

An interview with Joan Costa-Carreras on the standardisation of Catalan and comparative standardology (May 2018)

Brief biography of Joan Costa-Carreras

Joan Costa-Carreras is Professor at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. He has edited selected writings by Pompeu Fabra (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2009) and has also authored a major study of Fabra's views on the syntactic norm for Catalan (Munich: Peniopo, 2009). More information about Pompeu Fabra can be found on the following websites: https://www.upf.edu/expo_pompeufabra (an online exhibition in English) and <https://www.upf.edu/web/portalpompeufabra> (Fabra's collected works in Catalan). Professor Costa-Carreras can be contacted by email: joan.costa@upf.edu.

Wendy Ayres-Bennett (WAB)

Much of the work on standardisation has been based on the history of major European languages, such as French, German or English. It would be interesting to know whether the same processes are appropriate for the Catalan case. For instance, in an article published in 2016, I made a distinction between:

- a linguist/standardiser who is prescriptive in intent (i.e. who deliberately imposes value judgements on variants)
- a linguist/standardiser who is prescriptive in expression, but whose comments nevertheless reflect (changing) usage and the relative frequency of variants
- a linguist/standardiser who is made to appear more prescriptive than he really is because later commentators or grammarians add in value judgements or make the prescription more absolute.

These distinctions seem to work well for the French, English and German languages, but I am interested to know whether they would also work for Fabra,¹ for instance. Are there examples where he is 1) blatantly prescriptive, where the variants were more or less equal; 2) prescriptive in tone, but his judgement reflects the reality of usage; 3) tolerant of variation, but is made to appear more prescriptive by the way he is subsequently read. This would certainly be the case for Vaugelas in 17th-century France, Schottelius in 17th-century Germany, and Lowth in 18th-century England, and I would like to know if it works for the more recent example of Fabra.

Joan Costa-Carreras (JCC)

Before answering your specific questions, let me make some general observations about ways of analysing prescriptive texts.

1. When talking about texts' 'intents', 'expression' and 'interpretation', at least two perspectives are appropriate:
 - Speech Act Theory: the distinction between locutionary (a sentence's grammatical structure and literal meaning), illocutionary (a sentence's real meaning) and perlocutionary acts (a sentence's effect on the sentence's recipient).
 - Discourse analysis: rhetoric, strategies, ideology, attitudes, etc.

¹ Pompeu Fabra (1968-1948), the standardiser of Catalan. See Costa (2009*b*). Also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeu_Fabra.

2. A long time ago, I read a book which was a kind of revelation in this sense: Alain Berrendonner, *L'éternel grammairien. Etude du discours normatif*. Berne and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982. Pp. 125.

Do you know it? I applied it in my PhD thesis on Fabra's codification, and I published, in Catalan, two works (2008, 2016), combining the two perspectives.

WAB

Yes, it is something I have also cited in my work.

JCC

For having a wider perspective on the ways prescriptivism can be focused on, maybe it would be useful for you to read what I wrote on Costa (2013), which has been translated into English (and will hopefully soon be published; Costa forthcoming):

“4.5. Circularity of research into normative grammar

If we apply the circularity [among theorists, ‘agents’ and lay users] to research into normative grammar, the following points need to be made.

The theorists potentially required for a research project into a problem of normative grammar are university researchers from the following specialities: evaluation of corpus language planning, language teaching, language learning macro- and micro-sociolinguistics, theoretical and descriptive linguistics, dialectometry, discourse analysis, psychology, psycholinguistics, social psychology, error analysis, corpus linguistics and survey research.

In my opinion, the agents are, on the one hand, the academy of the language (IEC) and the educational authorities, and on the other, language consultants and teachers of Catalan. I make this distinction because theorists are in very close contact with the IEC and the educational authorities. Many members of the Philological Section (SF) are theorists. So, why do I not regard the SF as a member of the theoretical sector? Because most theorists are from specialities (theoretical linguistics and dialectology, for example) that are not fully adapted to the SF's function as a normalising body. When these theorists act within the SF they become agents who help to produce normative products; they do not engage in research. In the work carried out by the SF, even the theorists of normativisation (Mila Segarra) or standardisation (Isidor Marí and Miquel Àngel Pradilla, for example) do not engage in research but apply research to developing norms. According to Argenter (2010), “doing grammar” and “writing a grammar” are quite different things. And the educational authorities rely on theorists to advise them on how to go about their daily activity (programming, evaluation, etc.).

