Editors’ Introduction

This volume contains a selection of twenty papers from the 41st Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages. One theme that links the individual contributions is linguistic variation, understood in a broad and inclusive sense and viewed as a fundamental feature of language. All papers deal with one or several aspects of variation across languages, dialects, speakers, time, linguistic contexts or communicative situations, and address its causes, manifestations or formal treatment. Furthermore, the selected papers offer a representative sample of current perspectives and methods, applied to the Romance family and across a wide spectrum of linguistic subfields, from phonetics to semantics, from historical linguistics to bilingualism and L2 learning. Romance languages have continuously played a leading role in the evolution of linguistic research and this volume is an indication that they continue to serve as testing grounds for current hypotheses and as stepping stones to new developments.

The book is divided into four parts, which deal successively with sound structures and their interface with other linguistic components; syntax and semantics; language change; and interactions across dialects and languages. The languages represented in this volume belong to all main language groups within the Romance family: different varieties of Spanish and Portuguese, Catalan (Algherese variety), French (Old and Modern), Ladin (Fassano variety), Italian, Sardinian and Romanian.

This preliminary chapter introduces some relevant aspects of the status and treatment of variation in linguistics and discusses the structure of and the individual contributions to the volume.
1. Aspects of variation in linguistics

Linguistic variation takes on various dimensions that have traditionally been addressed within different subareas of linguistics. Crosslinguistic variation has always been central to linguistic theory, while internal and diachronic variation has lain at the core of sociolinguistics and historical linguistics. This type of ‘division of labor’, so to speak, has shifted and variation now tends to be treated in a more integrated fashion across the different subfields of linguistics (see, e.g., Gregersen et al. 2011). The development of experimental and corpus linguistics has contributed to new approaches to the study of variation, but theoretical formalisms and applied areas have also reconsidered the status and treatment of variation at various levels, variation being viewed more as a fundamental aspect of language and less as ‘noise’ to be abstracted away from; see Laks (2013) for an enlightening metatheoretical and historical perspective. For example, the acquisition of (socio)linguistic variation is a growing research topic in language acquisition, (e.g., Bentzen & Westergaard 2013; Chevrot & Foulkes 2013). In the realm of applied linguistics, second language teaching and learning have also embraced variation (e.g., van Campernolle 2013; van Campernolle & Williams 2013). However, the following paragraphs will focus on variation from the perspective of the analysis of sound processes and syntactic theory.

In rule-based phonology, crosslinguistic variation was expressed by the use of different rules or rule orderings. Internal variation was often reduced to rule optionality or lexical exceptionality, if it was not altogether ignored. A process could apply or not, but phonological analyses (unlike Labovian sociolinguistics) often offered little understanding of the conditioning factors of variation. Since the 1990s, different developments in phonological theory have allowed a much richer approach to variable processes, as indicated by several recent reference publications on variation in phonology (e.g., Anttila 2002, 2007, 2012; Coetzee & Pater 2011; Hinskens et al. 2014).

The advent of Optimality Theory (OT) gave rise to important developments in the treatment of variation. OT accounts for crosslinguistic variation through
constraint reranking (or constraint weighting in the closely related framework of Harmonic Grammar [Pater 2009b]). But OT’s potential for a deeper analysis of intragrammatical variation was also immediately exploited, the model allowing variation among different outputs to be accounted for by the very same factors and mechanisms that explain categorical processes and crosslinguistic variation. The scope of phonological analysis could even be extended to include not only categorical and optional phenomena but also finer-grained notions of preferences. Various formal proposals have been put forward to deal with internal variation, including partially ordered or stratified grammars (Anttila 1997, Auger 2001, Anttila et al. 2008, among others), stochastic grammars (Boersma 1997, 1998; Boersma & Hayes 2001), access to non-optimal candidates (Coetzee 2006), markedness suppression (Kaplan 2011) and, for lexically-determined variation, lexically-indexed constraints (Pater 2000, 2007, 2009a; Zuraw 2010, Coetzee & Kawahara 2013).

