming (Feagin, 2013, 34).

Sociolinguistic interviews appear to be the most appropriate method here, as they allow collecting both rare items and knowledge of the speakers’ background whilst controlling answers in interaction with the speakers. As opposed to surveys, they give way to more ‘natural’ speech production – that is: as ‘natural’ as possible (Hernández-Campoy/Almeida, 2005, pp.113–192) –, accounting for the interactional nature of language. Indeed, just like in most modern empirically-based field investigations in (socio-)linguistics, the aim is to observe and analyse language as it tends to be used by the speakers (cf. Hernández-Campoy/Almeida, 2005, pp.113–192). Yet, Labov’s well-known observer’s paradox (1972a, p.209) remains their main challenge (Schilling, 2013, 66–133; Hernández-Campoy, 2014, p.7). Therefore, eliciting ‘normal’ speech patterns requires reducing the negative effects of the fieldworker’s presence and the situation’s formality. Since their distortion increases as the speakers’ self-awareness is heightened by formal, controlled elicitation methods, data collection efforts are in a way driven by two opposite poles: ‘naturalness’, on the one hand, and commensurability (i.e. excluding the influence of confounding factors), on the other (Nerbonne, 2018, p.234). As a consequence, one of the keys is interaction – which also relies on the choice of appropriate interviewers.

3.2 An interactional approach

The goal of a sociolinguistic interview is to engage speakers in natural interaction, “so that their attention is focused more on what they are saying than on how they are saying it” (Walker, 2014, p.777; cf. Bailey, 2018, p.292). This requires for the informant a maximum degree of adjustment to individual speakers and situations. Such speaker adjustment in interaction is crucial to reduce negative effects of unpredicted interferences, but also of inferences and misunderstandings – inevitable parts of language, too. In order to reduce the formality of the interview whilst remaining in a partially standardised framework, the fieldworkers’ communicative skills are crucial, much more than their indigenoussness (e.g. Bresseur, 1999, p.38). They need to maintain a positive atmosphere that is as less formal as possible, ensure the informants’ positive self-image, and be attentive to

the latter at any time, considering subtle reactions, both verbal and non-verbal. This is important in order to interpret direct answers, but also comments and linguistic attitudes. The comparability of language data collected with different speakers, in different situations, with different interviewers (cf. Llamas, 2018, p. 253), but also in different languages and dialects, can, therefore, only be ensured if the fieldworker adapts as much as possible to situational factors (applicability, Chapter 2.4).

This does not exclude the need for a systematic approach in data collection. It is notably the choice of semi-directive interviews, which associate direct questioning and observation, that allows combining the advantages of both standardised enquiries and observational methods. Such interviews are based on a predetermined questionnaire with fixed key sections and questions for comparable data, but are to be adapted to every interview (cf. Águila Escobar, 2012, p. 119). This choice impacts elicitation techniques and the interview structure, presented in Chapter 5, but also the interview protocol and constellation.

3.3 Interview constellation

If the classic method of sociolinguistic research is the one-on-one recorded conversational interview (Labov, 1972b, p. 115), variants imply pairs of interviewers (as used in the USA in the 1990s) and/or two or more informants (already Gumperz, 1964, 150, in Norway). The latter aims at reducing the interview's formality, "turning it into a more natural social event" (Feagin, 2013, p. 26). Even though the informants' language production remains 'careful', this allows minimising the negative effect of systematic observation (already Labov, 1972a, pp. 210–211) since it distracts the attention from the interviewer and the situation's formality. Of course, a third speaker's presence can also double the normative pressure on speakers, who may unconsciously suspect a competitive setting. Hence, the present project targets pairs of speakers who have a particular bond and have as little social competition as possible (generally a relative, neighbour, friend or close colleague); this approach has proven efficient in a PhD project (Wissner, 2010).

Reducing this competition also relies on the choice of interviewers who are considered trustworthy. Therefore, informants are primarily selected from shared networks, following L. Milroy's *friend-of-a-friend* (or 'snowball') technique (1980). Indeed, using resources of families and friends or colleagues and acquaintances remains "one of the most effective methods for entering the research community and building one's network of study participants" (Schilling, 2013, p. 213). This ensures a relationship of trust (Chapter 5): fieldworkers who are completely unknown to the speaker "are less likely to overcome the observer's paradox" (Chambers, 2013, p. 190). Focusing on shared networks, which share linguistic

features, implies that the informants' personal language use during the interviews will tend to conform to norms that are shared with the other interview participants, without necessarily reflecting the usage of other networks. At the same time, from one interview to the other, the snowball technique opens up to different combinations of networks; In addition, the interview is structured to give access both to the speakers' personal usage and their passive knowledge (see Section 6.1), which is wider, hence balancing possible disadvantages of the snowball technique.

The situation's formality and indirect pressure on the informants can also be reduced through the choice of a quiet and customary place for the interviews. We opted for a place at the home of one of the interviewees. This implies accepting possible interruptions due to their everyday life, with a risk of impact on concentration, weariness and duration. The present project aims for an interview length of 75 and 90 minutes – which seems to be ideal for this kind of face-to-face enquiry according to Bres (1999, p. 68) – whilst adapting to the situation, the informants and the group constellation. For further reduction of normative pressure on informants, interviews are not recorded; even if the presence of a recorder or video is generally felt acutely mainly during the first and last minutes, its pressure re-appears now and then during the interview when speakers become more aware of the situation's formality. Recording is advantageous in terms of data accessibility and reliability, as it gives a chance of checking information and using data for other projects. However, since this project aims at eliciting rare grammatical forms (rather than phonological variants, like in variationist sociolinguistics), the benefit of integrating such an 'absent third person' (Bres, 1999, p.74) is considered less important than its negative effects. For Feagin (2013, p.32), the absence of recording can even have the advantage of "elimination of the Observer's Paradox"; it is at the least definitely a means of tempting to overcome it.

In order to ensure reliable data processing, all forms and relevant parts of answers are written down conscientiously during the interview, where fidelity to the actual utterance is the primary consideration (Feagin, 2013, p.23). Of course, this can induce a slow-down effect, which could delete the targeted naturalness effect. Notes are therefore realised on pre-established sheets that allow for maximum efficiency (Chapter 6; also Wissner *et al.*, 2020), and reduced to the essential: the adverbials, their context of usage whenever possible – that is, if this does not disturb the exchange – as well as their features using abbreviations, which ease the process. The fieldworkers' fluency and management of turns is also trained during several test interviews.

Taking notes also implies a minimal risk of standardisation: researchers may sometimes note down what they expect rather than what they hear, since all human beings have their own perception and normative judgement. Yet, this is

not limited to the use of notes, like in the present project: it equally concerns the transcription of recordings.