The second group of agents – language consultants and teaching staff – may be in contact with the product of the theorists' research (studies, publications, etc.) but they have to apply the official IEC regulations. In some cases, theorists and consultants take part in monitoring how the regulations are implemented [...]. The IEC has sought the cooperation of language consultants and professional users [...]. The complexity of the relations between all the agents can be seen if we remember that the IEC itself provides a language consultancy service through Optimot and the Advisory Office.

If we move onto the users – speakers and writers – another distinction can be made. One group of users is made up of professionals (writers, journalists, translators, text editors, presenters, etc.) who earn their living by producing oral and/or written texts. A second group consists of non-professionals. The professional users need to be held responsible for the quality of what they produce, like any other professional collective. Some of these professionals also collaborate with theorists [...]. This collaboration highlights the fact that, in some cases, the same person can be both language consultant and professional user.

Particular mention should be made of the inherent instability of the relation between the norm and use: users – a group which, let us not forget (and this is why it is so difficult to work in normative grammar!) includes the theorists and the agents themselves – through need or playful creativity, often create new forms or new structures and the SF has to decide whether to intervene or not and, if they

do, exactly what form this intervention should take (this is what *normativistes* [‘prescriptivists’] and *normativòlegs* [‘prescriptivologists’] get paid for!) [...]”

WAB

This is very interesting! You are talking here about recent work on the standardisation of Catalan. What if we consider Fabra?

JCC

This leads me on to my third point: What considerations do we have to take into account when trying to compare grammarians of very different (epistemologically, culturally, socially, politically, etc.) epochs and places:

- a) Fabra was born in 1868 and died in 1948
- b) Vaugelas: (1585-1650)
- c) Schottelius: Justus Georg Schottel (1612-1676)
- d) Robert Lowth (1710–1787)

WAB

This is precisely my question – to what extent is it possible to do what Joseph (1987) calls ‘comparative standardology’? We have different variables here which interest me: period of standardisation/ country / national language ~ minoritized language, etc. I am interested to see whether models developed for French, German, English, etc. work for a language like Catalan which is not associated with a nation state and which was standardised much more recently.

JCC

Let me provide some general pertinent remarks on Fabra’s biography (1868-1948)

1. The Catalan linguistic domain has been divided since at least the 17th century into 4 states (Andorra, France, Italy and Spain): in Spain, it is divided into 5 autonomous communities which support Catalan in very varied ways, ranging from oblivion to official status.
2. Until 1911, Fabra was a young revolutionary (collaborating with the Barcelonan Art Nouveau/Modernist intellectuals) in his proposals seen by the old, established writers and grammarians as too extremist.
3. From 1911 to 1939, he progressively became the academic and even political reference because he was backed by the political power and his works on spelling (1913-1917), grammar (1918-1933) and dictionary (1932) were progressively accepted as the official ones mainly in Catalonia.
4. From 1919 to 1939, he was a very important public presence writing articles in newspapers, giving lectures, etc.
5. From 1931 to 1939, Catalan was taught at school in Catalonia.
6. From 1939 to 1948, Fabra had to go into exile because of the Francoist dictatorship, dying in France in 1948. Catalan was forbidden everywhere until the end of the 1940s, when some books in Catalan were published, although they did not apply Fabra’s norms.

Some general remarks on the subsequent reception of Fabra’s works are pertinent.

From 1948 to 2016: until Franco’s death (1975), more and more people began to learn Catalan clandestinely and without being able to consult Fabra’s works which were prohibited. Slowly, more and more books and grammars were published, the process

culminating in the establishment of Catalan as the language of schooling (1980) in Catalonia, and having nowadays a complete academic dictionary (2007), orthography (2016) and grammar (2016),² which are new works but which try to preserve Fabra's spirit: the dictionary, the orthography and the grammar that Fabra would have produced if he were alive today.

WAB

This is a point which particularly interests me. Are there cases in the 2016 grammar where something Fabra described/recommended is made to appear more prescriptive (perhaps through removing some tolerance of variation)? This seems to happen in the other traditions. For instance, you might find 'You can use X in writing and Y in speech' which later becomes 'X must be used'. Does this ever occur in the Catalan tradition?

JCC

Absolutely not, on the contrary: the grammar (GIEC 2016) is founded systematically on the basis of a distinction between formal and non-formal registers. When there is more than one variant to convey the same meaning, differentiated according to this parameter, each variant is assigned to one or other register. The authors explain this in the introduction, and also explain what they mean by 'formal' and 'informal' registers. This is a 'revolution' in the Catalan prescriptivist tradition, to the extent that the old purist grammarians, proofreaders and teachers are against this perspective.