Parallel to the formal developments associated with OT, experimental and usage-based approaches to the analysis of sound processes have triggered advances in our understanding of various aspects of variation. Prominent research streams in recent years include Laboratory Phonology (Cohn et al. 2012), sociophonetic variation (e.g., Foulkes & Docherty 2006; Hay, Nolan & Drager 2006) and Exemplar Theory (e.g., Goldinger 1998, Pierrehumbert 2001, Bybee 2006, Weddel 2006).

In syntax, variation has been a trending topic since at least the beginning of the 1980s with the advent of the Principles and Parameters theory (Chomsky 1981) and in semantics more recently since Chierchia (1998). Gone are the days when English was the sole language under study. Comparative work has been at the forefront of linguistic research for decades and much has been learned along the way. One particular approach to variation in syntax that has been popular in the literature is the microparametric approach according to which the locus of variation is attributable to differences in the features of particular items (e.g., functional heads) in the lexicon (the so-called Borer-Chomsky Conjecture, first proposed by Borer 1984 and later adopted by Chomsky 1995). A variant of this
approach is the Cartographic enterprise (Rizzi 1997, 2004; Cinque 1999, 2002; Belletti 2004), which proposes to map all functional heads of the world’s languages and postulate rich structures in every extended projection, in every language. On this view variation is largely restricted to the inventory of features rather than their hierarchy (the latter is based on innate factors); it places differences between very close dialects, or even within dialects, under a microscope and focuses on internal variation. Much of this work appeared in the context of consideration of Romance languages (Poletto 2000, Munaro, Poletto & Pollock 2001; Munaro & Pollock 2005, among many others), Romance dialects notably providing a rich array of comparative points for linguistic research (Northern Italian dialects, for instance).

The microparameter approach is in contrast with the macroparameter approach of Baker (1996, 2001) that takes the view that languages differ on a much larger typological axis. This looks at interlinguistic variation. Baker’s Polysynthesis Parameter according to which languages must or need not express all theta-roles as morphemes on the verb is perhaps the most well known of all macroparameters. A more recent macroparameter proposed by Baker is the Direction of Agreement parameter (Baker 2008a) according to which the goal of agreement must or need not c-command the agreeing head. Expressed in this way, such parameters are directional rather than bidirectional parameters. Many researchers have proposed a microparametric approach to the properties of polysynthesis (Déchaine 1999, Legate 2002, Kayne 2005, Adger et al. 2009), and it is possible that the Direction of Agreement parameter is amenable to a microparametric approach as well.

Finally, there has recently been a trend to outsource, as it were, parameters to the interfaces, most notably the Phonetic Form (PF) interface. The idea is that parametrization and variation is mostly, possibly entirely, restricted to externalization (Berwick & Chomsky 2011). While Universal Grammar (UG) is stable, modes of externalization are not inherently unique to the language faculty, but rather emerge as recurring principles of design/organization and are thus subject to much historical change (Kandybowicz 2009). For Boeckx (2011,
principles of narrow syntax are not subject to parametrization; nor are they affected by lexical parameters. All ‘parameters’, and thus inter- and intralinguistic variation, reduce to realizational options (i.e., PF decisions rendered necessary to externalize structures constructed by an underspecified syntactic component. However, since the much quoted proposition that languages differ from each other without limit and in unpredictable ways (Joos 1957: 96) cannot be true, much work remains to be done in order to establish how exactly external parameters are mapped and how they cluster. The message to take home is not that variation has disappeared from linguistic theory but rather that it has shifted to another component of the grammar, perhaps more in tune with emergent theories of language, but with leaving the internal principles of grammar intact.

2. Overview of articles

Part I brings together articles on sound patterns (phonetics and phonology) and their interface with morphology, syntax and the lexicon. The topics addressed range from the organization of articulatory gestures (Campos-Astorkiza) and syllabic constituents (Scheer) to the interface between phonology and morphology (Torres-Tamarit), syntax (Mazzola, Mayoral Hernández & Alcázar) and the lexicon (Cabrera-Callís). Discussions include two emblematic processes of phonological variation: schwa realization in French and /s/ aspiration in Spanish.