3.4 Validity and representativeness

Just as any other method of eliciting data, field methods aiming at qualitative findings, in order to ensure the data's validity and verifiability, tend towards relative 'representativeness' and generalisability; this, of course, applies to all social sciences (Hernández-Campoy, 2014, pp.7–9). This generalisability presupposes the method's applicability in different settings in order to lead to comparable results, which is central in our pan-Romance perspective.

Concerning the findings' representativeness, it is first of all relevant for the enquired speakers' individual knowledge; deductions on authentic usage in their dialect can only be established in a second step through situational inference (Section 4.2). Authentic speech used to be considered as a prototypical speech (that of an average speaker of a community), both in traditional dialectology and in Labov's early work (1972a/b). Modern sociolinguistics rather examines authentic speech in terms of 'differences' of singular speakers. The data we are interested in is therefore considered 'authentic' in individual and situational terms (Chapter 4).

Yet, Hernández-Campoy highlights the "unpredictable nature of informants", which raises methodological problems in terms of observability, interpretation and reliability (2014, p.21). Human and situational parameters that influence field studies are hard to control – be it mood (stress, weariness...), the attitude informants have towards the fieldworker or interviews in general, due to previous experience, or down-to-earth logistic problems such as delays, noises and interruptions. The degree of the situational parameters' generalisability – which includes equal conditions for all interviews – is difficult to identify even with rigorous methodological means and controls; In addition, in a team of fieldworkers, procedural differences necessarily impact subsequent results (2014, p.17), and any investigator is inevitably perfectible as they endure the impact of factors such as tiredness or the repetition of the same questionnaire. In order to reduce the risks of a reductionist approach and excessive subjectivity, this study opts for a qualitative method, whilst integrating a quantitative dimension in data processing. Indeed, data needs to be significant, that is of sufficient quality and quantity to allow establishing a "causal relationship between linguistic and extralinguistic variables" (2014, p.9).

It remains that there are inevitably important differences from one enquiry to the other, despite systematic training and tests in the field, as realised in the present project, despite the choice of socially skilled investigators who establish

a relationship of mutual confidence with their informants (Chapter 5), despite standardised questionnaires and questions (Chapter 6). Sociolinguistic field studies can only *aim at* a scientific empirically rigorous approach by controlling the research method and stabilising human and situational factors as much as possible.

4. Sampling: Selecting speakers

The principles of the informants' selection, central for the interpretation of data, are strictly the same in the present study for all areas of investigation. Any speaker is certainly first and foremost an individual whose language production and attitudes have a certain degree of idiosyncrasy (see above). Therefore, qualitative enquiries first of all allow drawing conclusions on the enquired individuals' knowledge and performance once situational factors are put aside. At the same time, the speaker's knowledge and performance are subject to their social background and therefore also to sociolinguistic profiles as well as their dialect(s). Of course, social profiles and linguistic achievements do not necessarily correspond, especially for certain types of speakers such as adolescents; indeed, an individual does not carry any pre-constructed social category; they cannot be categorised on the basis of their utterances with a single identity dimension, nor can they be straightforwardly considered as 'necessarily representative' of a certain category of speakers (Cappeau/Gadet, 2007, pp.104–105).

Nevertheless, the speakers' environment inevitably shapes their way of speaking, writing (and thinking), just like linguistic varieties are shaped by the groups⁴ of people who use them. Fieldworkers hence need to find a balance between accessing purely idiosyncratic language data and information they can explore in order to draw general conclusions on the speech of the informants' dialects. In sociolinguistics of the so-called '1st wave' (starting in the 1960s), the 'speech community' was a significant element; in the '2nd wave' (1980s), the 'community of practice' was crucial; since the beginning of the 21st century, after half a century of field research, applied linguistics has developed 'speaker-design' studies, analysing the *individuality* of speakers (Schilling, 2013, 160). In this phase ('third-wave'), the speakers' posture – or 'stance' (Schiffrin, 2006) – has an important role

4. Most branches of sociolinguistics consider speakers as being part of a *community*, which shares a set of norms and/or usages, following an idea initiated by Gumperz (Labov, 1972a, pp.120–121). Taking into account the heterogeneity of such entities (e.g. Trudgill, 1983, p.37), particularly in modern societies, we opt for a more generic term, referring to *groups* in Meillet's sense (1904, p.12).

for the process of construction of meaning, as their individual language acts are considered as ‘acts of identity’ (Hernández-Campoy, 2014, p.19) – whether it be in ‘everyday’ life or during interviews. Their language is hence considered as ‘individual performance, a differentiating verbal positioning in society, accounting of individual identities’ (2014, pp.20–22).

Accounting for the principles of third-wave sociolinguistics whilst associating them with its second wave and historical linguistics, as argued above, the present project requires fieldworkers to consider a maximum of biographic and situational parameters as well as the great social and linguistic heterogeneity of any speaker’s language in order to draw conclusions on their dialects.

4.1 Local adult speakers

Since we cannot hope to include every speaker of the targeted speech variety in the study, we need to develop a sample of speakers whose behaviour (in terms of production and perception) can, at least to a certain degree, be generalised to their speech variety (representativity, reliability). The speaker sample therefore needs to be stratified for the variables that are relevant for the analysis, and should cover a diversity of profiles in order to avoid unpredicted bias.

Whilst traditional dialectology gave preference to non-mobile, older, rural males – NORMs, according to Chambers/Trudgill’s famous acronym (1998 [1980]), believed to be particularly conservative in their speech – later works in dialectology and sociolinguistics developed different, often project-specific criteria.⁵ The most common speaker variables used in Romance studies – age, sex/gender, and ‘social class’ – mainly stem from sociology. To these one can add mobility and ethnicity (e.g. Hernández-Campoy, 2014, p.9) as well as the factors ‘spatiality’ and the speakers’ ‘social networks’ (shaped notably by their professional environments, leisure pursuits and social commitments), since they necessarily belong to “complex, interconnected worlds” (D’Agostino/Paternostro, 2018, p.200).

The use of one simple social factor at a time has received strong criticism due to the complexity of sociological measures. In addition, the social categorisation itself and the use of the Labovian’s *social class*, based on economic factors, but also of notions such as *milieu* (e.g. Dauzat, 1922, p.128), remain problematic. According to Bourdieu, the social variability of language is less influenced by their *economic capital* (cf. Labov’s classes) than by the individuals’ cultural resources

5. For a general introduction on how big and how diverse a sample of informants should be, see Schilling, 2013, p.17–54 (for sociolinguistics) or Macaulay, 2018 (for traditional and modern dialectology).

such as linguistic abilities, education and cultural practices (*cultural capital*) as well as by their network of social relationships (*social capital*) (Bourdieu, 1994). The latter gives access to either restricted varieties – people with little education generally use so-called ‘popular’ varieties both on formal and informal occasions – or to socially ‘higher’ linguistic varieties, only accessible through education (D’Agostino/Paternostro, 2018, p.209).