In this sense, it would be very interesting to compare the structures Fabra claimed to be 'faults' in a little book called 'The principal grammar faults' (Fabra 1925), in 1925, when he was beginning to receive feedback about his proposals, and GIEC's proposals on these same issues. My hypothesis is that in general the latter are more flexible. This flexibility was already practiced by another very well-known grammarian, A. M. Badia i Margarit, who, in a grammar titled 'descriptive, prescriptive, diatopic and diastratic grammar' (Badia 1994) tried to distribute, when needed, the variants of some variables into three "levels": 'high', 'usual' and 'colloquial'.

And regarding geographical variation, the GIEC (2016) is defined as 'compositional' (all the geographical varieties are included) and polymorphic (all the 'prestigious' forms and structures are accepted regardless of their geographical origin).

1. Coming back to the general pertinent remarks on the interpretation of Fabra's work, another point is that during this period of almost 70 years, a radical change in public language usage occurs, and oral uses (radio, movies, TV) became as important as written ones.
2. This process has been followed mainly in Catalonia, the other Catalanophone territories varying in the degree of achievement of the standardisation.

Besides, as for Fabra's bibliography, it is relevant to know that, fortunately, Fabra not only wrote grammars but also wrote and spoke about his ideas; there is a summary in Costa-Carreras (2009b).

² The dictionary can be consulted at <https://dlc.iec.cat/>; the orthography, at https://www.iec.cat/llengua/documents/ortografia_catalana_versio_digital.pdf; the grammar, however, it is not yet available online. An online version is scheduled for September 2018. See GIEC in the references.

WAB

Yes, it is very useful to have these comments. Can we go back to the question of whether there are examples where Fabra was blatantly prescriptive, where the variants were more or less equal?

JCC

Would you say that the ‘blatantness’ of a prescription would be related somewhat or somehow to arbitrariness or lack of argumentative foundation, or of evidence?

What is sure is that Fabra had, as a basic ideological assumption, the ideal of restoring not only Catalan’s own ‘purity’ (versus Spanish), but also restoring its own way of language change and evolution, its own creative mechanisms. This means that where there are two variants, the first absolutely more used than the other, but a Hispanism, and the second being an old genuine form or a possible genuine form, Fabra always favoured the second. (Even where there were two genuine variants, the one coinciding with a Spanish one, the other being exclusive to Catalan, he would choose the latter.) Fabra always had a (socio)linguistic or grammatical basis for his proposals, even though purism was the basic underlying foundation of his approach.

WAB

Yes, I think this is the kind of example I’m interested in. Blatantly prescriptive could mean that the grammarian recommends a form which is not the dominant or preferred usage of the majority – or the descriptive norm. Could you give me an example of where there were – equally possible – variants in Catalan and Fabra prescribes one of them? Are his judgments *always* based on favouring the form which is exclusive to Catalan? Are you suggesting that the sociolinguistic or grammatical evidence provided ‘hides’ his real purist motives? This might suggest that the choices are linguistically arbitrary, but always motivated by socio-political concerns. Have I understood this correctly?

I noted in your 2016 chapter that you cite the example *els* for *els hi*. Is this the type of case you have in mind?

JCC

Fabra used to make this kind of choice based on the codification criterion which I (Costa 2009b: 49-50) called ‘specificity’; this is how I define specificity:

”10b. Specificity. Preferred forms are those which are specific to the language:

”It might perhaps be thought that it is not worth being concerned about an apparently insignificant detail like this (the use of *EL dilluns tindrà lloc* (= it will take place on Monday) instead of *Dilluns tindrà lloc*). But it is largely the sum of a whole assortment of small parts, seemingly unimportant, that makes the syntax of one language differentiated from that of another in the same family. (...)” (Fabra’s Philological Conversation, 13/XII/1922)³

Would another interpretation of the ‘blatantness’ of a prescription be related to the uncompromising personality of the grammarian, not changing his mind regardless the evidence that his proposals are not being accepted or used? This is not the case for Fabra, who, for example made a lot of changes in the ‘official’ grammar in his seven editions from

³ All these philological conversations, more than 800, are available at <https://publicacions.iec.cat/PopulaFitxa.do?moduleName=&subModuleName=&idCatalogacio=12908>.

1918 to 1933, recognising explicitly that he was forced to change by the failure of his proposals.

