The expansion of velar segments. Dialectal variation in Catalan verbal morphology

Verbal morphology is one of the aspects in which distance between standard Catalan and Catalan dialects is most considerable. More specifically, variation increases with respect to the presence or absence of a velar segment that appears between the stem and the inflectional suffixes and has been traditionally interpreted as part of the stem (cf. Mascaró 1986, Wheeler 2002). This segment only occurs in certain verbal forms of some conjugation-II verbs in standard Catalan, but has expanded to many more verbs and verbal forms in many dialects. This paper focuses on the distribution of this segment in Northwestern Catalan in comparison with that of the standard variety to provide evidences for progressive language change. In order to this, data are taken from the Corpus Oral Dialectal of the Universitat de Barcelona (compiled during 1994-1996) and from the data collected by Alcover during 1906-1928 (cf. Alcover 1929-1933). On the basis of the expanded distribution of the velar segment, we will provide an alternative interpretation of this “meaningless” segment. Our interpretation involves morphological distribution patterns –like the dependence relations between verbal forms that are common in other Romance languages (cf. Maiden 2004)– as well as phonological motivation (such as stress patterns in verbal paradigms).

References