

## Article

# The Sociolinguistic Integration of Immigrant Populations: Reflections on Its Study

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**Abstract:** Taking as its main point of departure the research carried out in the Madrid context by the Hispalin-UAH team of the IN.MIGRA2-CM project, the goal of this article is to reflect on the role of the linguistic dimension within the process of the social integration of migrant populations. It trains its sights on the need to work from a cognitive angle which may help to show how those involved in the process construct and re-define the new context, and on the need to consider the host population—as the prime conditioner of the process—and to identify and analyse in depth the components of identity that are modified as a result of cultural contact.

**Keywords:** cognitive sociolinguistics; migration; sociolinguistic integration; cultural contact; city of Madrid

## 1. Introduction

The goal of this article is to offer some general reflections about the study of the sociolinguistic integration of the immigrant population. More specifically, on the basis of the results of the Hispalin-UAH team of the IN.MIGRA2-CM project<sup>1</sup>, I shall consider certain aspects of the Madrid context, which, unlike other Spanish contexts, is officially monolingual. This fact explains the lack of any literature relating to multiculturalism and plurilingualism, or to attitudes towards the plurilingual realities constructed by individuals belonging to this context.<sup>2</sup> What is more, Madrid is held to represent what is regarded to be normative or standard Spanish (Alvar 1982; Alvar 1986; Moreno Fernández 2012b, 2012c; Cestero and Paredes 2018; Sanz Huéscar 2008; Sancho Pascual 2014, for the immigration context in Madrid), a fact that shapes the transmission of certain linguistic ideologies.

We should point out that when talking about the immigrant population, we are referring specifically to economic migration from less developed countries than the host country. Due to its unique socioeconomic situation, this group generally has to undergo an integration process with a level of complexity greater than that of individuals who start off from situations of less vulnerability. Although in this paper we will generally be referring to this group, we should bear in mind that each person's situation as an individual and as a member of certain social groups will affect specifically issues that we are going to address here, and subsequently influence their own process. In this sense,

<sup>1</sup> IN.MIGRA2-CM (*The migrant population of the Madrid Region: a multidisciplinary study and tools for sociolinguistic integration*—ref. H2015/HUM3404) is a project carried out by three universities from Madrid: the University of Alcalá (UAH), the Nebrija University and the European University of Madrid (UEM). Its goal is the study of the sociolinguistic immigration of the Madrid region's migrant population and the design of instruments to facilitate that process. An interdisciplinary project, it pursues four research lines: sociolinguistics, communication media, translation, and Teaching Spanish to Immigrants. The Hispalin-UAH team conducts the project's sociolinguistic studies.

<sup>2</sup> Although Madrid is officially a monolingual and monodialectal region, given its sociolinguistic complexity, it cannot in fact be regarded as such. The arrival of people of diverse Spanish or national origins make it a meeting point for a multitude of accents and languages which are common in the streets and, therefore, part of Madrilenians' daily lives (Sáez Rivera 2014).

key factors include the source country (and, consequently, the source language, which will or will not be shared by the host community), the age of arrival, the length of residence or the size of the source group in the host community, among many others (including, as we pointed out, purely individual factors) (Caravedo 2014). As regards the age of arrival, the difference between first-, second- and third-generation individuals is fundamental. Seeing as they join the educational system of the host country, second and third generations will find it easier to integrate into the host society. Their insertion into the group structure of the host community will, therefore, have different characteristics to that of first-generation members. This will affect the value system of these individuals, which will—entirely or partially—be developed in the host community, with the consequences that this will have from a social and linguistic point of view (Caravedo 2014). As we mentioned, this paper does not set out to dissect the aspects that are going to be proposed according to each of these factors. However, the study and analysis of specific situations and contexts do require the incorporation of these elements.

In the course of this article I will commence by explaining social integration before introducing the sociolinguistic dimension and, finally, focusing on two of the aspects involved in the process which I think call for particular attention in order to re-think approaches to them. These are: the analysis of the host community, and the components that are modified in the acculturation process.