WAB

Yes, this is certainly another way ‘blatantly prescriptive’ could be interpreted. Can we find recurrent reasons for Fabra’s changes? For example, do his changes go in the direction of better reflecting actual usage rather than imposing an artificial norm? Again, I’d be really interested if you could give an example of this.

JCC

In the 5th edition (1930), he included the following text:

“Note on the fifth edition

”Most of the solutions that, in the previous editions of this work, were proposed have been accepted by all the Catalan writers. However, the experience has shown that other solutions should be replaced by other more advantageous [when speaking or writing]. Hence, some modifications have been introduced in this fifth edition, which is not an exact reprint of the first edition (nor of the 2nd, the 3rd nor of the 4th).”

As for geolectal synonyms, Fabra was deeply aware that his reforming of literary language (entailing sometimes restoring some older variants) was being carried out almost exclusively in Catalonia, the other territories following a slower rhythm. So, for example, he wrote an article addressing Valencian and Balearic grammarians and writers, the other two big Catalanophone territories, inviting them to make their own purification on the basis of the medieval variety, and telling them that, in doing so, the three territories would eventually converge, unavoidably achieving a single literary language — after a period of there being doublets.

He also used to distinguish between orthography, ‘*orthomorphology*’, ‘*orthosyntax*’, ‘*ortholexicon*’⁴ and orthoepy, the first being the matter in which less variation should be allowed, the latter being the one in which more diversity has to be allowed. In syntax, he used to say that the introduction by him of an archaism in order to recover a more proper structure than the current one did not mean banning the latter, but letting the writers try it and decide in the end for themselves which to adopt, after three or four years of trials: his job as a linguist and grammarian was to find out what was the most suitable variant (or variants) and to provide it for the writers; it was then for them to try to use it and decide whether or not it should be adopted, after a trial period.

Besides that, Fabra wrote more than 800 short newspaper articles, from 1919 to 1928,⁵ in which he used to explain the reason for his decisions, to discuss with those who objected to his recommendations, and to comment on the extent to which his proposals were being followed or not. So he was willing to dialogue, the situation being, however, that nobody had his degree of scientific knowledge and political clairvoyance.

You also asked me if there are examples where Fabra is “prescriptive in tone, but his judgement reflects the reality of usage”. First of all, let’s talk about “tone”. As I said before, it is very useful to use Speech Act Theory. I think “tone” has to do mainly with how the recipient interprets (perlocutionary act) a message regardless of the speaker’s intent

⁴ These three words with the prefix *ortho-* are my creation.

⁵ Commented on in Costa (2009b).

(illocutionary act). As a speaker, Fabra was very careful about how he appeared. In Costa (2016), analysing the official grammar (1933), first of all, I called attention to the fact that very often it is not easy to distinguish between description and prescription in normative texts.

WAB

Yes, this is something I have also written about. In my view, description-prescription should not be thought of as a simple dichotomy, but rather as a continuum or cline. What interests me is whether there are examples in Fabra where the expression is prescriptive, but in fact the statement reflects current usage. For instance, we find, in the English tradition, prescriptive statements of the kind ‘It is better not to use the double negative’ in the eighteenth century. Research shows that usage of the double negative had more or less disappeared by this time, so in fact the prescriptive statement actually hides the fact that the grammarian is describing contemporary usage accurately. Do we find this kind of thing in Fabra, do you know?

JCC

I think that this happens in the following excerpt (Costa 2009b: 48), where I provide two examples, one from Fabra’s dictionary, the other from a transcription by a student of Fabra’s classes. They are about the codification criterion of “confirmed functionality”:

“8. Confirmed functionality”

”To be preferred are forms which have the greatest functional value, or which can achieve it easily.

“8a. Implantation. The preferred forms are those with the widest geographical and social distribution at the time of codification. This is because they have initially the greatest functional value of admissibility, regardless of whether they are traditional forms, innovations or interferences from other languages:

”**consagrar** vt.[i.e. transitive verb] Fig. to endow with the quality of durability [...] *És una regla consagrada pel temps* [= It is a time-honoured rule]. [DGLC]

”In the very early stages of the Renaixença, the first form [*al* + infinitive], that is, the current Castilian form, was the one favoured, but later on the writers started to relegate *al* systematically in favour of *en*. It should be said, though, that the first of these forms is not to be condemned; but, since the recent tendency is to put *en* then it is advisable to follow it. [...] [Collected Lessons for the Higher Catalan Course (1933-1934): 86]”

Moreover, I identified the following discourse strategies following Berrendonner’s (1982) typology and my own discoveries:

- a) Among the Speech acts, Fabra alternates deontic periphrases with performative verbs.
- b) He practices ‘masking’ with an impersonal style and with what I called ‘false descriptions’ (presenting the literary language he had previously set up as the current reality). The impersonality is complemented with what I called ‘anonymous needs’ (for instance, by saying ‘it is indispensable...’).

