Breakthrough Contributions of Romance Languages to Formal Linguistics: Introduction to the Special Issue

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The foundation of Formal Linguistics goes back to Noam Chomsky's generative program at the end of the fifties. In the seventies, natural language semantics was consolidated as a research field within theoretical linguistics, mostly by the hands of Barbara Partee, Angelika Kratzer and Emmon Bach. Almost seventy years later, our research interests have changed the way linguists conceive of and study natural

languages. In this short period of time, we moved from a syntax-centric theoretical perspective on grammar to an interface research program. This move has fostered investigation topics that were not on our radar before, while enhancing our comprehension of old issues. For example, recent research on the interaction between grammar and external, independent cognitive factors that control the growth of structural complexity and computational efficiency (third factor - Chomsky 2005), has had an impact on our understanding of how the outputs of grammar are accessed and interpreted by external systems related to thought and action and accessed and produced by cognitive and motor mechanisms responsible for externalization. This outcome has improved our theoretical tools to analyze phenomena that we already knew about, such as islands and ellipses, while shedding light on issues beyond those traditionally demarcated for formal linguistics, such as those related to semiotics and language evolution.

Nevertheless, as expected, this research program brought us a new set of challenging theory-internal questions, such as: (a) What is a good theory for the FLN (Faculty of Language in the narrow sense)? (b) Is a theory for FLB (Faculty of Language in the broad sense) possible? (c) Is a merge-only approach to the computational system (Hauser, Chomsky, & Fitch 2002) capable of explaining the richness of language and its manifestations? (d) What are the semantic interpretations of these mechanisms (Chierchia et al. 2021)? (e) What are the formal features and how are they constrained, so that computations triggered by them are not too rich nor too complex? Clearly, seeking answers to these questions has forced us to reappraise well-accepted concepts and hypotheses, such as those of Universal Grammar and Principles and Parameters (Homlberg & Roberts 2014, Roberts 2019), while pushing forward new ones, the Interactional Spine Hypothesis (Wiltschko 2021) for instance, according to which universal formal features result from cognitive pressures, structuring the syntactic spine into four dimensions: DP, VP, IP and CP.

In line with this, theoretical linguistics is a field in rapid expansion and evaluating how it is expanding and what contributes to its expansion is a challenging, but instructive task. With this in mind, in 2022, we - Cilene Rodrigues and Roberta Pires de Oliveira - hosted the online conference Romance Languages: Recent Contributions to Linguistic Theory. The primary goal of the event was not evaluating

possible applications of current linguistic theory to Romance languages, but rather assessing contributions from research on this language family to recent developments of linguistic theory, centering on syntax and semantics. The present volume Trending Topics within Romance Linguistics binds together most of the papers presented at the conference, offering to the reader an overview of the research topics within Romance that are heading our theoretical understanding of language.

Although there are historical surveys on the influence of Generative Grammar into the traditional field of Romance language studies, the literature on the contribution of Romance linguistics to formal theories of language is rather scarce. Kayne's PhD dissertation (defended in 1969 and published as Kayne 1975) is considered to be an introduction of generative linguistics into the field of Romance Languages (Pica & Rooryck 1994, Pescarini 2022), and the conferences LSRL - Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages (since the early 1970s) and Going Romance in Europe (since 1986) boosted Romance formal linguistics as an area of research within Generative Grammar. But what are the contributions of Romance Languages to theoretical linguistics? What are the topics explored by contemporary Romanticists given the historical importance of Romance languages in pressing linguistic theory forward?

As a contribution of Romance to studies on the nominal domain, we may highlight first investigations of clitics and pronouns. Kayne's work in the sixties and seventies (1975) on clitics, particularly in French, contributed to explorations of the interfaces between syntax and morphology, and syntax and phonology. Two decades later, it developed into systematic classifications of types of pronouns (weak vs. strong - Cardinaletti & Starke 1999), which were informative not only about the syntax of nominal expressions and the structural conditions governing their distribution, but also about language acquisition (Belletti & Guasti 2015, Varlokosta et al. 2015, Guasti 2017, among others). Also, research on Romance null subject pronouns amplified our knowledge of parameters, particularly the association between pronominal forms and agreement and on how clusters of different grammatical properties are set together, as part of a unique parametric choice (Chomsky 1981, Jaeggli 1982, Rizzi 1982, Kato 1999, Kato & Negrão 2000). Currently, our hypotheses about the Null Subject Parameter is under scrutiny, as we have observed that some languages, including Brazilian Portuguese, are partial pro-

