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DOUBLETS AND *CULTISMOS* –
POLEMIC WITH JAMES M. ANDERSON

This article aims to review the theories proposed by J. M. Anderson: whether it is true that the mechanism of creation of a doublet begins with the semantic change followed by the sound (formal) change, plus a free variation stage. It's aim is to discover the real mechanism of the creation of Spanish etymological doublet. At the same time it is the result of an extensive analysis based on a vast historical material.

Some years ago while working on a monograph on Spanish etymological doublets I came across James M. Anderson's article "Doublets, *cultismos* and their relation in Castilian Spanish", which was published in ORBIS in 1992. I found it quite revolutionary then. However, after some time I managed to collect facts that create controversy with Anderson's position. This is the reason why I would like to polemicize here with some of Anderson's opinions or at least to clarify some of his observations.

First, let us recall the most salient features of Anderson's stance. He considers cultism as a direct borrowing from an older stage of the language, or a lexeme that was used by upper classes of the society (cf. *artículo* vs. popular *artejo*). The features analysed in Anderson's article are the initial groups PL-, FL-, CL-, as they are considered a "prolific source of doublets in Spanish" (p. 166) – an absence or presence of palatal *ll* originated from those initial groups is a sign of cultism, cf. *pluvia/ lluvia; pleno/ lleno; clave/ llave; clamar/ llamar; flama/ llama*. Anderson observes that there are words which begin with each of those initial groups that have not suffered such changes, cf. *placer, playa, plaza, plazo, pluma, plomo, plural, plañir, claro, clavo, clima, flaco, fleco, flojo, flor*. At the same time he notices that some of the so called *cultismos* can be hardly considered learned words since they are simultaneous with popular words in the documents from 10th or 11th century.

Finally, Anderson concludes: "If we reject the *cultismo* hypothesis for the development of some doublets, such as the forms discussed above, it would be expected that at some point in time the original etymon gave rise to two competing forms in free variation, one, say, containing /pl-/ and the other /ʎ/, for example

flor/ llor irrespective of social class" (p. 168). Another, perhaps a bit controversial conclusion Anderson presents is that the polysemy of the Latin etymon that causes the differentiation at the semantic level is followed by further phonetic differentiation: "One of these non-phonetic inducements to change may relate to the underlying polysemous characteristics of a word in which diverging semantic properties invite phonetic modifications" (p. 169). It means that the extension was first metaphorical and then spread to the phonetic level. When the meaning is not far from the metaphorical one, it remains a single lexem, cf. *flor* as 'flower' and *flor in expressions such as la flor de su juventud* 'flower of his youth'. As the author recommends more detailed studies, we would like to present here our observations made while preparing a lexicographical corpus (1661-1739) needed to complete the monograph.

To begin with, let us make it clear that Anderson's article is valuable because it deals with the theme of doublets. As García Valle observes in 1998, the problem of doublets is not too often studied in Spanish linguistics. Besides, the article contains the revolutionary hypothesis of the inverse order in the creation of a doublet, *i.e.* a semantic change induces a phonetic one. However, it looks quite risky to draw such a general conclusion from so few examples of a single phonetic feature (*i.e.* the behaviour of some initial groups), because it is well-known that the differences at the phonetic level may occur in many different phonemes, which is easily noticeable in the historical material:

absinthium, -ii (from gr.) > *asensio* (1208: CORDE); *assensios* (1250: CORDE); *axénxio* (c. 1250: *axenxio*, CORDE); *acienzo* (1ª mitad del s. XIV: DCECEH); *absintio* (a. 1540: CORDE); *axenjo* (1710: CORDE; 1592: NTL I, 396); *rapidus > rábdo* (c. 1240-1272: *rabdo*, CORDE); *rapido* (c. 1270: CORDE); *raudo* (1492: CORDE); *rápido* (c. 1501: CORDE).

Among the examples of words that according to Anderson, do not produce doublets, there are also those which possess their popular counterparts: *plaza* < lat. *platea* together with *platea* (although some sources consider this word to be of uncertain origin), *plazo > lat. placitu* together with *pleito*. Among those lexemes there are some which can be considered semilearned (Sp. *semicultismos*) due to their partial phonetic developement: *plegar, playa, plomo, plañir*.

The problem of the learned words that according to Anderson can be hardly considered as such because of their early dating, can be solved if we admit that Spanish received Latin influences throughout its history (cf. Castro 1936; Martinez Otero 1959; Korolenko 1969; Benítez Claros 1960; Bustos Tovar 1974; Herrero Ingelmo 2007). The documents from earlier stages, except from a few that come from the ninth century, are scarcely available. That is why Carmen Pensado (1983) when applying the term *cultismo* to the voices imported from

Latin, splits them into *heredados* (inherited – borrowed at an early date) and *simples* (simple – arrived late) sometimes called "conscious borrowing" (cf. Clavería Nadal 1991). Wright (1976) also makes the distinction between early and late *cultismos*.

If we analyse a couple of doublets together with their first documentation, we can easily observe that in fact, there is no rule explaining their appearance in the written language:

afección (1411-1412) – *afición* (1440-1498);
artículo (c. 1250) – *artejo* (1251);
averso (1465-66) – *avieso* (1212 – c. 1250: *auieso*; c. 1270: *avieso*);
circo (1060) – *cerco* (1194-1211);
computar (1589) – *contar* (c. 1140);
delicado (1325) – *delgado* (1179-1184);
directo (1011) – *derecho* (1099);
límite (867-1043: *limite*; 1356: *límite*) – *linde* (1074);
mácula (1246-1252; 1376-96: *macula*) – *mancha* (c. 1250);
raro (c. 1250) – *ralo* (1250);
vigilar (1493) – *velar* (c. 1140).