WAB

This suggests that he is hiding prescription through using ‘false descriptions’. I am also interested in whether we ever find the reverse: where what is actually a good description is dressed up in prescriptive language.

JCC

It is hard to think of, or to find, such a case in Fabra's prescriptive works. On the contrary: his reputation in the official grammar is that he is very elliptical in his prescriptions (or even descriptions), providing a lot of very well-chosen examples, each one being a specific sample of the implementation of the norm to make the reader himself deduce this norm. As for the 800+ newspaper articles he wrote, there are very brief explanations as to why he chooses a particular solution. So, I think I can say that, in general, in Fabra's works, we do not find occurrences of "what is actually a good description is dressed up in prescriptive language".

1. In his few argumentative paragraphs, Fabra uses moral, legal and linguistic (mainly clarity and utilitarianism) terms.

2. It must be emphasised that there are no metaphors.

As for "judgments", in my thesis⁶, I identified a lot of reasonings, the most complex consisting of the combination of up to seven different codification criteria. He used to assume two different premises:

a) The 19th-20th literary Catalan would have had its own evolution and outcomes, if it had not had interference from Spanish from the 15th century on.

b) The object of his description and prescription was 19th-20th Catalan (mainly Barcelonese).

The apparent contradiction between these two premises was overcome thanks to his general methodology. When suspecting a word or a structure was a Hispanism in contemporary Catalan, he would study the equivalents in the other main Romance languages (French, Italian, Portuguese). If the suspected item was found only in Catalan and Spanish, he would deduce that it was a Hispanism, and thus to be proscribed. So his deep knowledge of Romance Historical Grammar allowed him to identify interferences in contemporary Catalan. Then a substitute was sought in the other contemporary dialects or in Medieval Catalan.

WAB

So, the criterion of 'exclusivity' is important?

JCC

Yes, indeed. Let us just take into account the first newspaper article of the 800+ he wrote from 1919 to 1928, a kind of work "programme", which I provide you in its English version: "(Philological Conversations 1919)"

"IN PURSUIT OF PURITY IN THE LANGUAGE CASTILIANISMS (18/XI/1919)

"The work of restoring literary Catalan to its proper condition and status is above all one of removing the presence of Castilian influence. And in the majority of cases it is old Catalan which supplies us with the word or turn of phrase with which to replace ones brought in from the other language. This explains the growing number of archaic forms found in the present-day literary language.

"Many people may deem to be excessively numerous the 'borrowings' from medieval Catalan. But this attitude is due to the fact that they have no precise idea of the level of Castilianisation reached by our language during the centuries when it was subordinated to its neighbour. Castilian importations

⁶ *La norma sintàctica segons Pompeu Fabra*: available at <https://upf.academia.edu/JoanCostaCarreras/Books>.

in modern Catalan are incalculably more numerous than a superficial examination of our language would disclose.

”Some of these are quite easy to recognise, like for example *puesto*, *cuento*, *ruedo*, words which their form alone betrays immediately as foreign. More difficult to discover, however, are those with a form which could be equally Catalan or Castilian, like *tonelada*, or words which have been invested with a Catalan form, such as *estribació* [< *estribación*].

”In the cases of *tonelada* and *estribació*, for us to be able to brand them as imports from Castilian, we need to be aware that they are derived from *tonel* and *estribo* [whose Catalan synonyms are distinct and do not give rise to the same suffixation]. Similarly, in the case of a word like *hermós*, we need to appreciate that loss of initial Latin *f* is a phonetic transformation alien to Catalan, so that a word like *formosus* could give in our language *formós* or *fermós*, but never *hermós*, the latter being a Catalan shape given to the Castilian word *hermoso*. Even beyond this, though, there are Castilianisms, like *enterar*, which are only revealed to us as such by their absence from our old texts, where the ideas they denote are constantly conveyed by other words: Castilianisms, then, the discovery of which demands deep study of the language.