I shall adopt a cognitivist perspective with a view to underlining the importance of starting from the perceptions of those involved in the process in order to analyse and interpret the dynamic spaces and linguistic identities which they themselves construct (Moreno Fernández 2012a; Caravedo 2014; Bürki 2019) and use in inter-group relations. My aim, then, is to highlight the need to change the starting-point of research into this phenomenon in order to avoid imposing researchers' own perspectives, which are usually developed from their own perceptions and, therefore, give their research a subjective bias (Caravedo 2014).

## 2. Social and Sociolinguistics Integration

When dealing with integration, our starting-point is Berry's acculturation model (Berry 1990, 1997, 2001) devised on the basis of transcultural psychology. Although the model's original scheme has been revised and extended,<sup>3</sup> it is a good place to start if we wish to define *integration*. The importance of Berry's model lies in its significant advances on earlier ones, and we shall refer to two of them. In the first place, it does not take acculturation as a synonym of assimilation; rather, assimilation is one of the process's possible solutions. Acculturation sets in when two different cultures come into contact and is defined as "the process by individual change, both by being influenced by contact with another culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes under way in their own culture" (Berry 1990, p. 204). It follows that the context in which acculturation happens should be redefined through the adoption of various strategies, as we shall see.

The second important innovation in Berry's model is its assumption that the process is bidirectional and, therefore, involves both the immigrant and host populations at all their respective structural levels (Gugenberger 2007; Moreno Fernández 2009). Consequently, the full weight of responsibility for the process does not fall solely on the immigrant population.

In line with Berry's model, acculturation is measured by means of two independent attitudinal dimensions which, depending on how they combine, give rise to a range of possible solutions (Figure 1). One of the dimensions has to do with the subordinate group's (in our case, the group composed of migrants) maintenance of its cultural identity, the other with the extent to which relations with

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<sup>3</sup> While Berry's acculturation model has been applied widely, above all (though not exclusively) in US and Canadian contexts, later valuable proposals have attempted to refine it with the addition of a greater number of explanatory variables. See the Interactive Acculturation Model (Bourhis et al. 1997) and the extended relative acculturation model (ERAM) (Navas Luque et al. 2004; Navas Luque and Rojas Tejada 2010). As it is not our objective to analyse the acculturation process, we shall not discuss Berry's model here but merely take its basic principles, namely, the existence of different acculturation strategies and its consequent definition of *integration*, as the starting-point for our study.

other group(s) are valued and maintained. Given that the process is taken to be bidirectional, both dimensions are present in both groups, that is to say, in the dominant group (the host society) and the subordinate group. Thus, Berry's model takes into account, on the one hand, the desires of the minority group with respect to the two dimensions and, on the other, the preferences shown by the majority group with regard to immigrants. Viewed in this light, the concept of acculturation assumes that cultural changes occurring as a result of contact will affect both minority and majority groups, albeit to a lesser degree in the case of the latter (Berry 1990).

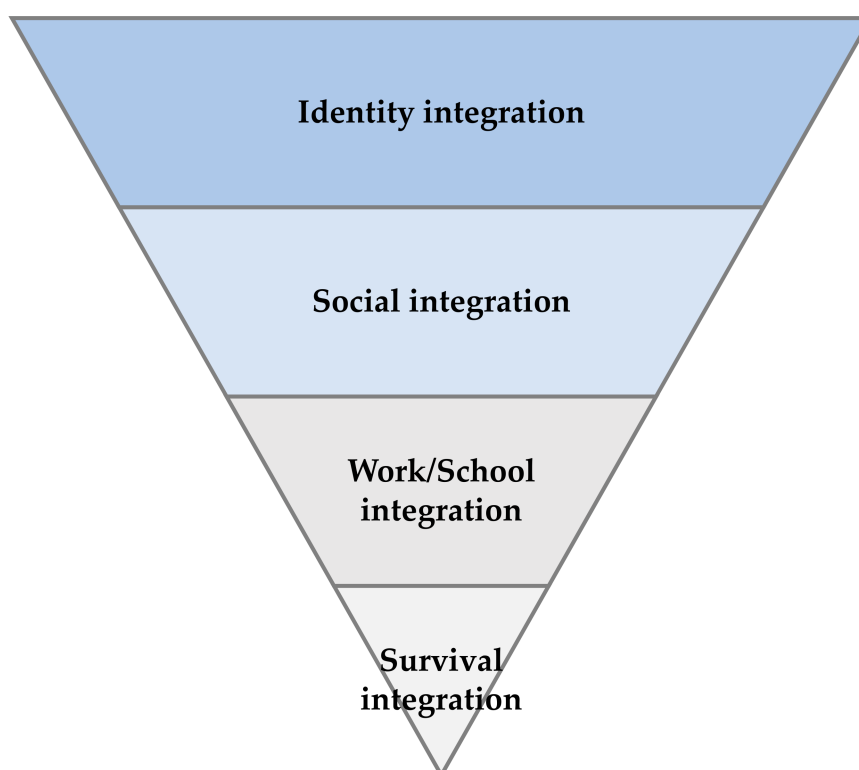
	SUBORDINATE GROUP		DOMINANT GROUP	
	Extent to which cultural identity is maintained and valued			
Extent to which relations with other groups are valued and maintained	Integration	Assimilation	Multiculturalism	Melting pot
	Separation	Marginalisation	Segregation	Exclusion
	+	-	+	-

