

International Workshop of Syntactic Variation of Catalan and Spanish Dialects

26-28 June 2013, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Received: 8-11-14
Accepted: 25-11-14

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It is a well known fact that generative grammar has always understood language as a faculty harbored in the mind, rather than as a set of expressions or data, as did the Bloomfieldian structuralism under the positivist legacy of the nineteenth century. The generativism task is to formalize the mental system which is the basis of all linguistic products, or, put another way, to develop a theory of linguistic competence. As long as Universal Grammar (UG) is linked to human linguistic capacity, it is able to give rise to any Particular Grammar (PG) by setting specific parameters, on the basis of some deep-seated rules (Chomsky 1981, Picallo 2014 and references therein). Nonetheless, theories have not agreed when establishing the locus of such variation within the human language system. A quite famed idea in the current Minimalist Program (MP) since the eighties (Chomsky 1986, Fukui 1986), and then followed by authors like Cinque (1999) or Kayne (2005), is the one which advocates for placing variation in the features of functional items, i.e., in the elements of the lexicon of each language. If, for the MP, the Universal Grammar cannot be parameterized (Chomsky 1995, endorsing ideas by Jespersen 1938), variation must affect lexical units and their realization through the morphological and phonological components. Thus, the problem is pushed to the parcel of the lexicon. This move may capture more properly the arbitrariness of the specific rules for each language, given that the nature of the lexicon is not predictable. At the same time, this turn may solve the apparent problem that linguistic variation represents for the MP, which attributes an efficient design for language: if all variation lies in externalization, the differences throughout do not jeopardize the notion of language optimality. Instead, they reveal fundamental properties of its nature and functioning.

Thereby, the study of syntactic variation analyzes diversity on the basis of uniformity. For a better understanding of this dichotomy, linguistic inquiry has approached variation with a macro or a micro lens. Macroparametric studies focus their attention in samples of historically unrelated languages, while microparametric ones look at languages that are closely related, like dialects or languages within one language family, or else different stages of the same language. The International Workshop of Syntactic Variation of Catalan and Spanish Dialects (26-28 June 2013), organized by Anna Bartra-Kauffman, Àngel J. Gallego, M. Lluïsa Hernanz, Francesc Roca and Avel·lina Suñer, aimed at studying these kinds of grammatical issues. The virtue of the workshop lied on

focusing on the domain of syntactic dialectal variation of Catalan and Spanish, a field which still requests deeper formal research. The generative framework provided to all the participants the tools to comprehensively project a fairly realistic picture of how language (and languages) work: small variations in the possibilities of a language delve into the rules governing the system, and redefine their contours. In all cases, the detection of specific parameters allowed us to convince ourselves that any object is defined by its boundaries.

The questions raised by the speakers through the exposition of particular cases were of special interest: how much variation is possible within a language? What is the beginning of linguistic change: adult innovation, linguistic contact, economy reasons...? Is it possible to bridge some dialectal tendencies of Spanish and Catalan with other languages (Romance or not)? In short, all talks established subtle and accurate observations of linguistic variation in these languages, both from a synchronic and a diachronic point of view. Building on already agreed-upon syntactic principles, the findings helped happily refine the theory.

The opening session was carried out by the first keynote speaker **Inés Fernández Ordóñez** (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), whose talk approached the problem of the corpus used to examine dialectal variation. The accessible data usually come from written sources where the unique register is the standard language, which represents the dialectal paradigms only partially. Therefore, the scientific interest in developing new hypotheses about already known syntactic variations, marking a particular feature's isogloss and discovering new syntactic variation phenomena led Fernández Ordóñez to create the Audible Corpus of Spoken Rural Spanish (COSER). The collected data have made several studies possible, such as the substitution of the subjunctive imperfect for the indicative conditional and imperfect (Pato 2003), the mass neuter agreement (Fernández-Ordóñez 2006-2007a,b) and the existential *haber* with third person unstressed pronouns (De Benito 2013), among others.