The first contribution, “Sibilant voicing assimilation in Peninsular Spanish as gestural blending” by Rebeka Campos-Astorkiza, also features the Spanish /s/. The voicing of /s/ before a voiced consonant is a well known feature of the Spanish sound system. Following much recent research in phonetics and laboratory phonology, the author investigates the gradient and variable nature of this process, focusing on some of the contextual factors that possibly condition voicing. The author considers /s/ voicing as a case of gestural blending, resulting from overlap between the conflicting laryngeal gestures of the two consonants. On the basis of careful instrumental analysis, she shows
that while the prosodic boundary between /s/ and the following voiced consonant has a significant effect on voicing, the location of stress, surprisingly, seems largely irrelevant. The experimental results also reveal a new conditioning factor: the manner of articulation of the following consonant.

The other papers in this section adopt a more formal perspective. Francesc Torres-Tamarit looks at another variable process affecting Spanish /s/ in “Phonology-morphology opacity in Harmonic Serialism: The case of /s/ aspiration in Spanish”. This process is subject to much dialectal variation, notably with respect to the interaction — transparent or opaque — between the aspiration of /s/ and its resyllabification across morpheme and word boundaries. The author accounts for different dialectal types within the framework of Harmonic Serialism, a close relative to OT, through the relative ranking of three categories of constraints governing the presence of [s] in coda position, the building of prosodic structure and alignment between morphological and prosodic categories.

Algherese Catalan, spoken in Sardinia, displays a complex process of rhotacism, whereby coronal stops and laterals turn into flaps. While rhotacism has often been described as categorical, Maria Cabrera-Callís shows that its application is variable and subject to morphological and lexical conditionings, pertaining to the borrowed or inherited status of the word and the position of the target consonant within the word. Her paper “Morphologically conditioned intervocalic rhotacism in Algherese Catalan: An account with lexically indexed constraints” develops an OT account of rhotacism with constraints indexed to lexical classes, reflecting on the adequate formalization of lexical variation.

Sardinia also features prominently in Tobias Scheer’s contribution “Muta cum Liquida in the light of Tertenia Sardinian Metathesis and compensatory lengthening Latin Ýtr > Old French Vrr”. Working within the CVCV framework, a development of Government Phonology that only admits sequences of simple onsets followed by simple nuclei, the author offers empirical arguments for the presence of an empty nucleus within stop-liquid onset clusters. Evidence come from two sets of data: the change from [tr dr] to
[rr] from Latin to Old French and metathesis in a variety of Sardinian whereby a liquid moves to its left and forms a ‘branching onset’ with a preceding stop. Variations in the application of Old French gemination and Sardinian metathesis are accounted for by governing and licensing conditions on neighboring segments.

Moving from Old to Modern French, Michael Mazzola turns to the notoriously complex behavior of schwa, especially its variability at word and clitic boundaries as a function of the number of adjacent consonants and syllables. In “Schwa at the phonology/syntax interface”, he argues that this variation is best explained by a grammatical model in which the phonological component has direct access to syntactic domains. The realization of schwa is determined by the rhythmic template of French, which interacts with both the lexicon and the syntax. No intermediate prosodic constituency is built, as in other popular models of the syntax-phonology interface, which limit the point of contact to prosodic phonology.

The following chapter, Roberto Mayoral Hernández & Asier Alcázar’s paper “Weight effects across verbal domains: The case of Spanish Subjects”, also lies at the interface between syntax and phonology and offers a nice transition to Part II. It is well known that word order is partially determined by the phonological weight of syntactic constituents. Most research on the interaction between weight and syntactic position has focused on postverbal constituents, heavier ones tending to move away from the verb. The authors look here at another case of word order variation between preverbal and postverbal subjects in Spanish. They show on the basis of corpus data that heavier subjects are attracted to the postverbal position, suggesting that the relevant characterization of the constituent order shift is not ‘away from the verb’ but ‘to the right’. Different correlates of weight are also compared (number of syllables, words or phonemes), yielding a marginal advantage for syllabic weight.
Part II is a collection of articles on variation as pertaining to syntax and semantics. Five articles compare Romance languages or dialects while two articles focus solely on French. Four articles look at interlinguistic variation: one compares European Portuguese with Italian (sempre, Amaral & Del Prete), another Romanian with other Romance languages, e.g., French, Italian, Spanish (epistemic indefinites, Fălăuş), another Romanian with Sardinian (polarity fronting, Giurgea & Remberger) and a fourth article compares Romanian (and Greek) with Spanish (clitic doubling, Marchis). One article looks at intralinguistic variation, comparing Spanish dialects (ordering in negative expressions, Gutiérrez-Rexach & González-Rivera).