drop languages, unable to license full deictic 3rdP null subject pronouns, allowing only anaphoric, obligatory controlled null pronominal formatives in finite subject positions (see Rodrigues 2004, Barbosa et al. 2005, Barbosa 2009, Homlberg 2005, Homlberg et al. 2009, Nunes 2019, Kato & Duarte 2023). In addition, as an example of a good by-product in science, let us mention that while analyzing the behavior of Romance null pronouns, we were able to provide a rationale for some previously ill-understood issues such as island violations. Consider, for instance, Chomsky 's (1981) discussion of extraction out of relative clauses and pronominal resumption in Italian.

Our expanded interest in se/si constructions (impersonal, passive, middle and reflexive) is another example of the central role played by Romance. Investigations of these constructions add to our theory of theta-roles, valency alternations, argument structure and agreement (e.g. Burzio 1981, 1986, Manzini 1983, Cinque 1988, 1995, Demonte 1995, Dobrovie-Sorin 1998, Cuervo 2003, D´Alessandro 2007), on voice (e.g., Roberts 1985, Jaeggli 1986) and on binding (e.g. Belletti & Rizzi 1988, Charnavel & Sportiche 2016).

Research on Romance has also led to important developments related to the IP node. First, Koopman & Sportiche (1985, 1991) gathered several cross-linguistic data showing that Spec/IP could be a derived position, with the subject being base-generated within the VP domain and moved afterwards to Spec/IP, the so-called ISH - Internal Subject Hypothesis. Sportiche's (1988) research on floating quantifiers in French provided strong evidence for this hypothesis, which was rightly incorporated into the mainstream theory. Second, Pollock (1989) took a further theoretical step demonstrating, based on data from French, that the spine of the clause structure postulated within Government and Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981, 1986) ([CP C [IP I [VP V]]]) was unable to accommodate non-finite verb movement in French, as these verbs surface in a position between VP-adjoined adverbs and Negation. Pollock´s data and clear-cut observations lead to the Split-INFL Hypothesis, which culminated in the Agr-based theory of Chomsky (1991, 1993). It goes without saying that this theory was quite essential to our understanding of the derivational mechanisms responsible for agreement, which Kayne (1989) and Belletti (2006) explored in relation to past participles in French and Italian, and Raposo (1987) and Pires (2001) explored in relation to Portuguese inflected infinitives. Chomsky´s

(1995) version of the Minimalist Program removed Agr from the set of functional categories, postulating that the category T is furnished with formal features responsible for agreement and verb movement, but the results of the studies cited above lent support to the concept of Agree as a syntactic operation that takes place within derivational cycles, phases (Chomsky 2001), and the empirical facts about agreement in Romance are best recast within this framework, as exemplified by D´Alessandro & Roberts (2008) account for past participle agreement in Italian.

In this domain of research, analyses of Romance data also fuel ongoing debates on the structural size and composition of certain finite clauses in complement position, imperatives and subjunctives. These debates were incorporated into studies of the featural defectiveness of TP and into the semantics and pragmatics of certain aspects of these domains, including obviation effects (e.g. Picallo 1985, Kempchinsky 1986, Suñer 1986, Farkas 1992, Schlenker 2005, Pires 2006). The first paper of the present volume investigates pseudo-relatives in complement position of perception verbs in Spanish. The authors, Pablo Zdrojewski and Fernando Carranza, offer a detailed description of these pseudo-relatives in Argentinian Spanish, observing that these are structures resistant to passivization. According to Zdrojewski and Carranza, the resistance of these structures to passivization is due to obviation effects. Although the authors do not deliver a full syntactic analysis of the phenomenon, they raise the hypothesis that obviation is an indication of structures with a defective T.

Issues related to focus, topicalization, preverbal subjects and left dislocation in Romance (Suñer 1988, Vallduví 1992, Cinque 1990, Uriagereka 1995, Rizzi 1997, Zubizarreta 1998, Ordóñez & Treviño 1999, Villalba 2000, Poletto 2000, Benincà 2001, Costa 2004, Raposo & Uriagereka 2005, Ortega-Santos 2016, a.o) have fed underpinning ideas on the formal architecture of left peripheries, leading to a fertile research agenda on the syntax of discourse features, considering the CP and the vP domains (e.g. Jiménez-Fernández & Spyropoulos, 2013, Gupton 2014, Lacerda 2020, Rodrigues 2023, Jiménez-Fernández, this volume).

