

Actitudes hacia la variedad caló

Un estudio sociolingüístico de adolescentes andaluces

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Abstract

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Caló is a language/variety spoken by the Spanish Calé (i.e. the Roma). The variety belongs to a group of languages referred to as “Para-Romani”, characterized by Romani vocabulary, but largely non-Romani morphology, phonology and syntax, in the case of Caló deriving from Spanish.

Much research has been carried out regarding the vocabulary and the grammar of this variety. The conclusions drawn in those studies indicate that Caló is on its way to extinction. However, there is an expressed interest in reintroducing the variety, in a form called “Romanó-Caló”.

Language attitudes play a decisive role for the destiny of endangered languages. In order for a revitalization project to be successful, the attitudes towards the variety being reintroduced have to be positive. The aim of this study is to measure the attitudes that both Calé and non-Calé have towards Caló and Caló speakers, a type of study never carried out in the past. The methods applied are both direct and indirect. In part one, 231 informants listened to different recordings of voices acting as either a “Spanish speaking person” or a “Caló speaking person”, a technique referred to as ‘matched guise’. Firstly, the informants were asked to write down their first three impressions of the speakers. Secondly, nine short questions related to the voices were asked, to which the subjects expressed their answers on attitude scales. They were also asked to match the voices with photos of people. Furthermore, the informants have answered questions regarding what variety is spoken at home, as well as if he or she has any knowledge of, or contact with, any language/variety, apart from Spanish. 182 informants continued with part two of the questionnaire, which consisted of 20 items – positive and negative statements towards Caló and Caló speakers. The informants have rated their agreement or disagreement to these statements on a Lickert scale. Another exercise measured the willingness of the informants to use Caló words for naming various objects. In addition, the subjects were tested on their knowledge of some Caló words, as well as asked whether they thought it was “useful” to know how to speak Caló. Various statistical methods have been used in order to establish whether or not the results are statistically significant.

The results of the analysis indicate that the attitudes differ towards Caló and Caló speakers, depending on the informant’s (a) ethnicity (b) contact with Caló as well as with Caló speakers, and (c) gender. It is those who – in their own opinion – belong to the ethnic group Calé, as well as those who claim that they have some contact with the variety and its speakers, who show positive attitudes in both parts of the study. The women also show more positive attitudes than the men. It is also possible to note positive attitudes towards the variety and its speakers among the subjects with a high level of knowledge of Caló words, as well as among those with the highest willingness to use Caló.

These observations suggest that a revitalization project of the variety Caló has a clear chance of being successful.

Keywords: Caló, Para-Romani, Romani, attitudes, ethnic identity, minority languages, multilingualism, language death, language revitalization, language acquisition.