Part II begins with Patrícia Amaral & Fabio Del Prete’s contribution entitled “On truth persistence: A comparison between European Portuguese and Italian in relation to sempre”, where the authors analyze a non-temporal interpretation of the adverb sempre “always” in European Portuguese and Italian. This adverb expresses persistence of the truth of a proposition over time and displays specific contextual constraints (TP-sempre). The authors show that, despite an overlap in the contexts in which TP-sempre may occur in both languages, its distribution is not exactly the same in European Portuguese and Italian. In view of these data, Amaral & Del Prete propose that TP-sempre is a modal operator of confirmation in both languages, but that it is more restricted in Italian in that it has a plan presupposition only in this language.

Anamaria Fălăuş in her contribution ”Pick some but not all alternatives!” shows that while many languages have epistemic indefinites, their interpretation may vary depending on the language. Among the parameters of variation, one distinction plays a crucial role, namely the modal inference they sustain. It concerns the extent of variation (‘freedom of choice’) in the quantificational domain, which can be total or partial. In her paper, Fălăuş provides further support in favor of the distinction between total/partial variation and argue that it is possible to exploit this difference to derive not only the interpretive properties of epistemic indefinites, but also their distribution. To this end, Fălăuş focuses on the Romanian epistemic determiner
vreun and discusses new data concerning its use in the context of imperatives. The author shows that vreun requires partial variation, and as such is excluded from contexts in which a total variation inference is possible.

In “Polarity fronting in Romanian and Sardinian” Ion Giurgea & Eva-Maria Remberger compare Romanian and Sardinian in relation to polarity fronting. They argue that, while verum focus (i.e., focus on the polarity component of the sentence) involves movement and a checking operation in the left periphery, in Romanian polarity fronting is realized as head-movement of a verbal complex to Fin with a focus-probe but in Sardinian, an entire phrase headed by the lexical predicate (verbal non-finite form or non-verbal predicate) is fronted before the auxiliary. In Romanian, the movement operation licenses VS orders for predications in which VS is not allowed as a neutral order (i-level predicates, iteratives, generics). In Sardinian, the authors argue that the result order is obtained by two movement operations, head-raising of (V+)T+S to Foc and movement of the predicate phrase to SpecFoc. Giurgea & Remberger also present the semantics of polarity focus, distinguishing several types of focus (informational, emphatic, contrastive).

The next article by Javier Gutiérrez-Rexach & Melvin González-Rivera “Degree quantification and scope in Puerto Rican Spanish” looks at a common feature of Caribbean Spanish, namely the possibility of preposing a degree delimiter before a negative term. The authors present a detailed empirical analysis of the Puerto Rican case and show that this possibility is due to a combination of syntactic and semantic factors that pertain to the syntax and interpretation of degree restriction. The authors propose that placement (preposition) of the degree delimiter is allowed by a Deg raising operation nevertheless restricted by general syntactic locality constraints. This property seems to suggest potential fruitful avenues for further research: for example, to determine whether it would be possible to establish microparametric variation within the Caribbean area with respect to the degree raising operation.

Mihaela Marchis in “‘Minimal Link Constraint’ violations: Move vs. Agree” continues the long-standing discussion on whether clitics in clitic
doubling constructions should be regarded as being similar to affixes expressing subject-verb agreement or rather as reflexes of movement. She argues that a crosslinguistic comparison of clitics shows that, although clitics come in different flavors either as phi-features or as determiners, they are all the result of an overt feature movement to repair violations of the Minimal Link Constraint (MLC). Raising constructions in Greek, Romanian and Spanish are claimed to use clitic doubling as a strategy to avoid minimality effects and, on the basis of a parallelism between clitic doubling and Raising, the author concludes that they are the outcome of two different operations Move vs. (Long Distance) Agree, yet both are sensitive to MLC and regulated by a phase-based locality condition (the Phase Impenetrability Condition).

