

# Microvariation in the Languages of the Iberian Peninsula

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This issue of the *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* was conceived with the idea to promote comparative studies of the languages spoken in the Iberian Peninsula. The importance of comparison in linguistics dates back to neogrammarians in the XIX century due to their interest of discovering the common roots of most of the languages spoken in Europe. In order to get to that objective, comparison of phonological patterns were crucial to retrieve the common Indo-European origins.

In the generative framework variation and comparison was not highlighted until the advent of *Lectures on Government and Binding* (Chomsky 1981), which marks the beginning of the Principles and Parameter theory. A parameter, in its original conception, is a principle with a dimension of variability with respect to a specific syntactic property (Head-initial or Head-final, Node for Subjacency: S or S'). This variation can be expressed with the values + or –, and each value is associated to a series of syntactic correlations.

This framework tried to capture in a formal and elegant way what Greenberg (1963) had already noticed in the 60s: variation among languages is not random and unpredictable, but languages have very specific patterns of variation. One finds correlations and clusters of properties that go together. The idea of parameter gave shape to this intuition by connecting a specific property of the language to a cluster of effects. Thus, in the first formulation of pro-drop (Rizzi 1982), strong person morphology in a language derived a series of properties (null subject, subject inversion, lack of *that*-trace effect).

More than 30 years have passed and the theory has moved on since then; however, the idea of finding correlations among languages is still intriguing and crucial for understanding our language faculty. Kayne (2000, 2005, 2010) has taken this line of approach very seriously. He has shown that theoretical advances must be made through comparative tools. He started this line of approach in his classic comparative studies between English-French, then moved French-Italian and finally further

comparative studies among Romance languages in Kayne (1984, 2000). This work has led to what Kayne (2000) calls micro-parameters. According to this approach, a parameter does not necessarily have to have far-reaching properties in the structure of the language. All variation is important.

Opposed to this conception, Baker (2008) proposes the idea of macro-parameter, which focuses on comparing fundamental properties of different languages. It is not our objective here to enter in the debate between the two approaches, but we want to emphasize along with Kayne, that in order to find what is universal in languages, we have to make clear what is subject to variation. In order to see what the correlations between properties are, we have to do detailed comparative studies of languages. Only a detailed study of properties coupled with a rich theoretical apparatus can make sense of linguistic variation.

The history of parameters has taught us that many of the initial correlations and connections were naive. This is normal and desirable in a young science. The minimalist program has served as a heuristic tool and it has sharpened the model. New conceptions on the idea of parameter in this model are being debated. Thus, Baker (2008) challenges the idea of whether parameters can only be circumscribed to properties of lexical items (the so-called Chomsky-Borer conjecture). Longobardi and Guardiano (2009) have explored hierarchy of parameters and its analogy to biological models. Finally Boeckx (forthcoming) and Gallego (2011) have debated the place of parameters in the minimalist program. Nevertheless, we think that the initial spirit of the idea of parameter still survives, and comparison is the right tool to proceed to find out more about our language faculty. This issue of the *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* is a contribution to this comparative spirit using the languages in the Iberian Peninsula.

The eleven contributions that form this issue deal with several aspects of the grammar of Basque, Catalan, Portuguese and Spanish. The comparative spirit is made explicit in every article and consists of clear comparisons among several dialects of these languages or between two of them (and, in some cases, comparing them also with English or with other Romance languages). Thus, the reader will find studies on different varieties of Catalan (Central Catalan, Balearic Catalan, Valencian Catalan), Spanish (Andalusian Spanish, Basque Spanish, Castilian Spanish, Spanish from Extremadura, Chilean Spanish), Basque (Biscayan Basque, Gipuzkoan Basque, Central Basque, Souletin, Low-Navarrese), comparisons between the standard varieties of Portuguese, Spanish and Catalan, and references to languages like English, French or Italian and to previous stages of the language (Medieval and Classical Spanish).

The issue pays special attention to syntax and morphology and addresses phenomena like A' movement (Vicente, Valmala), verb-subject inversion (Martins, Matos), the order of constituents (Vanrell and Fernández Soriano, Planas-Morales and Villalba), case properties and case markers (Etxepare, Romero and Ormazabal), the status of prepositions and complementizers (Camus, Ortega-Santos) and lexico-syntactic structures (Oltra-Massuet and Castroviejo). As a whole, the work on these grammatical topics offers insightful descriptions and analyses of the prosodic, syntactic and semantic properties of interrogative and exclamative sentences, the

relevance of informative and contrastive focus for word order, the role of conjunctions and prepositions in coordinate, subordinate and comparative constructions, the syntax and interpretation of right-displaced constituents, the adjunct role of quotative parentheticals, the way differential object marking appears and some of its consequences, the morphological form and syntactic uses of pronominal clitics, the differences between locative adpositions and affixes, and the syntactic and semantic values of a certain kind of deadjectival verbs. In addition to the (micro-)comparative view, the papers present new data on nonstandard features (*deísmo*, *laismo*), deal with constructions that have not been object of much debate in the studies on Catalan, Portuguese or Spanish, in contrast with languages like English (right node raising, quotative inversion), provide further evidence for a better knowledge of the syntactic, semantic and phonological properties of some already studied constructions (deadjectival verbs, phrasal comparatives, interrogatives, exclamatives), and put forward new analyses that question previous approaches and challenge some well-established aspects of the theory (Case theory, case affixes, the status of adpositions and prepositions and its role in the functional architecture).