More generally, as Cappeau and Gadet point out (2007, p.105), the usual combination of demographics (gender, age) and sociology (occupation, level of education) ‘is better suited to opinion polls than to sociolinguistic findings’. The authors’ warning against ‘rudimentary spontaneous sociology’ does not negate the usefulness of sociological categories for sociolinguistics, but underlines the risks of associating data with criteria that are not necessarily significant in substance. In modern sociolinguistics, rather than being treated in terms of ‘objectively’ measurable categories, socio-demographic data is indeed considered for its subjective (‘emic’) social meaning in the process of data interpretation (Schilling, 2013; also Walker, 2014, p.776).

In order to avoid conceptual shortcuts, self-fulfilling or circular results and therefore potential bias due to pre-selected rigid categories, the present study opts for a qualitative approach both in selecting relevant categories and in analysing their correlation with language data. It therefore chooses a small number of speakers and does not select them according to traditional social categories. Since we need to interview speakers whose repertoire plausibly includes the types of adversials we are looking for and who allow for measuring potential ongoing change, the major relevant objective criteria are age and spatiality; this, of course, does not imply that the link between speakers and geographic space is perceived as intrinsic (cf. D’Agostino/Paternostro, 2018, p.210). We choose individuals

1. who are aged 18 or more – which allows focusing on speakers whose repertoire is completed and avoids taking developmental speech production for other types of variation
2. who are native-born in the target area, whose first language is the target variety, and who have always lived in the area apart from short stays abroad (up to two years) – a choice which helps reducing external influences from other varieties and confusions between different varieties
3. whose parents are native-born and have always lived in the same area apart from short stays abroad (up to two years) – a choice which adds to a potential in-depth knowledge of the local vernacular variety and gives a chance to recover traditional usages up to the beginning of the 20th century, as well as clues on the targeted pattern’s belonging to the vernacular or learnt tradition.

4.2 A stratified speaker sample

This approach is combined with (stratified) ‘judgement sampling’ (e.g. Feagin, 2013, p. 27), also called ‘quota sampling’ (Schilling, 2013, pp. 35–36). It involves obtaining a certain number of each type of speaker. The obtained categories, or ‘cells’ are then filled by working through the participants’ social networks (cf. Schilling, 2013, p. 35).

The constitution of sub-cells is based on only two directly relevant criteria for our research aim as it includes measuring potential language change:

- a. age, intrinsically linked to diachronic variation and therefore linguistic change, is used to capture diachronic change within a current synchronic ‘window’. Comparing speakers belonging to two different generations is meant to allow to measure relevant changes in apparent time, and therewith possible changes in progress – once lifespan differences are set aside (cf. Labov, 1994, p. 204);
- b. gender, here not considered as an independent variable, but ‘stabilised’ by the means of a balance between male and female informants, and mainly considered for potential representational gender-related differences.

In every area, informants are equally male and female subjects (or non-binary if applicable), and chosen from different age categories: 50% of speakers are 18 to 45 years old; 50% of speakers are aged 46 or more. This categorisation, based on global contemporary average lifespans, aims at creating two fairly balanced groups.

If possible, age groups are more specific, more exactly: 18–29, 30–45, 46–65, 66 and above. This tighter and partially random categorisation attempts to reflect the way speech is impacted in the targeted modern occidental societies by regional trends in the pace of life of a large proportion of individuals notably in terms of the nature and diversity of communication networks; it may need to be adapted to the different areas of investigation, as the speakers’ rhythm of life can diverge. Their social networks and cultural resources have not been chosen for the constitution of cells here, as in most studies in the Romance area; this would be a more complex though relevant approach (Macaulay, 2018, p. 243).⁶ Yet, the ‘Third Way’ fieldworkers are aware of these networks’ impact on speech; they therefore consider them indirectly for qualitative data processing, crossing a series of factors, notably the speakers’ range of social activities.

6. In linguistics, social network analysis stems from Labovian research and notably Milroy/Milroy’s works, as Milroy and Llamas (2013) remind us; see also Milroy (1980) for the notion of ‘network’.

4.3 Speaker profiles

Information on the informants' biography, notably socio-cultural criteria, are collected for every participant in case of their possible relevance for the interpretation of data, and neutralised as far as possible. This notably concerns the level of education as well as the speakers' range of social activities, relevant for their cultural resources and their network, since the latter determines the situations of speech and the diversity of interlocutors they potentially encounter. In addition, social networks impact linguistic change, as it "is slow to the extent that the relevant populations are well established and bound by strong ties, whereas it is rapid to the extent that weak ties exist in populations" (Milroy/Milroy, 1985, p.375). In order to allow for a critical socio-historical analysis of collected data, informants are described in terms of the following criteria:

- profession(s): position and type (intellectual *versus* executive)
- level of education: 1. fundamental education preparing for technical jobs; 2. fundamental education preparing for secretarial positions; 3. diploma giving access to university studies; 4. university studies,
- languages/dialects spoken
- leisure and locale (rural, semi-rural or urban), which helps understanding lifestyle as well as networks (strong/weak ties) and hence a tendency towards conservatism or innovation
- use of media (type, frequency): reading, print media, TV, radio, internet/social networks, relevant for the speakers' social space, since virtual communication (just like mobility) plays a major role in modern networks, influencing their perception of dialects
- place of birth and residence, travel (frequent travels or trips exceeding 3 month) as well as their parents' place of birth, residence and languages/dialects, which informs on speaker mobility and local language usage.

These traditional criteria – widely used in quantitative studies in the Romance area (cf. D'Agostino/Paternostro, 2018, pp.208–220) – are completed with the fieldworkers' personal impression on the informants' linguistic consciousness and social ambitions (e.g. Douglas-Cowie, 1978; Hernández-Campoy, 2016, p.30) – crossing the above-mentioned factors –, since both help interpreting the speakers' attitudes.

Classifying speakers according to such criteria is difficult, and ideally requires a clear definition of the categories used. In absence of a satisfactory consensus on neat entities of linguistic relevance, the categories employed in this project are most often those used by the speakers themselves.

4.4 Speaker sample size

Drawing conclusions on data implies using an appropriate sample size, which depends on the number of independent (socio-demographic) variables. A first important guideline is “that a close analysis of a small amount of data is better than an unfinished grandiose project” (Feagin, 2013, p. 21). Yet, in the critical bibliography, recommendations on a suitable number of speakers are rare. In traditional sociolinguistic fieldwork, a rule of thumb is to work with at least five individuals from each cell (2013, pp. 28–29). The present project has opted for this threshold in order to ensure its pan-Romance scope. This implies interviewing at least five informants of each of our relevant cells: age and gender. However, since the latter is not used as an independent variable, this allows drawing valid conclusions on the data from 10 informants from each age cell in each area.