The next article “On subjunctives and islandhood” by Léna Baunaz & Genoveva Puskás discusses the relation between selection, subjunctive mood and extraction facts in French. The authors show that the degree of permeability observed in subjunctive clauses with respect to, e.g., wh-extraction is apparent, and is only indirectly related to the indicative/subjunctive alternations. Baunaz & Puskas examine different verb classes in French and show that the behavior of various types of wh-phrases in extraction contexts is not directly linked to the mood of the embedded clause. They propose (i) that the indicative-subjunctive distribution is a property of predicates which has to be distinguished from the property involved in complementizer selection (the subjunctive-indicative alternation can be accounted for in terms of the emotive–cognitive property of the matrix predicate); and (ii) that islands effects, that is, the degree of permeability of the embedded clauses can be related to the properties of the selected complementizer. In other words, the possibilities of extraction of a wh-phrase from an embedded clause can be accounted for by the size of the complementizer, which acts as a more or less strong blocker for wh-extraction from the clause it selects. The authors conclude that mood ‘selection’ and complementizer selection are two independent properties of the main predicate.
Lisa A. Reed in “When control can’t be a fact” identifies a class of French verbs that has the interesting characteristic of disallowing simple Control, ECM, and small clause complementation, apparently universally. It is argued, on the basis of a novel application of certain tests developed in previous literature, that what distinguishes these verbs is the lexical semantic feature of selecting for a Possible Fact-denoting clausal complement. The metaphysical feature of truth indeterminacy — unique to Possible Facts — is used to explain why they cannot be realized as simple Control, or for that matter, simple ECM or small clause complements.

**Part III** deals with diachronic variation. Three papers focus on syntactic change, one on sound change, starting with the latter. In “Prevocalic fronting and coronalization in Chilean and Proto-Romance”, Carolina Gonzalez first investigates synchronic and diachronic issues related to various cases of velar advancement in prevocalic position, distinguishing velar fronting, palatalization and coronalization. Connecting historical developments in Proto-Romance with contemporary Chilean Spanish, the author proposes a diachronic scenario in which a palatal stage occurs between velar fronting and coronalization. The first two stages are assimilatory in nature, whereas coronalization is motivated by phonetic factors disfavoring palatals. The conditions applying in different waves of palatalization in Proto-Romance are also elucidated. This analysis departs in several respects from other recent accounts of palatalization and it is formalized within OT.

The second article is by Mary Aizawa Kato. In her paper, “The role of the copula in the diachronic development of focus constructions in Portuguese”, she shows that Old and Classic Portuguese had two positions for contrastive focus: one at the sentence initial position, followed by the verb, a ‘V2’ sort of pattern (XPVS), and one at the sentence final position, constituting the Romance post-verbal subject (V(XP)S). Kato analyzes the role of the copula in the innovations that occurred in Modern Portuguese focus structures: a) the expansion of cleft constructions, from wh-cLEFTs to *that*-cLEFTs, b) from inverse
clefts to canonical clefts and c) the reduction of that-clefts, a grammaticalization that affected only Brazilian Portuguese (BP). In European Portuguese (EP), XPVS and V(XP)S survive together with modern clefts while in BP clefts and reduced clefts took over the old constructions completely.

In “The French wh interrogative system: Evolution and clefting” Sandrine Tailleur shows that the contemporary system of French wh interrogative is complex and that speakers have access to over five different variants of wh questions. Through the study of the evolution and usage of all variants, the author shows that the wh+est-ce que variants are at the center of the system’s evolution. They explain why so many variants have been preserved, and they are also the trigger of a possible structural change affecting the interrogative left periphery. Assuming a diglossic approach, some registers of French lack wh movement, and now produce wh interrogatives that are similar to syntactic clefting. Such an analysis predicts that wh in situ is to be expected, since it is part of the same register — grammar — as the wh est-ce que.