Figure 1. Berry's acculturation model. Source: Berry (2001, p. 618).

Thus, when we talk about integration, we mean the desire to preserve one's own cultural identity and also to strike up relations with other groups. From the point of view of the host community, the desire that migrants forge relations with other groups further implies a search on its own part for such relations. In this regard, Moreno Fernández (2009, p. 131) defines integration as the "process of mutual adjustment on the part of an immigrant community and of a resident population which enables the intersubjective construction of the social reality of both populations and leads them to share certain values, whether those of the resident population or of the resident and immigrant populations".

As far as the process's bidirectionality is concerned, it should be pointed out that the host community becomes the powerful group both macro- and microsocially, thereby controlling the creation and maintenance of the asymmetrical relations that arise by definition when there is a migratory movement. In this sense, regardless of the desires of the subordinate group—or, at least, over and above them—integration can only be achieved successfully if the dominant group has an open and inclusive attitude towards cultural contact and the preservation of different identities. In other words, the real prospects of integration depend on the stance of the majority group (Berry 1990, 1997; Bourhis et al. 1997; Navas Luque and Rojas Tejada 2010). Consequently, as Berry (2001, p. 619) points out, integration depends on finding a society with multicultural (or intercultural) values, free of prejudices, with low discrimination levels, positive attitudes towards cultural contact and a predisposition to identify with different groups.

Moreno Fernández (2009) has proposed a model for the study of sociolinguistic integration which treats the analysis of the linguistic dimension as a function of the process of social climbing and also in parallel to it. For Moreno Fernández, social integration is a process—and therefore dynamic—with four phases (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Integration process pyramid. Source: [Moreno Fernández \(2009, p. 133\)](#).