As a whole, interviews are realised with at least twenty individuals in every area with the following distribution:

- ten younger speakers (five female and five male), from the age-group 18–45, as well as
- ten older speakers (five female and five male), from the age-group above 46.

Whenever the researchers’ network allows it, there are also five speakers of every age-based sub-group, as presented earlier (18–29, 30–45, 46–65, 66 and above). In addition, their profiles are as varied as possible. When it is relevant to realise field research in two areas, data is drawn from at least 40 speakers per language, that is: 20 younger and 20 older speakers. This is the case for Mexico, where traditional dialectology distinguishes two major areas, ‘Tierras altas’ and ‘Tierras bajas’ (Chapter 2). Overall, this gives access to data from at least 140 Romance speakers and 70 from each relevant age group: 70 younger speakers, aged 45 or less, and 70 aged 46 or above.

Even though this number of speakers is limited as compared to quantitative distant online enquiries, the validity of qualitative fieldwork depends less on their absolute number than on the method used to design and conduct the study, the rigour of data analysis and its appropriateness for the research purpose. With results from 20 speakers per variety and 140 from all Romance languages, our fieldwork is conceived to yield relevant information that is rich enough to reveal the recognition of the targeted forms with their features in a pan-Romance perspective.

5. The paradiscourse: Ensuring a bond of trust

Collecting reliable data not only requires a careful choice of method, speakers and dialects, but also an appropriate protocol for the way fieldworkers approach informants, and for the information they can reveal before and after the interview (paradiscourse).

5.1 The researcher-speaker relationship

Due to the necessarily asymmetric researcher-speaker relationship, the aim for any field worker is to “lower the barriers between their subjects and themselves” even if it is not possible to remove them (Feagin, 2013, p.25). This requires establishing a relationship of mutual respect, confidence and a certain bond of trust, built on involvement. This bond is notably obtained through the choice of informants according to the friend-of-a-friend technique (Section 3.3) as well as an inversion of the position of power. Indeed, efficient sociolinguistic fieldworkers consider themselves not as much as experts, like in academic settings, but as ‘novice students’ ready to learn from the community experts they interview (Schilling, 2013, p.81; Chambers/Schilling, 2013, p.578); it is the latter who are considered as the ‘owners of social knowledge’ (Gadet, 2007, p.41).

It seems to be less the field workers’ identity itself that is important, but rather their in-depth understanding of the speakers’ group, their relationship with the latter and their involvement (Chambers/Schilling, 2013, p.577; Chapter 4.2). The ‘Third Way’ fieldworkers’ wording, voice, physical distance, general posture and appearance therefore demonstrate respect, humility, and interest for the speakers and their group; this also includes aspects such as dress code (between casual and formal, adapted to local customs) and relevant criteria such as the informants’ age (cf. Feagin, 2013, p.24). Depending on the areas, we distinguish two major types of fieldworkers:

1. Fieldworkers are experienced researchers, specialists in the target dialect, and speakers of geographically close but different varieties (Romania, Mexico, Brazil); highlighting their need for real speakers as experts on the local dialect helps reducing normative pressure whilst allowing good knowledge of the local group.
2. Fieldworkers are themselves members of the group they investigate (Italy, Quebec, Spain): a student, generally not considered as an ‘expert’ (Quebec), or a young specialist in the target dialect but well integrated in the investigated local village (Italy, Spain); In Italy and Quebec, they are also accompanied and/or trained by foreign specialists of the variety; in this configuration, high-

lighting the colleagues' status as foreigners tends to increase the project's prestige and consequently also the speakers' pride and involvement.

In both cases, 'Third Way' fieldworkers make the most out of their personal identity, which is often the case in fieldwork in both linguistics and ethnography (cf. Feagin, 2013, pp. 24–25).

5.2 Presenting the research: A motivating and accessible project

The need for comparable data in a pan-Romance project requires a partially standardised way of presenting the enquiries, both during the speakers' recruitment and before starting the interview. 'Third Way' fieldworkers are concise and strictly descriptive in presenting:

1. the field of research and a general topic, the researcher's identity and scientific affiliation (transparency) as well as the project's institutional frame and scope (reminding prestige)
2. the interview's duration and recording method, the reasons for the choice of the informants (intrinsic value, legitimacy, empowerment) and what is expected from them (realisable descriptive tasks).

A semi-standardised introduction, presented in detail in the fieldworker's *Guide* (Wissner *et al.*, 2020, p. 9), has multiple objectives: ensuring the informants' motivation and collaboration, accounting for the needs of transparency for ethic reasons, and establishing, maintaining and reinforcing a relation of trust where the speaker feels as little inhibited by the interview situation as possible. The exact wording is of course slightly adapted to different dialects and speakers if this avoids biasing the latter's perception and involvement, as this would reduce the data's comparability.

Since the fieldworkers' networks and early informants help finding candidates, they need to dispose of unequivocal information on the project that is easy to understand, to remember and to repeat, even for non-specialists. This reduces potential misunderstandings, but also normative pressure as well as "erroneous impressions, negative stereotypes, and linguistic myths" (Wolfram, 2013, p. 559). Being clear can therefore imply revealing only certain aspects of the research, "walking a line between full disclosure and the observer's paradox" (Walker, 2014, p. 777). This is the case of our presentation of the research topic; it is considerably simplified, according to a frequent procedure in sociolinguistics (cf. Feagin, 2013, p. 24): *[As already discussed on the phone] my name is [name], I am from [area of birth or country]. I work on a scientific research project in sociolinguistics for the University of Graz, which is an Austrian university. We want to analyse how people*

experience the way life is changing in your home area, and how these changes can be described’.

For the sake of transparency and respect for the informants, the announced topic is as close to the research aim as possible whilst remaining sufficiently general without mentioning the research question’s grammatical dimension in order to avoid linguistic insecurity. The topic’s presentation is, more precisely, selective: the expression of change is one of the major functions of the targeted language features, which determine the interview structure in the first part (Chapter 6). During this sociolinguistic interview, all questions therefore imply the notion of change; making speakers talk about change is meant to encourage them to take position and express their attitudes and feelings, which, again, generally implies the use of adverbs.

Our presentation is similar to that of enquiries in Oklahoma for the *Atlas of North American English* (Labov/Ash/Boberg, 2006). In the latter, simplifying the research aim and announcing a cultural rather than linguistic topic as well as naming sponsorship and implying local ‘intermediates’ as collaborators had proven valuable (Baily, 2018, pp. 291–292).