Christina Tortora, in her contribution “On the relation between functional architecture and patterns of change in Romance object clitic syntax”, shows that Complement clitic pronouns (OCLs) in Romance are not all created equal: diachronic change in OCL syntax can at first affect some clitic forms, but not others. Tortora examines two cases of variation and change in OCL syntax from two different Romance varieties. The author examines the change in progress in OCL-infinitive order in Fassano (Ladin) varieties, and the variation in the OCL-types which participate in a non-standard imperative construction in Spanish. Tortora explores the idea that variation and change in these apparently unrelated cases is the result of the same underlying fact, namely, that the different OCL forms occupy distinct functional heads within the functional hierarchy of the clause, within the stretch of functional architecture dubbed the “clitic placement domain”. The Functional Hierarchy Hypothesis for clitic placement provides a framework in which to understand how syntactic variation and change affects the different OCLs in a predictable way.
Part IV contains three articles involving interactions across dialects and languages. At play here is variation at the individual level: between speakers of different varieties interacting together (McLeod), monolingual and bilingual speakers (Hsin), L2 speakers at different levels of proficiency (Millard & Lonsdale). In the chapter “Investigating the effects of salience and regional dialect on phonetic convergence in Spanish”, Bethany MacLeod first contributes to our understanding of the factors affecting phonetic accommodation between different speakers. Pairs of speakers from two dialects of Spanish — one from Madrid and one from Buenos Aires — were tested before and after engaging in a conversation that exposed them to the other variety. The participants also performed a task designed to measure the perceptual salience of four dialectal differences. The author shows that the perceptual salience of dialectal differences affects both the magnitude and the direction of phonetic change from pre- to post-conversation: participants make greater changes on the more salient differences (diverging or converging) and are more likely to converge on the less salient differences.

Still in the area of linguistic influence, Lisa Hsin investigates interlinguistic influence in Spanish-English bilingual acquisition. In her paper “English questions, Spanish structure: A shared-structure account of interlinguistic influence in bilingual first language acquisition”, the author argues that English wh-questions are acquired at an accelerated rate by English-Spanish bilingual children in comparison with monolinguals. This unusual finding is explained as the result of structure sharing between Spanish and English: the acquisition of English wh-questions requires syntactic projections for which Spanish provides independent evidence, hence the acquisitional advantage observed in bilinguals. This analysis in turn suggests a model of bilingual acquisition involving a closer relationship than generally assumed between the child’s two languages.

Finally, Benjamin Millard & Deryle Lonsdale focus on L2 speakers and models of oral proficiency testing, an important but difficult area in language teaching. In their chapter “French oral proficiency assessment: Elicited imitation with speech recognition”, the authors present a new and more
effective method for measuring individual variations in oral proficiency in French. This method comprises two main ingredients: a methodology called elicited imitation, consisting in the repetition of aurally presented sentences, and automatic speech recognition used to score the repeated sentences. The results of the automatic scoring system were shown to correlate with a high degree to human scorers. The possibility of implementing an accurate and fully automated assessment process will have considerable impact on the ever expanding domain of L2 teaching and testing.

3. Conclusion

The articles in this volume illustrate the richness and complementarity of topics, methods and formalisms explored within Romance linguistics. Formal, experimental and corpus-based approaches are all represented, as well as different theoretical frameworks. Articles are tied together by common empirical or analytical issues addressed in contrasting ways. The realization of Spanish /s/ across different morpho-prosodic contexts is explored from two perspectives: intradialectal phonetic variability (Campos-Astorkiza) and interdialectal variation in a constraint-based formal framework (Torres-Tamarit). The interface between syntax and phonological units is approached formally (Mazzola) and experimentally (Mayoral Hernández & Alcázar). Other common topics include focus, explored from a crosslinguistic (Giurgea & Remberger) or diachronic and dialectal perspective (Kato), clitics (Marchis, Tortora) and modality and presuppositions (Fălăuş, Amaral & Del Prete, Baunaz & Puskas).

This volume is also quite representative of some of the recent trends observed in general linguistics. Strong emphasis is put on interfaces, frontiers between established subareas of linguistics being increasingly blurred. For instance, syntax meets historical linguistics and sociolinguistics (Tailleur), beyond its traditional connections with morphology and semantics. New research avenues are also explored, such as phonetic convergence in interactions between speakers of different dialects (MacLeod). Finally, the
inclusion of an article on language learning (Millard & Lonsdale) attests to the necessity of a continuing dialogue between general and applied linguistics.

References


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