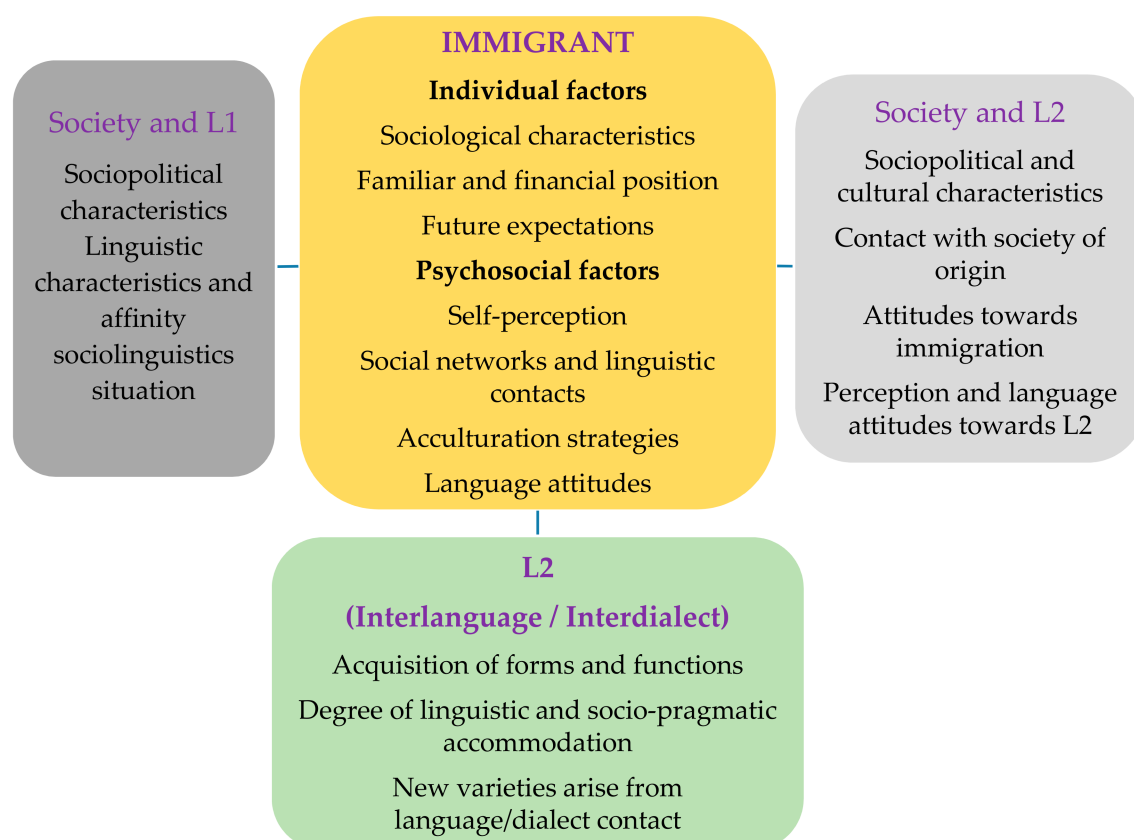
The survival and work/school phases refer to individuals' covering their basic vital needs and their employment or schooling needs, respectively. For its part, social integration entails the presence of the individual in society as such and as a member of a social group tied to his or her national, ethnic, linguistic or racial origin. In this phase, the individual is still identified as belonging to the category of "immigrant". Finally, the phase of integrated identity implies that the host society recognises the immigrant as one of them "in social, cultural and affective terms" ([Moreno Fernández 2009, p. 133](#)). This does not mean any loss of original identity, but rather that the individual can shuffle multiple identities.<sup>4</sup> As the process advances, different phases of integration will be completed, always in tandem with changes on the linguistic plane (133 ff.). That is to say that what happens socially is reflected linguistically.

Through these different phases runs a *continuum* in which social contacts and, in short, interpersonal relations between immigrants and natives, are projected ever more frequently. As a result, the components of the psychosocial spheres of both groups must be incorporated into the study. In other words, the migrant's passage through the different phases entails a shift from maintaining simple relations with members of the host community to the establishment of more complex ones ([Sancho Pascual 2019](#)). Completion of the integrated identity phase carries with it the de facto disappearance of the immigrant category and, therefore, a recategorization of the community's social reality, that is, a recategorization of the groups that make up the community in terms of the feeling of belonging, on the part of the immigrants, and of the perception that the immigrants belong to other groups than that of the immigrants, on the part of the host society.

<sup>4</sup> This way of viewing integrations agrees in part with Gugenberger's hypothesis ([Gugenberger 2007, 2008](#)). By introducing the concept of linguistic hybridity, Gugenberger revamps Berry's model to overcome the rigidity caused by its binary nature. For Gugenberger, the resolution of acculturation need not be found in any one of Berry's four strategies; instead, individuals may draw on elements with some points in common with each of the various solutions in accordance with their communicative needs.