5.3 The Informants’ Privacy

Any sociolinguistic field study needs to respect the informants’ privacy for the transcription, processing and publication of confidential data (e.g. Hernández-Campoy/Almeida, 2005, pp. 113–192; Chambers/Schilling, 2013, p. 577). In addition, considering the universal social law of mutual respect, informants need to be consenting and able to decide whether they wish their material to be included in research (cf. Feagin, 2013, pp. 32–33; Turchetta, 2000, p. 133). The ‘Third Way’ project complies with the legal requirements in the countries of investigation and of institutional attachment. Realised by members or contractors of the University of Graz, it is subject to European legislation (EUDatAP, EU-DSGVO) in terms of the protection of natural persons, notably with regard to processing personal data and movement of such data. After council from the Institutional Review Board approval for legal data processing at the University of Graz, the project has been considered not due for notification nor subject to regulatory approval as it does not prejudice the physical or psychological integrity of the persons implied, nor does it interfere with the protection of privacy or any other important right and interest of the informants or of members of their family.

Respecting privacy requires both disguising identities and treating private matters and illegal activities as confidential – which implies appropriate data management, both for meta-data on the speakers and for detailed field notes. For instance, in the questionnaires as well as in follow-up documents that collect the

data – an excel presenting results per speaker, as well as tables presenting aggregate data (Wissner/Roy, 2021) – fieldworkers do not take notes of personal or possibly illegal issues, and the informants' names are pseudonymised (e.g. Feagin, 2013, pp.32–33); In addition, access is restricted to the research team. Notes that allow traceability to the interviewees are generally in paper-form and will be safely stored in the project leader's archives according to legal requirements, where they are accessible only for institutional control. Speakers can also ask for their data to be deleted as long as research results have not been published. In any case, publications only present anonymised and mainly aggregate material data that does not allow any traceability from the published data to the informants (cf. EUDatAP, art. 5).

Data protection and respect of privacy are mentioned in accessible words during speaker recruitment, before the interviews, and in more detail after the core interview. These are provided in oral, instead of writing (compulsory in the US, for instance), in order to avoid a highly formal act. The latter would imply a strong risk of breaking the bond of trust that has been carefully and progressively developed in order to obtain linguistically valid data. The exact information on legal and ethical data protection presented to the informants is published in the standardised guide that is used by all fieldworkers (Wissner *et al.*, 2020, pp. 9, 15); the latter therewith ensures traceability of the respect of the compulsory ground of justification for gathering and processing personal data (cf. EUDatAP, art. 6, 9, 10).

5.4 Closing the Interview: Meta-Data and Debt Incurred

At the end of each interview, informants switch from a content-focused core to a more conscious-focused section. Fieldworkers are again acutely perceived in their institutional function as researchers, which tends to increase insecurity and distance. Reassuring speakers at this stage consolidates the bond of trust – which also allows recruiting further informants and preserving a positive image of the investigator's university and/or country – as well as the research community as a whole. Fieldworkers notably repeat the respect of the speakers' privacy and add that the obtained data will be duly diffused – following the traditional Labovian *Principal of Debt Incurred* (e.g. Hernández-Campoy, 2014, p.14). Depending on the speakers' interest in the project, fieldworkers also commit to sending them the final article once published.

Monetary compensation is not offered, as this is a controversial subject and can change the nature of the enterprise (cf Feagin, 2013, p.32). However, notably in areas where the investigations are realised by external researchers, a small gift is

offered. This reinforces the expression of gratitude, and indirectly promotes institutional commitment to community empowerment.

The interview's closing section also aims at gathering relevant meta-data on the speakers that is still lacking. Of course, major characteristics are already identified during speaker recruitment, and skilled fieldworkers generally manage to obtain relevant information during the interview without attracting the speakers' attention to their interest in such data, notably in the narrative section of the interview (Chapter 6). Placing this section at the end avoids attracting the speakers' attention on their person before the interview, as this potentially heightens the observer's paradox.

Before leave-taking, a more informal exchange consists of small-talk of variable length (depending on the areas), mostly on logistics or on the relationship with other people in the area, where informants tend to relax. The paradiscourse is therefore also valuable for gathering complementary data for discreet checks or collecting new forms in less controlled speech – more easily obtained during moments perceived as 'pauses' (Labov, 1972a, p. 209).

The approach developed here to reduce the situational formality, as presented in this chapter, can be summarised in five major aspects:

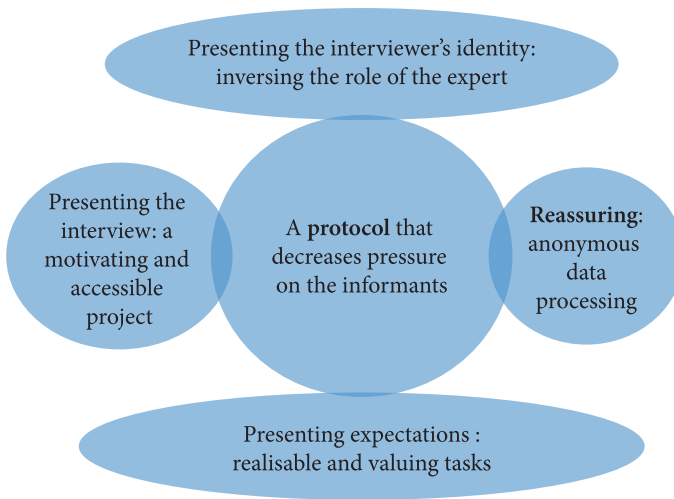


Figure 2. Reducing the negative effects of the situational formality in the paradiscourse

Our standardised, but adaptable protocol for the recruitment of speakers and in the interview's paradiscourse can considerably reduce negative effects of the enquiry's situation, allowing for collecting a common core of comparable linguistic data even when fieldworkers, circumstances, languages and dialects differ. The

core interview has been designed with a similar approach, both in its structure and its elicitation techniques.

6. The core of the interview

6.1 Interview structure

In sociolinguistics, general and anthropological linguistics, it is common to structure an interview in two major parts: often a first questionnaire or sociolinguistic interview aiming at obtaining conversational speech data, and a second part focusing on specific items, in order to elicit information on usage and structural limitations (cf. Schilling, 2013, p.71).

The present project uses a variant of this protocol. Its questionnaire template is composed of

1. a conversational interview, in order to elicit potential ‘natural’ usages of the targeted adverbials as well as variants or synonyms and their relative frequency
2. a series of worksheets, in order to test the recognition of the targeted list of prepositional adverbials whilst identifying their features in synchrony (form, meaning, vitality, syntagmatic and paradigmatic behaviour), next to indications on their legitimacy and their evolution.

