

Parameters of Microvariation in the Clausal Domain: A Pan-Romance View

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This talk reviews some of the principal patterns of morphosyntactic variation within the Romance in support of a north-south Romance continuum from an approach which locates the relevant dimensions of microvariation between northern and southern varieties in the properties of individual functional heads (Ledgeway 2016; 2020; 2022). This approach, which builds on the insights of the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (cf. Baker 2008:353), assumes that the locus of parametric variation lies in the lexicon and, in particular, the (PF-)lexicalization of specific formal feature values of individual functional heads (Borer 1984; Chomsky 1995). These feature values are not set in isolation, inasmuch as parameters ostensibly form an interrelated network of implicational relationships: the given value of a particular parameter may, in turn, entail the concomitant activation of associated lower-order parametric choices, whose potential surface effects may consequently become entirely predictable, or indeed render entirely irrelevant other parameters (cf. Roberts 2019). Such is the case, for instance, with T which probes the verb in northern Romance, a parametric setting which, in turn, accounts for the availability of verb-subject inversion, Stage II and III negation, subject clitics and active-stative perfective auxiliary selection. In southern Romance varieties, by contrast, all these same options are absent since T fails to attract the verb which is probed instead by *v*, a parametric choice which explains the restriction of V-to-C movement to positive imperatives, the use of generalized or person-driven perfective auxiliiation, and active participle agreement with *in situ* objects.

Considerable progress in this direction has already been made in establishing, and modelling the relationships between, some of the most important parameters of microvariation within the nominal domain, not just across Romance but also more broadly within Indo-European and beyond, in recent parametric work, especially that couched within the Parametric Comparison Method (see, among others, Guardiano and Longobardi (2005; 2017a,b), Longobardi, Guardiano (2009). In this talk, by contrast, I shall consider a selection of key examples from the clausal domain of representative morphosyntactic divergence between the varieties of northern and southern Romance which highlight a number of significant differences in the featural make-up of the functional heads C-T-*v* and their associated domains – the left periphery, the inflexional core of the sentence, and the verb phrase – and the parametric options they instantiate. For example, the contrast between northern Romance varieties which show privileged marking of the subject through a system of subject clitics and southern varieties characterized by differential marking of the object highlights a major difference that can ultimately be related to the differential, and often complementary, featural composition and role of the functional heads T and *v*. Whereas in the north the T head proves particularly active in probing, for example, the verb and spelling out the D-features of the subject through a system of subject clitics, in the south the role of T is less significant in that it is *v* that attracts the verb and spells out the various D-related features of the object through a licensing operation of DOM.

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