In short, the further the advance of integration, the greater and, in interpersonal terms, the closer the contact between different groups; and as this contact grows, the new context will acquire a negotiated re-definition in terms of shared values. On the basis of Tajfel's theory (Tajfel 1984) of social identity, and in view of the relation between language and identity (Tabouret-Keller 1997; Moreno Fernández 2006; Coupland 2007), theories of communicational accommodation and ethnolinguistic identity (Giles and Jonhson 1981; Giles et al. 1991; Viladot i Presas et al. 2007) highlight the importance of the linguistic plane in the process of group categorization, where its role is crucial as a defining attribute of group identity. Thus, we take as our hypothesis that, as the integration processes advance and intersubjective relations are established between residents and arrivals, thereby leading to social recategorization—as, then, social identities come closer to each other (group limits are diluted)—the linguistic practices of members of the group will come closer together since, if the group is redefined, its defining characteristics will be modified, its linguistic ones among them. Thus, from the point of view of sociolinguistics, the changes produced in group configurations will be reflected in the speech communities' linguistic patterns, which will be modified *pari passu* with the configurations.

Integration is a complex process involving various elements of different kinds. The IN.MIGRA2-CM project proposes a holistic model of sociolinguistic integration which encompasses them all (Figure 3). The sphere of the individual is affected by factors related to origin society, host society, social context and the linguistic phenomena resulting from contacts between languages or language varieties. By analysing these factors, we shall be able to see how they impact the process and, therefore, to describe how the acculturation process happens.



**Figure 3.** Holistic model of the sociolinguistic integration of immigrants. (Paredes García).

Generally speaking, we need to point out two significant biases in research conducted into integration from different academic disciplines. Firstly, studies of acculturation have mainly focused on analysing acculturation strategies (whether preferred or actually carried out), and chiefly those of the minority groups (thereby ignoring studies about the host population). Secondly, the aspects of culture

and identity that are modified on contact have received little attention to date, particularly once again in relation to dominant groups. One outcome of that is that changes arising in the psycho-social sphere of individuals and the ensuing subjective perceptions of the process on the part of those involved in it have been pushed into the background (González-Rábago 2014, p. 204).

Thus, by working on the microsocial plane, which is where inter-group communication takes place and where, therefore, the new shared values mentioned earlier are negotiated, and by considering the linguistic dimension, we may turn our attention to two aspects: the study of the perception of individuals forming part of the host community and the study of the linguistic elements which are modified in the process of that intersubjective construction of the new shared reality. When it comes to the first of the elements, as we have pointed out, the real possibilities of the migrants will be limited by the desires, attitudes and behaviours of the host population. In this respect, in order to gain a full insight into how acculturation is taking place, it is vital to know the position of the host community and the way in which its attitudes and actions have an impact on those of the immigrant population and adjust them. As for the second aspect, the changes that take place in the cultural elements of the various groups in contact will shape a new shared reality, along with their cultural and social values. Therefore, it will be necessary to identify the linguistic changes taking place as a consequence of cultural contact and to determine the social significance that they are taking on within the community. In other words, the study of the acculturation process requires characterising, describing and interpreting the new reality constructed among the individuals that make up the community.

### 3. Reflections on the Analysis of Two Factors Involved in the Process of Acculturation

#### 3.1. Perspective of the Host Community

As far as the perspective of the host community is concerned, the analysis of their attitudes and behaviour vis-à-vis the acculturation process is essential for the real prospects of the migrants depend on them, as we've just mentioned. González-Rábago (2014) indicates a paradox regarding the roles residents and arrivals assume in the process that could play a part in determining the attitudes each group develops towards it. The full weight of responsibility is shouldered by the migrants, who are regarded as the active subjects in the process, yet they do not have—or do not always have—the capacity to make decisions about what they want and how they want to achieve it. This state of affairs is complemented by the view that the residents are passive parties to the process when in fact, as we have said, it is they who may either facilitate or hamper the process since they enjoy higher status and, consequently, wield more power. This interpretation also has a bearing on the degree of awareness residents possess of the implications of acculturation.