This structure combines both observation of behaviour (mainly in Section 1) and elicitation of reports on the language use of people in the informants’ area, mainly in Section 2 (cf. Chapter 3) – a combination which has proven efficient (e.g. Bailey, 2018, pp.290–291). Indeed, for to obtain rare morphosyntactic features in spontaneous speech, in whatever way they are elicited, even extended samples of free speech cannot ensure that the target forms will emerge in any quantity (unlike segmental features at the phonological level of analysis or frequent lexical units), if at all. In addition, it seems obvious that the non-use of target items in natural speech (cf. Section 1), just like in straightforward elicitation (cf. Section 2), may be due to accidental gaps. Some targeting, as in Section 2, is generally necessary to increase the likelihood of the emergence of particular forms (Llamas, 2018, p.261). Combining different ways of elicitation, mixing top-down (pre-defined feature catalogue) and bottom-up (sociolinguistic interviews) approaches, also aims at obtaining a more faithful picture of the investigated dialects.

Like the paradiscourse, the core of the interview is standardised, yet adaptable; for instance, once new forms are identified, they are progressively integrated

in the following interviews; according to a widespread approach in sociolinguistic fieldwork, this increases its efficiency (Feagin, 2013, p.20). Both sections are organised through semantic groupings that allow speakers to engage in a meaningful exchange, anchoring the interview as a semi-directed dialogue which involves the cooperation of the informants (cf. Águila Escobar, 2012, p.126).

6.1.1 Section 1: Conversational interview

The first section (conversational interview), which lasts some twenty minutes, is similar to controlled linguistic observation. It allows obtaining conversational speech data through content-focused, mainly open-ended questions on topics that encourage the use of the targeted PA-patterned adverbials. The structure of this narrative section has been conceived in an onomasiological perspective around three topics that account for the prepositional adverbials' common functions in sentence and discourse. Indeed, the latter belong to six main functional types, as identified by Hummel (2019a, pp.157–159; Wissner *et al.*, 2020, p.11 for the topics' exact phrasing in the questionnaire):

1. “The perception of elderly people, now and in the past” (gathering groups 1 and 5): This topic encourages the use of adverbials with epistemic or evidential functions, which allow informants to position themselves and to measure and evaluate their own judgement, like (Sp.) *por cierto, de seguro* or *en general* (group 1), as well as adverbials conveying the functions of approximation, intensification, quantification and focusing such as *en especial, de recio, a lo mucho* (group 5); the latter may be used to describe and judge peoples' attitudes and behaviours as well as changes in their attitudes and behaviours.
2. “Working life in the past and nowadays” (gathering groups 2 and 6): This topic encourages the use of adverbials conveying mainly the function “occurrence in time” (or “type of occurrence”), more precisely sequence, (un-)expectedness, duration and frequency, such as (adv.) *al pronto* or *a diario*, which allow to talk about routines or changes of habits (group 2), as well as adverbials conveying a local circumstantial perspective on an event; the latter may be used to describe the place, goal or source of an action, such as (Sp.) *en alto*, or *de largo* (literally ‘from far’) (group 6).
3. “An exceptional event which happened in my childhood”, for instance: “A foolish thing I did” (gathering groups 3 and 4): This topic encourages the use of adverbials conveying the circumstances of an event's result such as *por entero*, for instance when talking about intentions or non-compliance with social rules (group 4), as well as the use of adverbials conveying manner, which may be used by informants to describe or evaluate how they did things, for instance *a las buenas* (group 3).

Starting the interview with motivating and stimulating, partly emotional topics also aims at distracting attention from the situation's formality and at encouraging informants to be at ease to produce passionate, or at least less self-conscious speech that reduces focus on attention to speech, hence allowing for more reliable data. Choosing emotional discussion topics (or 'shotgun questions') as in question 3 has been a well-known strategy since Labov's works (1972a, p. 209); it contributes to breaking through the constraints of the interview situation, as expressed in Labov's *Formality Principle* (1972b, p. 113); associated with the right way of framing, this can generate significant amounts of less controlled speech (cf. Bailey 2018, p. 294). All three questions invite speakers to think back to their childhood, give personal opinions and evaluate behaviour; They also provide insights into their auto-perception (cf. Trudgill, 1974, pp. 46–53), on their attitudes and their degree of insecurity, which help interpreting the adverbials' legitimacy.

In the different areas of investigation, the topics may be adjusted to local conditions and customs as the speakers' emotional involvement correlates with the degree of self-consciousness, rather than the topic per se. This is why fieldworkers need to know their area of enquiry, including societal tensions and local happenings. Labov's famous question on danger of death (1972b, p. 113) was, for instance, inefficient in many other studies (cf. Trudgill, 1974). If speakers are not intimately involved during test interviews (organised with at least three pairs of informants per area), fieldworkers test related topics. For instance, the first question on changes in age-perception can be replaced by the following question: '*I keep hearing that people are more and more globalised. Do you think that's true here?*'. Question 2 on changes in work life can be replaced or extended by a topic on the relationship with colleagues, which could lead to discussing changes in friendships. Question 3 on an event in childhood could for instance be replaced by a discussion on the neighbourhood where the speaker grew up, which can then lead to talking about childhood friendships, allowing again for more emotional interaction (cf. Feagin, 2013, pp. 20, 30).

6.1.2 Section 2: Worksheets on the targeted linguistic items

In the second section (worksheets), still closer to a sociolinguistic interview than to word list activities as know from variationist approaches, the targeted adverbials are elicited with mainly direct elicitation frames in a discourse that tries to ensure logical transitions from one example to the other (see Wissner/Gagnon, 2022, 81–82 for an example on Quebec).

Whereas traditional questionnaires include a set of pre-formed questions posed in the same way to every informant, worksheets provide fieldworkers with a set of target items (one per sheet) leaving the actual question up to each of them in order to elicit features in a more 'natural' way (cf. Bailey, 2018, p. 289). Field-

workers start with worksheets that the informants are supposed to know (which helps putting them at ease) and which contain authentic examples; Indeed, some sentences had to be constructed by mother tongue fieldworkers when written corpora did not provide appropriate examples. Interviewers also tend to gather worksheets according to the adverbials' belonging to the groups identified in Section 1, which eases transitions between worksheets and creates logical links (like in the Quebec questionnaire mentioned above).

