

Preface

Language Contact in Theoretical Syntax*

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While most syntactic research has naturally focused on varieties spoken by (supposedly) monolingual speakers, the study of language contact stands out as particularly relevant not only as celebration of linguistic diversity, but also from the theoretical point of view. For one thing, it expands the number of syntactic context available to test hypotheses by adding contact varieties and heritage languages as well as phenomena such as code-switching into the picture. Moreover, the study of language contact presents data collection challenges, which speak directly to ongoing debates on data collection standards in the field of syntax. In particular, there is an ongoing trend towards the adoption of experimental data collection methods and statistical analysis and/or the use of crowdsourcing and citizen science (e.g., see Gallego and Ortega-Santos 2019). Language-contact phenomena correspond to highly specific geolects/sociolects that are not necessarily spoken by the researchers. Thus, researchers are faced with the question of how to gather the data most efficiently and with generalizability; crucially, these issues are discussed explicitly in the corresponding publications, in contrast to most non-experimentalist or non-variationist syntactic research, thus helping the field of theoretical syntax as a whole adopt experimental data collection protocols. Furthermore, the study of language contact has figured prominently in the study of language change, with an emphasis on the extent to which language contact may cause syntactic changes – changes in the I-grammar, say, parameter resetting – and, if so, under what conditions (see Meisel et al. 2013 and references therein). Last but not least, this is also an area relevant to the study of external factors (e.g., language identity or language shift). As such, it lends itself to interdisciplinary work and hopefully crosspollination in

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the study of the relationship between the grammar/competence and more usage-based notions such as frequency. The various contributions, summarized below, enter into these and other issues.

Overview of the contributions

D'Alessandro and Frasson study auxiliary selection and so-called anti-agreement effects in Brazilian Venetan, a heritage Italo-Romance variety spoken in Brazil. The coexistence of multiple varieties of Venetan in Brazil resulted in a complexification of the grammar of Brazilian Venetan, when compared to its European counterpart, specifically in the interplay between agreement, subject position and auxiliary selection as evidenced in interviews. In turn, anti-agreement effects in Venetan are argued to follow from Phase Theory. Furthermore, this work also highlights the need for frequency of usage to be taken into account in analyses of grammatical competence, particularly for naturalistic data gathered through interviews.

Jiménez-Fernández develops a contrastive analysis of so-called main clause phenomena in various types of relative clauses in English and Spanish as well as a study of the grammar of bilinguals in Puerto Rico using acceptability judgement tasks. The latter data provide evidence for an integrationist view of bilingualism (López 2020) in that speakers do not keep the two grammars available to them separate, but rather rules available in one language might be used in the other language.

Van Craenenbroeck and van Koppen focus on the relationship between parameters and geographical proximity, as relevant to the study of language contact. Through the statistical analysis of data from the Syntactic Atlas of Dutch Dialects (the SAND-project, Barbiers et al. 2005, 2008), gathered through a variety of methodologies (translation questions, sentence completion tasks and grammaticality judgments), they put Parameter Theory to a test vis a vis language contact/geographical distance to predict the (non-)occurrence of linguistic phenomena. It is shown that Parameter Theory and language contact can account for different aspects of the dataset.

Llop and Paradís study clitic climbing and presuppositional negation, among other transparency phenomena, in Occitano-Romance varieties. An acceptability judgment task that included three different verbal classes, in particular, restructuring verbs (modals, aspectuals, and motion verbs), control restructuring verbs that go beyond the first class (implicatives, desideratives), and non-restructuring verbs (propositional and factives), reveals (i) a non-trivial amount of variation within certain dialects (mainly in Central and North-Western Catalan), and (ii) that the transparency effects of negation and clitic climbing can be considered independent phenomena. The authors propose that verbal clusters that allow the presence of the embedded presuppositional negation and clitic climbing contain a defective embedded C/T clausal boundary. This embedded clause does not conform a phase and this is why the embedded material is visible to the matrix clause.

Sánchez et al. test the Big DP Hypothesis (Uriagereka 1995, a.o.) in the Spanish spoken by Spanish-Shipibo bilinguals. Data gathered through experimental work (e.g., a production task) provide evidence for the asymmetries in agreement pat-

tern of clitics vs. determiner phrases in the said variety. The Big DP Hypothesis, however, underscores the similarities between both contexts, contrary to the fact. Thus, their research emphasizes not only the importance of experimental research when answering theoretical questions, but also the availability of novel contexts to test theoretical hypotheses in contact situations.

To sum up, the papers included in this volume reveal how the study of language contact allows for a better understanding of the architecture of grammar; language contact also leads the way in methodological issues (e.g., data collection standards and the explicit discussion of data collection heuristics), an exciting trend within formal linguistics.

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