Since the linguistic dimension advances in parallel with the social one and evolves as a function of the needs generated in it, when analysing sociolinguistic integration from the viewpoint of the host population, some correspondence is expected between social attitudes and behaviour and linguistic ones. However, the work carried out in Madrid by the team of sociolinguists from the IN.MIGRA-CM project showed, on the basis of questionnaires, how there are favourable attitudes towards social issues related to immigration and integration, but that these attitudes are not echoed in the dimensions relating to modifications in linguistic practice (Sancho Pascual 2019). Therefore, it might be expected that these favourable attitudes towards social elements were reflected in behaviour oriented towards integration and would consequently redound in progress in terms of integration. As pointed out, that would entail a recategorization of the groups and the consequent redefinition of the identity-related elements that characterize them. However, the majority of Madrilenians claim to hold the view that communicational convergence—which would imply some degree of modification to their language use—is not necessary for social integration to happen. As stated, that is what they claim, but, as I will explain shortly, we need to ascertain what they really think, how they use language, and how far that use is being modified or otherwise by cultural contact.



At the same time, we might ask how Madrilenians understand the term “integration”. According to IN.MIGRA2-CM data, the majority (76.7% of a sample of 1534 respondents) do indeed believe that integration entails immigrants’ maintaining their origin culture and adopting Spanish cultural traits (Pérez Cantador 2019). That said, the doubt remains whether Madrilenians are aware that integration also implies a degree of change to their own cultural traits and signs of identity.

Furthermore, when dealing with a such a socially sensitive subject as immigration, studies of opinion and attitudes run the risk of obtaining socially acceptable responses (Ramos de Oliveira et al. 2005). That makes it necessary to ascertain whether we are dealing with real or only apparent attitudes (Sancho Pascual 2019). In our opinion, not even the use of anonymous surveys can guarantee honest answers because even when they are sure they are not being observed, it is unlikely that individuals will admit to racist attitudes or to being less than tolerant. In this regard, we need to employ a qualitative methodology which will allow us to explore and learn more about residents’ views regarding all that integration implies and how they stand in relation to it. Life-stories, in-depth interviews or discussion groups can provide information about how those involved perceive reality and the integration process.

At the same time, in questionnaires sent out by the internet, the Hispalin-UAH team has found out how, as indicated above, a majority of the people willing to participate in this declare a positive attitude towards immigration, a fact which may influence the results. In other words, people with a more positive attitude are more willing to take part in this sort of study. Thus, methodological steps should be taken with respect to this population in order to find and achieve a sample that represents all the opinions present in society.

As for the role of the linguistic dimension in acculturation processes, various studies in different contexts have shown that immigrant populations use language knowingly as a strategy of approximation and/or distancing in intergroup dynamics (Giles et al. 1977; Giles and Jonhson 1987; Sanz Huéscar 2008; Sancho Pascual 2014, 2016, for the Madrid context). Therefore, there needs to be exploration of the way the host society, for its part, modifies its own linguistic practice to set limits and differentiate between groups. In this regard, the transmission of linguistic ideologies may be used as a source of power in order to perpetuate asymmetrical relations. In this context Preston’s popular language theory assumes importance (Preston 2004). This theory works from the speaker’s own perception to explain how the individual categorizes both what is regarded as his/her language and what are regarded as varieties (Moreno Fernández 2012a; Caravedo 2014), and how, in the Madrid context (which Madrilenians consider to be monolingual and represent the “exemplary language” of Preston’s model), this favours the transmission of linguistic ideologies (Sancho Pascual) on the basis of the “ideology of the standard language” (Milroy and Milroy 1985; Milroy 2001; Moreno Fernández 2017). In order to remain distinct from the immigrant, then, Madrilenians may be shoring up their own identity by transmitting attitudes which confer on their linguistic practice greater prestige than on that of the immigrants. Those attitudes would, in part, be composed of ideas concerning correctness, normativity or exemplarity.

Finally, as far as the host population is concerned, we need to study whether its linguistic practice is being modified in some degree as a result of the acculturation process and, if that is the case, what uses are changing and what significance they acquire *via-à-vis* the acculturation process. In the Madrid context, that would call, on the one hand, for the creation of corpora to complement those already available for studying speech in Madrid<sup>5</sup> and, on the other, as we shall see in the next section, the inclusion of perception tests.