In this metalinguistic section, the use of direct questions, known from traditional dialectology, allows eliciting introspective judgements (cf. Schilling, 2013, pp.70, 81). 'Third Way' fieldworkers are aware of a heightened impact of the observer's paradox and of the difficulty of the informants' task since their attention is explicitly brought to language, especially to its structural dimension, which is not a common activity and difficult cognitively speaking (cf., 2013, p.72). Using direct frames in order to elicit the speakers' perceptions remains a widespread method, notably for the study of grammatical variation (Llamas, 2018, p.261). Except for rare cases, this perception is directly shaped by the language that speakers encounter in everyday life; consequently, a careful interpretation of answers still allows deductions about the existence of the targeted features in their dialect (Chapter 3.4).

Following Francard, we more precisely distinguish *effective usage* from *declared practices*, based on reports on their own usage and, first of all, the usage of *other* speakers in their groups (2005, p.49: *pratiques déclarées vs effectives*). More specifically, fieldworkers elicit passive knowledge, asking informants to describe what they hear *in their surroundings* (rather than what they think they say themselves) in order to further reduce normative pressure. This technique has proven efficient both in French sociolinguistics (e.g. Francard, 2005) and in English-speaking dialectology, for instance in the Oklahoma project mentioned earlier (Bailey, 2018, p.296; also Llamas, 2018, p.261). It is used for initial questions eliciting the target items' recognition, but also for follow-up elicitations that aim at identifying their features.

'Third Way' fieldworkers only add questions on the speakers' *own* usage when they do not dispose of enough hints indicating the targeted adverbials' legitimacy. Indeed, since introspection increases normative pressure, the gap between what people do and what they say or think they do when they speak to a fieldworker can be considerable (cf. Schilling, 2013, p.77); in general, speakers tend to provide information they believe to be expected from them, rather than what they really do or say themselves – depending on the image they want the fieldworker to perceive.

A central point in the 'Third Way' method is therefore a clear distinction between

- a. information provided by speakers on language usage in their surrounding, retrieved systematically for each adverbial and each sub-question, used to analyse their usage in the speakers' group, and indirectly in their dialect,
- b. information provided by speakers on their own usage, which tends to reflect 'expected' answers, retrieved only very occasionally in a second step when the fieldworker wants to identify language norms, which inform on the tested items' legitimacy.

The description of the adverbials' existence and paradigmatic and syntactic features is exclusively based on information provided by speakers on their surrounding (a). The speaker's appreciation of their own language usage (b) is only used in occasional critical comments, in order to identify the target items' status or the speakers' degree of linguistic insecurity. For instance, this is observable in the case of speaker alignment, when speakers provide the same answer as the informant they are interviewed with. This is why all data used for aggregate and quantitative (statistical) data processing will be exclusively based on information provided on the speakers' surrounding (a).

6.2 Elicitation frames

The careful choice of elicitation frames depends on numerous parameters, notably the targeted items' nature, their legitimacy (if known), the situation, the interviewer and the informants' answers and profiles to which the fieldworkers adapt constantly. The latter also need to ensure a certain variation in order to avoid redundancy during the interview, as this would reduce the impression of naturalness; therefore, the exact questions are not dictated in the questionnaire (Wissner *et al.*, 2020). 'Third Way' fieldworkers strive for a balance between just enough verbal and nonverbal signs of involvement to obtain sufficient data without interrupting the speakers' conversational flow. This requires intervening as little as possible with questions, active turns and semi-directed follow-up questions, if possible with short prompts like *right, ok!*, part of naturalistic interaction (cf. Feagin, 2013, p.30; Bailey, 2018, pp.94–95). In general, they make sure questions and, more generally elicitation frames, are consistent in terms of their perspective – either linguistic (Section 1) or metalinguistic (Section 2) – and based on exclusively unambiguous questions (Turchetta, 2000, p.122). They are also non-technical, purely descriptive – mobilising only neutral words (like *possible, natural or frequent*) (cf. Schilling, 2013, p.78) – and, as highlighted above, attract attention on *others*; they do not lead to an obvious answer, nor do they allow informants to anticipate answers to subsequent questions. Depending on

the fieldworker's personality, it is also efficient to frame elicitation as 'games' rather than as test-like tasks (cf. 2013, pp. 78–79).

Indirect and direct elicitation frames can be situated on a continuum between two poles of directness and indirectness. Whereas direct questions in traditional dialectology tend to be close to the very direct pole, like *How do you name a mug?*, indirect questions like *The thing [...] – do you remember any other names for it?* are fairly centred; more indirect questions are of the type *Where did you keep your dogs and pigs?* (looking for *pig pen* or *sty*) (Schilling, 2013, p. 70 for this example).

In Section 1, questions and prompts, focusing on content, are exclusively indirect; in other words, they are “designed to prompt a person to *produce* the item of interest” (Schilling, 2013, p. 70). Following the dominant method in contemporary sociolinguistics, they avoid stating the phenomenon sought by the investigator and focus on things (not the names of things), helping people make semantic or social sense of linguistic input. For instance, in order to elicit adverbials such as (Sp.) *de ordinario* ('ordinarily') and *de diario* ('on an everyday basis'), fieldworkers can direct the informants' answers with questions like *This didn't happen every day, did it?* Indirect frames primarily allow eliciting non-stigmatised forms; stigmatised ones can also appear if the interviewers' attitude and linguistic posture as well as their relationship with the speakers decrease sufficiently the impact of the observer's paradox (cf. Schilling, 2013, p. 70).

For studies in morphosyntax (as well as phonetics), another widely used form of questioning consists of linking concepts together (Águila Escobar, 2012, p. 126), like asking for the opposite of (Sp.) *raramente* to elicit the above-mentioned (Sp.) *de diario*. It is also common to start a sentence and let the informants finish it, as in (Sp.) *uno, dos y...* or *despues de abril viene ...* (Águila Escobar, 2012, p. 126). In such hole sentences, or 'fill-in-the-blanks' (cf. Schilling, 2013, p. 70) – which need to be sufficiently contextualised – 'Third Way' fieldworkers either use it as a guess game or pretend they forgot the missing word.

If in Section 1, the informants do not use any adverbials from the targeted paradigm themselves, fieldworkers can use the target items to observe their verbal and non-verbal reactions. Especially non-native fieldworkers can also use deformed items, inviting informants to correct them to test reactions, as in: 'So, if you cross your neighbours every day (Sp. en [sic] diario), does this bug you?'. The latter's reactions indicate if they know the targeted items (which is to be presumed for *de diario*, as it belongs to standard Spanish); they can for instance manifest surprise at its usage, repeat the adverbial to confirm meaning, or reproduce it whilst correcting the interviewer discreetly.

In Section 2, explicitly metalinguistic, a first direct question aiming at testing the items' recognition is presented in a realistic example as in the following (Sp.): *Ayer dijo un hombre en el mercado que en breve van a construir una piscina munic-*

ipal cerca del ayuntamiento. ¿Se dice aquí, ‘en breve’? (Wissner *et al.*, 2020, p.38). Since it is not easy for informants to know when the form aimed at starts and finishes (because they are presumably not highly conscious), researchers repeat the targeted form or stress it clearly with other verbal or non-verbal hints; they also adapt their wording from one example to the other, notably for well-known forms.