Next we offer a brief summary of the contributions to this volume:

**Camus** studies the non-standard construction called *deísmo* in which the preposition *de* is used to introduce a subordinate clause with infinitive. The author compares the uses in Castilla-La Mancha Spanish with those found in Andalusia, Extremadura and America, as well as with similar constructions appearing in Old Spanish and in the standard varieties of Romance languages like Catalan, French or Italian. This variation is treated in relation with the properties of the CP domain.

**Etxepare** provides a fine analysis of Basque locative adpositions based on the morphological form and the syntactic properties of case affixes and determiners in several dialects of Basque. He argues that the *-a* that appear in Basque inessive constructions is not a determiner, but an ergative marker, and puts forth an analysis of adpositional phrases with a complex functional structure that parallels the clausal structure and treats the adpositions as functional items reminiscent of aspectual projections.

**Martins** describes and analyzes two types of non-degree exclamatives that have received little attention in the study of this kind of sentences in European Portuguese. Both types of exclamatives involve coordination and display subject-verb inversion, but differ in the interpretation of the subject and in the existence of an implicit comment conveying the speaker's attitude. The analysis is based on the presence of an evaluative feature (satisfied through V-to-C movement or through the properties of the coordinate conjunction) and on the movement of the subject to a Focus position. Thus, the features and the properties of the elements involved in the CP domain cover both the similarities and the differences detected between these sentences.

**Matos** examines the properties of quotative parentheticals in European Portuguese and compares them with Peninsular Spanish and English. She presents exhaustive

evidence for analyzing the quote as an adjunct that may occupy different positions. The analysis includes a null operator that binds the object gap and accounts for the word order differences (obligatory verb-subject inversion) in terms of the focus interpretation (informational vs. contrastive) of the subject in Portuguese and in Spanish.

**Oltra-Massuet** and **Castroviejo** study the crosslinguistic differences found in verbs derived with the suffixes *-ejar/-ear* in Catalan and in Spanish. They show that these two affixes produce different results: while Spanish *-ear* deadjectival verbs are change of state verbs, Catalan *-ejar* deadjectival verbs are stative predicates. This difference is supported by the semantic and syntactic properties related, for instance, to telicity and causative constructions. From a theoretical point of view, the difference is formulated in terms of a morpho-syntactic configuration that includes both a Place and a Path in Spanish *-ear* deadjectival verbs, and a configuration with Place only in Catalan *-ejar* deadjectival verbs.

**Ormazabal** and **Romero** propose an approach to case-licensing where, on the one hand, the functional architecture in the verbal system can license at most one DP, and, on the other, only certain DPs require formal licensing. This work takes into consideration data from a *laísta* dialect of Castilian Spanish and discusses the syntactic problems posed by the Person Case Constraint effects, the differential object marking and the raising to subject constructions in Spanish. One of the conclusions of this article is the suggestion to remove the Case Filter from the theory in favor of treating case as part of the general checking theory.

**Ortega-Santos** investigates the properties of phrasal comparatives of inequality with *que* in Spanish focusing on data from Chilean Spanish (obtained by means of a scale questionnaire that combined grammaticality judgment tasks and sentence completion tasks) and compares them with Peninsular Spanish. The author argues for the existence of both a reduced clause analysis and a PP-analysis in Chilean Spanish, in contrast with peninsular Spanish, where only the clausal analysis applies. This is consistent with the gradual change from *de* 'of' to *que* 'that' in the history of comparatives in Spanish and with the analysis of complementizers and prepositions as the same kind of grammatical element.

**Planas-Morales** and **Villalba** address a well-known difference between Spanish and Catalan concerning subject-verb inversion in interrogative sentences: Catalan avoids the order V-S and right dislocation of the subject is preferred. The authors examine this observation from a corpus-based perspective and they include the prosodic and pragmatic features of interrogatives into the syntactic picture. The analysis of the data confirms the preference for right dislocation in Catalan and shows that the in situ realization in Spanish has important consequences for the prosodic patterns of interrogatives.

**Valmala**'s article is dedicated to the analysis of Right Node Raising (RNR) in Catalan and Spanish. The author identifies two types of RNR constructions, ana-

lyzes their information-structural, prosodic, and syntactic properties, and compares them with RNR in English. He notices that the main difference between the two types concerns the focal and non-focal interpretation of the pivot constituent and shows that their grammatical properties follow from the application or not of a syntactic operation of ATB movement. In addition, this article also describes and analyzes a particular construction that has not received much attention in the generative literature on these Romance languages.

**Vanrell** and **Fernandez Soriano** investigate how word order interacts with prosody in the expression of sentence modality in several varieties of Catalan and Spanish. The syntactic and prosodic analysis of the data (obtained through a production test and discourse completion task) shows (i) that in Catalan and Spanish the intonational prominence tends to be located in clause-final position in broad focus declarative constructions whereas it can also fall in clause initial position in informational focus declaratives or remain in situ in both informational and contrastive focus declaratives, and (ii) that subject-verb inversion in direct questions applies to Valencian Catalan and Spanish, but not to Eastern Catalan, where the subject is right dislocated

Finally, **Vicente**'s article reports the results of a series of experiments (acceptability rating tasks) on a group of speakers of Andalusian Spanish. The author discovers a generalized mild penalty on object wh- fronting which has remained unnoticed until now and that can be correlative with the existence of a superiority effect in multiple wh- questions, a surprising fact if we bear in mind that, according to the previous literature on this topic, Spanish does not exhibit superiority effects.

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