The next talk was **Anna Pineda's** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), whose conference dealt with monotransivization in Spanish and especially Catalan dialects. The author discussed the cases of some verbs which exhibit dative and accusative alternations (i.e. *La Maria li_{dat}/la_{acc} truca*, 'Maria phones her'). Consistent with her work on applicatives, Pineda assumed that goals are introduced by a LowApplP, and thus the difference should be found in this functional head. She treats these structures as hidden ditransitives, where two arguments are marked with accusative case. In her contribution, she equated these constructions with Germanic's Double Object ones, an idea that is due to Barss & Lasnik (1986), and was first explored for Galician by Uriagereka (1988). Pineda provided further justification by comparing this pattern with other incipient structures of Catalan, where the DO is a *that*-clause. She upheld the existence of a German-like tendency, not developed in all Catalan dialects equally. As for the speakers of innovative dialects, the author stated that they don't exploit the two encoding options evenly, and outlined two tentative lines of research: a syntactic one, which links case with the aspect of the predicate, and another attached to the interpretative component, which considers the notions of holistic affectedness and impingement.

Next came **Javier Ormazabal's** (Universidad del País Vasco) and **Juan Romero's** (Universidad de Extremadura) presentation, in which they defended the possibility that there is no accusative case in Spanish. The difference that they

established between a DOM argument and a non-DOM argument is observed in constructions with SE, where only the non-DOM argument agrees with the verb, since it rises to the subject position. Therefore, the DOM argument would be the only possible object in the object position in Spanish and, hence, the only argument to receive case. In defense of this hypothesis, they presented evidence from Mohawk, in which the animated objects -in close relation with DOM in Spanish- must be legitimated, while the applied arguments -like Spanish non-DOM arguments- must agree. They considered other examples as well, such as cases of *laismo* and clitic doubling. All in all, they assume that case and agreement are checked by different probes and that there is no third person object agreement in standard Spanish, whereas there is an agreement relation with third person animated objects in dialects with *leísmo*, which might reveal the existence of an agreement with dative.

The goal of **Silvia Perpiñán's** (University of Western Ontario) study was to explore the relation between Spanish-Catalan bilingualism of different geographic areas and dialectal variation in Catalan. Her proposal, beyond sociolinguistic factors, explained dialectal variation as a result of some kind of bilingualism that arises in each bilingual speaker who has only partially acquired the second language. She provided empirical evidence from production and judgement tasks: a) the adverbial clitics *en* and *hi* in locative, partitive, and prepositional argumental contexts; b) the accusative masculine specific clitic (*el, l', 'l,-lo, ho*) and the Direct Object Marker. The results obtained showed that in many cases there is an incomplete acquisition of the second language, convergence in the acquisition of certain linguistic aspects and certain variability in balanced bilinguals. Therefore, all these conclusions seem to indicate that one of the internal causes of dialectal variation comes from the different outcomes of bilingualism.

Next came the presentation by **Javier Fernández & Marina Roman's** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), which approached the possibility of non-finite IPs to project a left periphery (in the sense of Rizzi 1997). They presented extensive evidence to show that in Catalan and Spanish Infinitival Topics (ITs) (i.e. *El Joan es pregunta, el sopar, on fer-lo*, 'John is wondering where to dine') are subject to certain licensing conditions. The authors claimed that the availability of ITs is a focus feature in the syntax which, by its very nature, introduces assertive content. They state that the IT depends on a Focus Condition, which implies that an IT is allowed as long as the infinitival clause is focalized. Then, the material preceding the infinitive raises from a position internal to the Esp, FocP to Esp, TopP, what clearly illustrates the correct linearization. Finally, they highlighted certain asymmetries between Spanish and Catalan regarding dislocations, and defend that the reason why the Catalan examples of IT are slightly worse is due to the fact that the topic element should be pronounced rightmost in the string.

The presentation by **Anna Gavarró & Mar Massanell** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) explored the history of Past Participle Agreement (PPA) in Catalan over the centuries, ending with contemporary Catalan. Firstly, they compared the varieties (both historical and geographical) and then they provided a synchronic analysis of the prevailing cases of Catalan (i.e. *La Marta les ha trobades*, 'Marta has found them'). By a plentiful provision of examples, the authors showed that the loss of PPA began in the 16th century, and started with

postverbal full DP objects. They observed that the most resilient case is that of the 3rd person clitic objects, especially [+fem], although some dialects display PPA in other contexts. This led them to draw comparisons between Romance varieties, and note that the path of PPA loss is not identical throughout, Majorcan Catalan being the variety which shows agreement in more contexts. From a formal point of view, they upheld that morphological agreement is attributable to the fact that the object and the participle are found in the same phase. Finally, they offered a glimpse of the acquisition puzzle of PPA, indicating that adult-like performance is achieved at the age of three.