In further follow-up questions eliciting features, ‘Third Way’ fieldworkers use various frames ensuring both precision and variation. Questions on grammar (just as for phonology) can for instance be embedded with lexical questions or presented like lexical questions (Bailey, 2018, p.296), as these are more easily accessible in cognitive terms. Fieldworkers also add ‘trap’ questions containing features that have already been tested but received a doubtful answer in order to check the answer’s validity.

It remains that “even the best elicitations are not very natural” (Schilling, 2013, p.77). For instance, direct questions on the speakers’ knowledge can lead them to declare they know a form in order to protect their face (insecurity); they may purposely over- or under-report their use, notably for stigmatised and more generally vernacular forms (legitimacy). Respondents may also focus more on semantic sense, pragmatic felicity or social appropriateness than on figuring out subtleties of linguistic forms (focus). Especially indirect questions can be difficult to devise, yielding responses other than targeted items, and respondents are not always consciously aware of their usage patterns or able to describe them. Bias is also induced by ordering effects of different tasks, as their order impacts the informants’ perception and focus (2013, pp.77–78).

The limitations of the various elicitation types used here can be partially overcome with strategies such as focusing the informants’ attention on *what they hear in their surrounding*, but also test interviews, an ethic and speaker-centred protocol and speaker adjustment. This helps making the interview as informal as possible, according to the method developed here.

Conclusion

In this article, we presented a field method for the socio-historical analysis of a list of complex adverbials built with the pan-Romance pattern ‘Preposition + Adjective’ (e.g. Port. *em especial*, Sp. *por lo serio*), under scrutiny in the Austrian-based project ‘The Third Way’. More precisely, we presented an enquiry design that allows extracting relevant information on their current usage based on enquiries with speakers of substandard varieties of all six major Romance languages (in seven areas) whilst obtaining indications on the adverbials’ legitimacy and processes of ongoing change they are subjected to; the latter, in turn, provide

hints on the adverbials' belonging to the scholarly or the vernacular tradition and, hence, on their evolution in the targeted Romance languages, in Europe and overseas.

Most general methodological issues addressed in this article have been previously discussed in studies on Romance languages or English, both in sociolinguistics and dialectology. We have therefore focused on the most relevant aspects which determine the study's conceptualisation and scientific validity as they directly stem from our overall sociohistorical research question.

Nevertheless, in the critical bibliography, detailed information on how exactly fieldwork is realised is rare: most works present general discussions, first-hand accounts being mainly described in dissertations (cf. Labov, 1972a, Schilling, 2013). Yet, the exact method is central as it directly determines the validity and comparability, and hence the reliability of the data one can obtain with different interviewers in different settings, even more so in different languages and dialects. We considered that the kind of data one can gather in the field cannot be directly seen as 'representative' of the speakers' everyday usage nor of their dialect as it is directly tributary of the way interviewers manage their exchange. We opted for an approach we called *interactional* – In reference to the interdisciplinary approach of interactional linguistics –, combining a standardised interview structure with partially standardised frames and constant adjustment to speakers and circumstances. This has been considered to be a key for the collection of data that is as 'natural' and hence as comparable as possible, in spite of changing settings, interviewers and areas, despite the enquiry's situational formality (Chapter 3).

We have shown that the interview protocol has been designed to decrease sociolinguistic pressure on informants as far as possible (cf. *Formality Principle*, Labov, 1972b). For this purpose, the relationship with the informants, established from the speaker recruitment onwards, plays a major role (friend-of-a-friend technique; bond of trust; inverting the position of power). We paid special attention to the interview's paradiscourse, as it determines the informants' motivation, focus and expectations (transparent institutional framework; simplified research aim; motivating and realisable tasks; respectful data processing; reassuring and valuing speakers) (Chapter 5). Breaking through the constraints of the situation's formality also impacted the interview structure and elicitation techniques, with accessible and descriptive metalanguage, interactional speaker adjustment, a focus on content before language, and notably eliciting reports on usage of *others* (Chapter 6).

In order to gather both 'natural' speech and targeted information on specific adverbials, the core of the interview has been structured in greater detail in two major parts: an introductory conversational section focused on content, encouraging the potential 'natural' usage of the targeted adverbials with three stimulating

topics (mobilising indirect elicitation frames), whilst putting informants at ease, followed by a linguistic section with a series of worksheets on a list of twenty-five pan-Roman items tested in all areas, completed by dialect-specific items in order to test their recognition and features.

Considering the interview constellation, we have argued why enquiries are realised by locally connected interviewers who are specialists of the targeted dialects, with pairs of informants who have a particular bond (Chapter 3). In view of our sociohistorical research question, we have presented how informants are chosen according to two relevant criteria (age and spatiality) in order to increase chances of recovering traditional usages as well as possible intergenerational change in progress. A choice of some 20 speakers per area allows for a qualitative analysis based on targeted data rather than on huge amounts of data which tend to be hard to control. In the pan-Romance perspective, this still allows us to draw conclusions on language data gathered from at least 140 Romance speakers (70 from each relevant age group) (Chapter 4).

Certain choices, such as the retained age brackets, may appear random, in absence of generally recognised categories; others deserve further explanations, notably the choice of the Romance varieties, presented in language-specific articles (e.g. Porcel Bueno/Koch forthcoming).

In any case, the best field method is necessarily the one that researchers have at hand at the end of the project (cf. Llamas, 2018, p.265 quoting Gillieron). The limits of research in the field have been pointed out by the best fieldworkers both in pioneer works and in recent reference articles. Llamas, for instance (2018, p. 265), reminds us that “some knowledge and acceptance of the limitations of the questionnaire must form part of its design” in order for an enquiry to proceed.

The impact on data processing of the method developed here requires further development, which will be provided in follow-up articles (Wissner, forthcoming and Wissner/Roy, forthcoming): Small speaker samples for each sub-cell (notably dialects and age-groups), as opted for in this project (Chapter 4), have major consequences on the interpretation of correlated data – for instance between the adverbials’ recognition and the speakers’ age: this requires a comparison, and hence statistical data processing, which is difficult with small samples. Based on a shared method of data treatment and on a shared enquiry design, ‘Third Way’ members will dispose of qualitative data that is just enough to provide innovative dialect-specific analyses, in addition to a synthetic paper that will confront results from different areas. This will give access to descriptions of the vitality and features of the examined prepositional adverbials in the target dialects in the modern period, but also to a critical analysis of their possible evolution in a pan-Romance perspective.

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