”Furthermore, and without leaving the lexical field, there is a class of such words which are even harder to detect and which are possibly the most humiliating. These are the ones which consist, not of a foreign borrowing, but of the change in meaning of a Catalan word under the influence of a Castilian one. We have given to the verb *lliurar*, for example, the meaning of *deslliurar* (= to deliver, to free) belonging to the Castilian verb *librar*; *remetre* has acquired the meaning of *trametre*, which is that of the Castilian verb *remitir* (= to send).

”In these daily notes we shall try to give an idea of how great is the number of Castilianisms in our present-day language, and thus to demonstrate the need to resort abundantly to old Catalan forms, in the supposition that we are not to be satisfied with just a shallow clearing up of our language involving merely the extirpation of the most obvious imports from Castilian.”

WAB

Let’s go back to my final question, that is whether there are examples where Fabra is “tolerant of variation, but is made to appear more prescriptive by the way he is subsequently read”.

JC

As I put it in the ‘General remarks on Fabra’s biography (1868-1948)’, Catalan was generally taught only between 1931 and 1939, and then only in Catalonia. Until 1975, Catalan was banned from schools and the public domains. Fabra’s norm was conceived when the object of prescriptivism was almost only writing (being ‘literary language’ the name for a standard variety). As Catalan began to be used in the fifties in novel dialogues, theatre plays and radio broadcasts, the distance between Fabra’s prescriptions (for mainly written texts) and the needs of these productions grew larger and larger. This situation made Fabra appear more prescriptive than he really was, as, in his codification, he took into account the needs of his contemporary writers.

WAB

So, although he was setting a norm for written Catalan, this was interpreted as also applying to speech? Are there any contemporary comments on this?

JCC

Let me make what might seem a surprising comparison. Fabra’s reputation as an excellent grammarian as well as a public personality became legendary after his death in exile during the prohibition of Catalan up until 1975. So he was seen as a kind of prophet, whose writings were the holy word. That is why, when oral discourses became more and more important, the

grammarians used to try to apply Fabra's norms to them. The underlying question was: what would Fabra do in these cases? Even Badia (1994) claims to have written the grammar Fabra would have written in 1994... And the new official grammar — very well founded in 21st-century current linguistic approaches — claims to be his heir and to follow his “philosophy”.

What is more: Fabra's texts were in fact literal recommendations addressed to the writers living between 1913 and 1948. So the time that had passed also proved to be a difficulty for applying Fabra's norm in the second half of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st: the diversity of formal uses is now much wider. And post-Fabra grammarians didn't know what to do: not all the doubts were treated in Fabra's texts, Fabra's norm was not always applicable, and there were no official guidelines about oral uses.

WAB

Could you give me an example of a case of where ‘Fabra’s norm was not always applicable’? Are you thinking of sociolinguistic variation here?

JCC

In a PhD I supervised, Aina Labèrnia (2015)⁷ used a grammatical test and reviewed writings of students of the UPF Faculty of Translation; she concluded that the following grammatical questions were especially hard to put into practice:

- a) *Tardo A venir* (‘I take too much time to come’) instead of *Tardo EN venir*.
- b) *Tothom QUE* (Everyone who’) instead of *Tothom QUI*.
- c) *La pilota, al noi, L’HI/LI dono jo* (‘The ball, to the boy, IT HIM I give’) instead of *La pilota, al noi, LA HI dono jo*.

What is important in this thesis is that the respondents were undergraduate students of all levels of translation studies who study Catalan as a subject and a translation subject.

In this context, what has been taken into account by some Fabrists is Fabra's usage, style, his way of writing: so when there was no a *de jure* solution, a Fabra's *de facto* usage was looked for, and, when found, adduced for proposing a new norm.

WAB

Are there studies which compare Fabra's recommendations with his actual usage? Do these shed any light on how prescriptive he was?

JCC

Besides Labèrnia (2015), which is perhaps the most modern and systematic study, there are many. Some of them shed light on how prescriptive he was. The easiest way to check the gaps between Fabra's prescription and 21st-century contemporary formal usage is to consult Solà [*et al.*] (2002), a three-volume descriptive grammar (with more than 3,400 pages) which aims to describe contemporary Catalan standard (in all linguistic domains) comparing it to Fabra's prescriptions (mainly for the so-called ‘Central’ variety). It is the most exhaustive study of the language features used in formal registers, regardless of whether or not they were prescribed by Fabra. When they were not, they appear then as the most general usage by the authoritative speakers and writers: the reader, at least, has a guideline.

⁷ *La Incidència de certs factors sociolingüístics en la implantació de setze variants sintàctiques en català*; available at <http://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/315284?show=full&locale-attribute=en>.

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