### 3.2. Analysis of the Linguistic Features Modified in the Acculturation Process

As for the analysis of the linguistic features modified in the acculturation process, two levels of analysis are defined which need to be considered. On the one hand, the study of sociolinguistic acculturation needs to analyse the sociolinguistic corpora of the spoken language in order to characterize

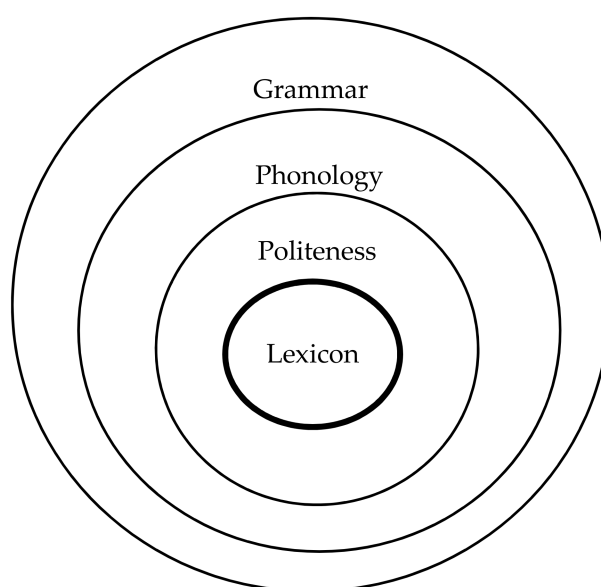
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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://preseea.linguas.net>.

the real speech of those involved in the process. Comparison of the speech of the different groups would enable us to observe the effect of linguistic contact in migratory contexts (accommodation, levelling out, language learning and phenomena deriving from it, transfer, etc.).

On the other hand, from a cognitivist standpoint, the subjective perception of linguistic practices by those involved would have to be tackled in order to explore the significance acquired by particular language uses in the integration process (Moreno Fernández 2012a; Caravedo 2014). If we work on the assumption that integration implies social recategorization and that, therefore, there will be modifications to the signs of identity which define social groups, we must suppose that the social indexing of linguistic uses may vary, that new signs of group identity may appear (because there will be new groups), as will, consequently, new noticeable and marked features from the social point of view.

In our first studies of the sociolinguistic integration of Madrid's immigrant population, we proposed the following model to explain the process of linguistic accommodation (Figure 4).<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 4.** Process of linguistic accommodation (Sancho Pascual 2014, p. 189).

As shown in the figure, linguistic modifications commence with lexical adaptation; thereafter, for a variety of reasons, the process seems to slow down. While we believe that that is actually the case (although we need to perform more studies to confirm the model), the key issue is how the accommodation processes are interpreted. In our studies of the speech patterns of Madrid's migrant population, we have confirmed that there are cases of divergence from and convergence with Madrilenian speech patterns (Sancho Pascual 2015; Paredes García 2017; Cestero Mancera; Olímpio de Oliveira Silva 2019). Divergence is always found at the pragmatic level and is associated with cultural

<sup>6</sup> The proposed hypothesis is taken from the results of research carried out on the Ecuadorian community in the city of Madrid based on the discourse of the respondents from the sample used. Lexical adaptation would in the first place occur due to a question of communicative effectiveness and, generally, only in intercultural interactions, as foreseen by the communication accommodation theory (Giles et al. 1991). From there, accommodation may or may not occur, or may take place more slowly. When it comes to issues related to courtesy, the pragmatic aspects are directly related to cultural aspects and, in situations of cultural contact, their evolution is linked to the development of sociolinguistic attitudes, as Lambert, Gardner and their collaborators pointed out in their pioneering studies on attitudes in Canada (Lambert et al. 1968). As for phonetic-phonological and grammatical levels, the degree of sociolinguistic awareness will have a different impact on them. The lower level of awareness of grammatical variation will cause grammatical variables to arrive later at a level of consciousness that fosters change. However, phonetic features are important signs identified more as linguistic elements belonging to certain social groups, so their accommodation will be linked to the progress of social integration (Giles et al. 1995; Caravedo 2014).



issues. Viewed unilaterally and ethnocentrically, cases of divergence could be interpreted as factors hindering sociolinguistic integration since they amount to movements away from host community uses. However, on the assumptions as stated above, namely that the shared system of values has to be redefined and negotiated between immigrants and residents, we cannot expect there ever to be full convergence towards the speech patterns of the host community or that the linguistic patterns of the new context can be interpreted from the static viewpoint of the host community. As we have said, the linguistic uses that emerge in the new context will have to acquire a new social value. In short, what we try to show is that it will not be enough to carry out descriptive analyses of a variationist nature, but that it will be necessary to use complementary methods that identify the social meaning of the linguistic uses of the speech communities.