The next talk was delivered by the second keynote speaker **Anna Bartra-Kauffman** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), who analyzed the unexpected presence of a determiner in superlative nominals in Old Spanish and Old Catalan (i.e. *La batalla la més cruel*, ‘The most cruel battle’). First, Bartra-Kauffman aimed to establish a relationship between doubly determined superlative DPs in these variants and the properties of D in their grammar, and concluded that the definiteness of the Superlative Phrase (SP) is independent of the definiteness of the whole nominal. Conversely, the definiteness of the SP comes from the existence of a Maximum Degree DegP, which entails uniqueness and D-linked specificity properties. Based on a technical discussion of high refinement, the author drew an analysis that happily provides the correct linearization results, but offers no clear explanation of the feature relation that the two DPs maintain. Following Cornilescu & Nicolae (2011), Bartra-Kauffman suggested that the solution may lie in assuming the existence of a lower D, which would be merged with the SP as a *last resort*, in order to value its definiteness feature.

The second day of the workshop started with the talk “Variation in the exponence of determiners and other prenominal elements” by **Eulàlia Bonet** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), the third invited speaker. The first part of the presentation was devoted to concord asymmetries within the DP. In North-Eastern Catalan, an expected word-final *s* does not surface under certain phonological, morphological and syntactic conditions (i.e. *el bon vins* instead of *els bons vins*, ‘the good wines’). Bonet claimed that this phenomenon is caused by a failure of realization of the plural morpheme. Interestingly enough, this lack of realization of agreement features within the DP in prenominal position can be found in other languages (in Spanish, a class marker is absent in modifiers or they disagree in gender with the noun under certain conditions; in Asturian there is a mass and gender concord conflict). In a nutshell, Bonet analyzed this concord asymmetries within the DP in parallel with agreement asymmetries at the clausal level between the subject and the verb (cf. Samek-Lodovici 2002), using Optimality Theory as a framework. In the second part of the talk, she assumed that the two allomorphs [lo] and [l] in Old Catalan and some Western dialects are introduced through Vocabulary Insertion, adopting the Distributed Morphology framework. She showed that both the preceding and the following segments should be present at the point of allomorph selection, so they must belong to the same spell-out domain. She discusses, finally, the important consequences that this fact has for phase theory.

Next was **Jan Casalicchio** (Università di Padova), who analyzed the distribution of predicative gerunds and preposition infinitives in a number of Romance varieties. He presented a large amount of data about the use of predicative

gerunds in different contexts in three varieties of Catalan (Central, Majorcan and Algherese) and proposed that the key for this microvariation is a correlation between aspect and distribution of gerunds. Following Cinque's hierarchy (1999), with the highest Asp^o involved, the construction is only grammatical in Central Catalan, the less restricted variety. He also compared this data with other Romance languages that use the preposition infinitive instead of the gerund in the same contexts, and provided a unified explanation. Upon his view, the only difference between the two possibilities is the availability of verb movement: if it is blocked, the preposition is realized and the verb is inflected in infinitive.

The next contribution was **Juan Pablo Comínguez's** (Rutgers University), who presented some interesting data on the nature and position of subjects in interrogative wh- movement in Caribbean Spanish (i.e. ¿Qué *tú* haces? 'What do you do?' vs. ¿Qué haces *tú*?, found in Standard Spanish). Firstly, Comínguez showed the procedure and results of his experimental research, which provides evidence of microvariation in the Caribbean macrodialect, namely the type of subjects (pronominal or not) and the type of pronouns (weak or not) that can occur preverbally. Secondly, he theoretically accounted for preverbal subjects in interrogative wh- movement by positing that Puerto Rican Spanish is becoming a partial pro-drop language due to the underspecification of a referential feature [R]. Finally, he showed some consequences of this new tendency.

After Comínguez's talk, a poster session was scheduled. **Carlos Sánchez & Cristina Buenafuentes** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) presented a study about dialectal and diachronic variation. They aimed to prove that there is a bond between Spanish dialectal syntax and linguistic change, providing a better understanding of mechanisms in linguistic evolution. Meanwhile, the work by **Sílvia Serret** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) dealt with complex modalizers from a dialectal syntax point of view. Following Rizzi (1997, 2002) and Speas & Tenny (2003), she accounted for the scope of these elements, their incompatibility with interrogative operators and the possibility for them to co-occur with speech act adverbs. The poster by **Alejo Alcaraz** (Universidad del País Vasco) exposed the variation that passive alternations can present. He focused on a subset of A-verbs that are able to form adjectival passives with the auxiliary verb in Peruvian Spanish. Finally, **Francesc González i Planas** (Universitat de Girona) approach the issue of quotative recomplementation showing the morphosyntactic variation in Catalan and Spanish regarding the assertive-completive sentences. He analyzed the possible *de dicto* and *de re* interpretations, and proved that quotative recomplementation is subject to morphological but not syntactic dialectal variation.