It can be noticed that there are pairs of words where the learned word is a classical borrowing in the late Medieval or even Classical Spanish as well as it can be practically simultaneous with their popular counterpart.

It is also worth mentioning that a group PL- can be transformed into / tʃ /: *plattu > chato, *ploppu > chopo; pluteu > choco* (Penny 2001: 71) and that the palatalization also occurred in the days of preliterate Spanish, although there is also a possibility of its partial appearance in Vulgar Latin (Penny 2011: 70). It means that the transformation of the initial cluster can be considered a tendency rather than an exception-free rule.

However, as it is the semantic aspect that is of our principal interest, let us begin with an observation about the lexical camps. The alleged membership of learned words to the upper classes and therefore to the higher registers of the society is questionable since, as it is shown in our analysis (Stala 2012b), most doublets between 1611-1739 pertain to the field of so called everyday life. This apparent contradiction can be cleared up when we follow the reasoning of Molho (1985: 474) who differentiates between the physical aspect and mental aspect of a word (in original version: *fisismo, mentalismo*). He emphasises a diachronic character of the former and synchronic character of the latter as it is shown in Figure 1.

Although it is true that the semantic differentiation is an important factor in the creation and survival of learned words and therefore doublets themselves, the latter subsist only thanks to semantic differentiation; otherwise some of their founding element must disappear (cf. Cano Aguilar 2002: 180). Let us notice here that the same example of *plaga/ llaga* was mentioned by Korolenko

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              fisismo
   word = -------------
              mentalismo


         traditional              learned              learned
entero = ---------------    íntegro = --------    negro = ----------
         traditional              learned              traditional
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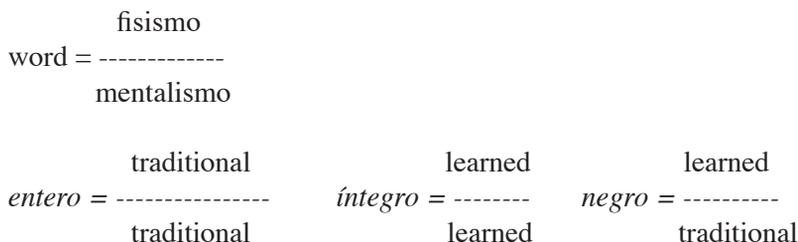
Fig. 1. Double aspect of a word (Molho 1995: 474).

(1969: 112) while discussing the internal relations in the doublets, namely homo-
nymy and semantic differentiation (see Figure 2).
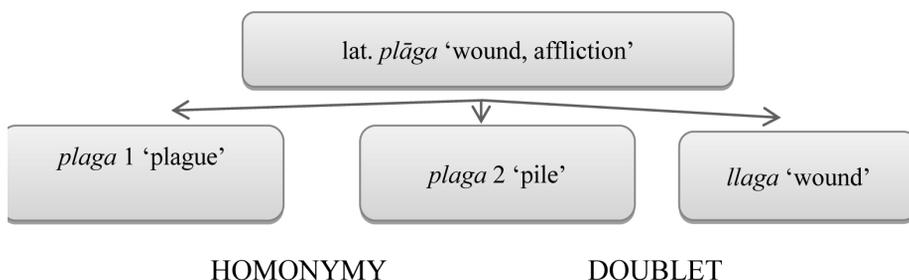
Fig. 2. Difference between homonymy and a doublet (Korolenko 1969: 112).

It seems that the Anderson's scheme (see Figure 3 below) contains an incon-
sistency: if it is true that the mechanism of creation of a doublet begins with the
semantic change followed by the sound (formal) change, plus a free variation
stage, the scheme under discussion (p. 169) seems to contradict his own suppo-
sition.

Fig. 3. Anderson's scheme of the creation of a doublet (Anderson 1992: 169).

Although both meanings are used simultaneously (free variation stage), there is a <u>formal</u> differentiation (*plaga / llaga*), which denies Anderson's theory. Perhaps we would not expect the same form to appear in Latin anymore, but in the preliterate Spanish with both meanings, yet it is hard to decide which of them: 'plague', 'affliction' or 'wound'? There seem to be no way to find it out. In order to prove this hypothesis a profound study should be carried out that would cover the first and the following apparition in the language together with their documented meaning. All that requires more time and space than it is allowed in such an outline.

The metaphorical extension[1] has to be considered in case of the repartition of Latin meanings, that is when the polysemous etymon distributes its meanings among the Spanish words, in this case between an inherited (popular) word and the learned one (cf. Stala 2010, 2012b). Even if we admit that little metaphorical extension does not cause changes in phonetic form, as in *flor de su juventud*, it is difficult to establish measure when one can speak of sufficient spread between the two meanings because, as Bloomfield said (1984), it is difficult to measure a degree of the closeness of meaning. What is more, in the doublets discussed above – for example, *pleno/ lleno*, *pluvia/ lluvia* or *pleno/ lleno* – the semantic closeness is even more salient.

In conclusion, the semantic factor may be considered vital, but the order suggested by Anderson is difficult to accept. It is quite possible that a polysemous word in Latin used in different social contexts acquired with time different meaning, which was followed by a different form providing in consequence a doublet on both levels: semantic and formal. One thing is still certain: the doublet is a fascinating yet poorly investigated phenomenon in the history of Spanish vocabulary.

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[1] Although it would be possible to speak also of metonymy or ellipses.

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