In this respect, the analysis of the perception and of linguistic attitudes towards languages or varieties of Spanish in the Madrid context, or towards particular linguistic features, may yield valuable information. The value placed on the linguistic dimension on the cognitive and affective planes will provide information about the place this plane occupies in the individual's psychosocial sphere. The value placed on this dimension on the affective plane may indicate identification with the linguistic features at stake and, consequently, a feeling of belonging to the groups that manifest those uses since the groups share the system of values, beliefs and attitudes that underlies their forms of behaviour, one of which is linguistic. As far as the cognitive component is concerned, it may imply asymmetrical relations since variables like correctness or open prestige come into play. As both are elements related to status and power, the way this component's linguistic dimension is evaluated may give us information about how those involved in the process perceive this group asymmetry.

#### 4. By Way of Conclusion: The Researcher as Member of the Host Community

As [Caravedo \(2014\)](#) has emphasised, I would not like to end without mentioning the importance of the figure of the researcher. As far as methodology is concerned, we must take stock of some of the ideas set out above. Firstly, we have to be aware that, as an individual, the researcher is one more actor in the host community, which has its system of values, beliefs, attitudes and also its own categorizations of social reality. In this regard, the researcher needs to perform a considerable exercise of estrangement if his or her own beliefs are not to affect the research at both the design and the interpretation phases. If we wish to know how the process is evolving and whether or not integration is occurring, we cannot analyse the phenomena from our own point of view, in other words, by fitting the data into a series of categories which appear to be valid but are, in fact, of our own ethnocentric and subjective fabrication. As stated, the study of sociolinguistic integration must enable us to understand what significance and what interpretation the actors in the process give to the new array of linguistic uses defining the new reality which is being built dynamically and progressively by intersubjective contact. From the very instant that we find particular respondents for our research and call them immigrants, we are transferring to them our categorization and identifying them by means of an attribute which does not define them, but which has to do with a particular circumstance of their life. At the same time, we are shoe-horning them into belonging to a particular group which need not coincide with their own perception or sense of belonging to that or to any other group.

In short, that the process is complex is obvious, so too that it has many components, among them an element of individuality which is difficult to systematize, including as it does individuals' wills and capacities to manage their own realities and their own conflicts of identity, whenever these arise as a by-product of migratory movement and cultural contact. Accordingly, there is no simple way to approach the process. Our work needs to be interdisciplinary in its combination of diverse qualitative and quantitative methods which will permit us to form an overview of the process after analysing the different variables impacting on it. It will also be necessary to introduce a cognitivist approach that trains its sights on how those involved in the process perceive it, as well as on inter-group and inter-subjective interactions. In our opinion, the first step to be taken if we wish to understand and explain the process must be that the researchers themselves take stock of this complexity so that

they may then understand, identify and interpret the psychosocial elements that are at stake in a process of this nature. There can be no integration without a reorganization of pre-ordained social categories. There will be no reorganization until the initial ethnocentric perspectives of all involved are deconstructed. This entails a constant self-reflection and questioning of our social normality, which is acquired from the first stages of socialisation based on the development of perception as a cognitive tool of reality (Caravedo 2014). As a result, re-socialisation—within the acculturation process—is not just the responsibility of the migrant population, but also of the host population. Therefore, the researcher must assume these premises and handle them appropriately when approaching the study of sociolinguistic integration. In this respect, we are facing a social issue of enormous psychosocial sensitivity that calls for an interest and a realistic engagement on the researcher's part. In this sense, it is crucial to learn how to self-question one's own prejudices and know how to recognise and control them when dealing with the study of sociolinguistic integration. Only then will the researcher be able to comply with the principle of debt incurred (Labov 1982, p. 173) in pursuit of a fairer and more egalitarian society (Moreno Fernández 2009, p. 153).

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