The morning session ended with a presentation based on the nanosyntax framework. **Juan Romeu** (CCHS-CSIC) and **M. Mar Bassa Vanrell** (University of Texas at Austin) put forward an analysis for microvariation of the preposition *dins* in Catalan following the structure of spatial expressions proposed by Svenonius (2010). To sum up, they illustrated that, unlike standard Catalan, Majorcan needs *de* preceding *dins* when it lexicalizes AxPart and that *dins* always lexicalizes *Region* in this variety. Comparing the case of (*de*)*dins* in Catalan and Majorcan, on the one hand, and (*de*)*bajo* in Spanish, on the other hand, they showed that a fine-grained structure allows us to explain subtle properties of lexical items and compare them with other lexical elements across related languages. They also

claimed that principles of lexicalization like the superset principle or the anchor condition can help predict the range of variation in the data.

The next presentation was delivered by **Yurena M^a González-Gutiérrez** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), who focused her talk in the operator *sólo*. She showed that, in a morphological level, there are two different types of operators: SÓLO-unagreeing (i.e. *Ana encontró sólo una huella*. ‘Ana founded one single footprint.’) and SOLO/A-agreeing (i.e. *Ana encontró una sola huella* ‘Ana founded one single footprint.’). In addition, in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Spanish (LPGC) SOLO/A-concordant can appear in a postponed position (i.e. *Ana encontró una huella sola (no más)* ‘Ana founded one single footprint (no more).’). However, we can have the same interpretation ‘one and no more’ in all the cases. González-Gutiérrez proposed that, although *sólo* and *solo/a* have a different syntactic behaviour, there is a SFoc-D position that will always be active and that would allow quantificational readings in both types of focal operator.

This presentation was followed by a talk by **Paz González** (Leiden University) against the conception of grammaticalization as a consistent and irreversible process, taking into account the particular case of Present perfect distribution in Spanish (and other languages). She began recalling the distinction perfect vs. perfective and the geographical uses of verb forms depending on the type of perfect in Spanish. While in Peninsular Spanish the Present Perfect has become the default form of perfective past reference, in Mexican Spanish this verb form is restricted to continuative and experiential uses. Interestingly enough, there are continental differences across languages: British English and Peninsular Spanish behave similarly, and the same holds for American English and Mexican Spanish. González concluded that there is no cross-linguistic consistency (Peninsular Spanish has not evolved aspectually like French or Dutch, against the traditional analysis) and there is no unidirectionality (because Mexican aspectual forms have developed independently).

The work presented by the fourth invited speaker **Francisco Ordóñez** (Stony Brook University), which is part of a more general project with Esthela Treviño (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Itzapalapa), studied the clitic SE using a comparison between Catalan, Spanish and Italian, and offered an insight on its implications within syntactic theory. Their talk started with the presentation of the different microparameters. The first one establishes that, in order for impersonal SE constructions to exist, pro-drop must be possible. This trait sets French apart from all the other Romance languages. The second parameter establishes that the empty pronoun next to SE can contain a set of features that determine the co-reference, distribution and interpretation possibilities. The third parameter had to do with transitive verb contexts and (non-)agreement relation when the DO is to the left or to the right. Moreover, using grammaticality tests and comparison among Romance languages, they establish a relation between doubling clitic and DOM depending on whether SE and the clitics form a cluster. In case they don't (like in Italian), doubling clitic can occur in non-DOM objects.

The final day of the conference started with **Ángel J. Jiménez Fernández's** (Universidad de Sevilla) talk. He discussed the discourse-syntax peculiarities of the different constituents implicated in focus fronting constructions in Spanish. His presentation was centered in the syntax of Contrastive/Corrective focus (CF), Mirative Focus (MF), Quantifier Fronting

(QF) and Resumptive Preposing (RP). Jiménez-Fernández explored these four phenomena in two varieties of Spanish: Southern Peninsular Spanish (SPS) and Northern Peninsular Spanish (NPS). SPS seems to omit the adjacency condition in focus fronting constructions (i.e. *¡Varias langostas de dos kilos la familia sirvió!* ‘¡Several two kilos lobsters the family served!’). He concluded that pre-verbal subjects in CF, MF and QF are grammatical in SPS due the fact they are interpreted as Given Topics moved to spec-TP. On the contrary, RP is incompatible with pre-verbal subjects.

The next contribution was **Aritz Irurtzun**’s (CNRS-IKER). He explored polite requests in the Spanish of the Basque Country (SBC) (i.e. *¿Una sidra me pones?* ‘¿Get me a cider?’). This type of construction is ungrammatical with clitics, so it is not a topicalization. Besides, it is not a leftward contrastive focalization either. Formally, these constructions involve a split focus-like structure with focus-fronting and a bare absolute (YES/NO) question. Due to this fact, the author’s experiment, tested in French, Spanish and Basque, consisted in the comparison between the intonation of Fronting Questions in SBC and the intonation of Exhaustive Answers (ENF), Non-Exhaustive Answers (NENF), and Verum Focus constructions (VF). Irurtzun concluded that there is a linguistic change taking place and that the plausible catalyst could be OV orders in SBC. Following Schwartz & Sprouse’s (1996) Full Access/Full Transfer Hypothesis, he argued that features of polite request would come from other constructions (i.e. absolute questions).

Next were **Rodrigo Gutiérrez-Bravo** (El Colegio de México), **Martín Sobrino Gómez** (El Colegio de México), and **Melanie Uth** (University of Cologne). They studied Contrastive Focus in Yucatecan Spanish. In this variety, focus constructions show a lot of syntactic idiosyncrasies that are prominent properties of Yucatec Maya syntax (namely, verb focus constructions with dummy verbs *hacer* or restrictions related to the cooccurrence of fronted verbs with direct object clitics). Thus, their proposal was that these syntactic peculiarities of Yucatecan Spanish in the field of fronted focus constructions derive from the contact with Yucatec Maya. Additionally, they suggested that, in line with Zubizarreta (1998) and Gutiérrez-Bravo (2006, 2007), fronted focused constituents land in the specifier of TP, and that prefocal constituents should be analyzed as lefthand adjunction to TP.

The last presentation of the conference was “Microvariation and syntactic theory. What dialects can tell us about language”, by the final invited speaker **Roberta D’Alessandro** (Leiden University). The author started and ended the talk by emphasizing the importance of studying microvariation. According to her, if we want to find where syntactic variation is encoded, we should observe and compare data. The presentation was devoted to the study of some Upper Sothern Italian Dialects (USIDs), because they show non(prototypically) Romance features. Due to this fact, in the first part of the talk she presented some generalizations about Romance languages (i.e. DOM, VOS, VSO, Nom-Se, leísmo or laísmo). After this general view, she checked these generalizations with USIDs to increase the Romance typology. In the second part, d’Alessandro took a crucial question up again: what is the locus of syntactic variation? She offered an answer in line with Borer-Chomsky conjecture: syntactic variation is encoded on functional heads. Thereby, SIDs feature an extra head (π) in the syntactic

structure, which is a probe and hosts unvalued ϕ -features. As the author defended, studying microvariation is a significant task and Romance languages still have many mysteries to solve.

That was a good remark to conclude the workshop, since it showed that syntactic comparison among Catalan and Spanish will help bridge variation in these languages with other Romance cognates. We believe that one idea was shared by all the attendants: the study of (micro)variation does provide a better understanding of the faculty of language.

We sustain that the workshop set up a big picture of both the theoretical framework and the empirical range of variation between Catalan, Spanish and other closely related languages. The keynote speakers' talks deserve special mention, as they are consolidated experts on this field. Inés Fernández Ordóñez presented a powerful tool for searching empirical facts about dialectal variation in Spanish (the COSER); Anna Bartra-Kauffman and Eulàlia Bonet, respectively, provided a fine-grained analysis to two different phenomena within the DP in Catalan (comparing also data from other languages); for its part, Francisco Ordóñez built a microparametric analysis to account for the variation between Catalan, Spanish and French regarding the behaviour of the clitic SE and also the possibility of pro-drop and the distribution of DOM for each language; finally, Roberta D'Alessandro closed the conference showing how important the Romance data comparison is to find out where syntactic variation is encoded.

However, it is worth saying that all the participants offered insightful explanations and ideas, contributing to turn the Syntactic Variation of Catalan and Spanish Dialects international workshop into a remarkable forum debate not only for traditional issues of variation and syntactic theory, but also for new, unexplored lines of research. This interaction between revisited ideas and new ones is the key for the success of any scientific discipline. In linguistics, this effort will hopefully serve to improve our comprehension of the human faculty of language.

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