The present volume shows that investigations of issues relating to left periphery is a current trend within Romance linguistics. Six out of the nine papers that compose the present volume center on matters related to wh-expressions and foci. First, Ivano Caponigro and Anamaria Fălăuș contribute a paper on the inventory

of wh-clauses in Romanian, showing that, although these clauses look similar at the surface, they have quite different underlying structures. The authors provide a detailed description of the Romanian wh-clausal system, suggesting a set of criteria to characterize and classify it. Caponigro and Fălăuș′ work has relevance beyond Romanian and Romance languages. The set of criteria they provide can be used in different languages, and, by comparing different wh-clauses within the same grammar, the authors pinpoint characteristics that are specific to each wh-configuration, independent of parametric factors. Hence, their paper is an excellent theoretical exercise that provides us with analytical tools to classify different types of wh-clauses, while uncovering some of their morphosyntactic and semantic inherent properties. Given that the semantics of wh-clauses relies on alternatives (Dayal 2016) , it constitutes the theoretical background on which the studies of discourse representations rely.

Tarcísio Dias analyzes the expression quem nunca "who never" that occurs in Brazilian Portuguese. Quem nunca? is a fragment answer uttered as a replay to a verbal assertion. It's a rhetorical question that indicates the speaker's lack of surprise with respect to the content of the previous speaker 's assertion. It is an emotive expression that accepts what was said before as something expected. Dias provides evidence that these expressions are derivationaly formed via wh-movement followed by clausal ellipsis. However, as the author shows, only locally moved wh-subjects are allowed in quem nunca constructions. Following Bošković's (2021, 2023a,b) hypothesis about possible landing sites for A-bar moved wh-expressions, Dias proposes that, in the grammar at hand, locally moved wh-subjects surface in a position between TP and CP; a low A-bar position within the CP-domain associated with polarity (Gribanova 2017). That is, it is a polarity phenomenon. To the best of our knowledge this is the first time this expression is described and analyzed, and Dias′s analysis adds to our knowledge of sluicing, and in particular to issues relating to the structural conditions on ellipsis.

Giorgio Carella, Mara Frescarelli and Marco Casentini investigate long distance A-bar dependencies crossing over factive complements in Italian which are traditionally treated as weak islands based on wh-extraction patterns. Carella & colleagues' paper has a twofold goal: (a) confronting wh-extractions from complements of factive verbs and from complements of bridge verbs to establish the

resistance of factive islands to wh-movement; (b) verifying how sensitive these islands are to focus-fronting extraction. To achieve these goals, two experimental tasks - acceptability judgment tests - were conducted with native speakers of Italian. The results of the first experiment indicate, in accordance with the literature, that wh-extraction of factive complements is significantly less acceptable than wh-extraction out of bridge complements. However, the syntactic function of the extracted constituent has a significant effect, bridge complements seem porous to extraction in general, although extraction of subjects are the most accepted. In contrast, factive complements block extraction of subjects, but allow extraction from indirect objects and adjuncts, and barely allow extraction of direct objects. This suggests that, with respect to wh-movement, factives complements are intermediate rather than weak islands. As for fronting focus, the results of the second experiment indicate that factive islands are sensitive to this type of A-bar movement. All in all, thus, Carella's et al. paper presents us with experimental observations that refine our descriptive adequacy of islands, particularly factive ones.

Until recently gestures were out of the list of the phenomena to be studied by linguists interested in the formal properties of grammar. They were left to semiotics. However, very recently, as we gained more knowledge on externalization of grammatical information, co-speech gestures were placed in our list of things we need to know better. The present volume contains a breakthrough paper in this direction. Valentina Colasanti offers a characterization of the RING-FOCUS co-speech feature observed in Italo-Romance, presenting experimental evidence that this gesture is the PF realization of focus. The experiments conducted were a binary forced-choice task and an acceptability judgment rating task (Experiment 2). The first experiment was run to characterize the contexts in which RING-FOCUS occurs, whereas the second tested the alignment of this gesture with the oral productions it co-occurs with. The results of experiment 1 indicate that the licensing of RING-FOCUS depends on the contextual structure of the utterance it attaches to. It is preferred in non-embedded high informational Foci, in contrastive Foci, and in low contrastive Foci in predicate focus structures, but it is dispreferred in embedded low and contrastive Foci and in high informational Foci in predicate focus structure. The observations obtained in experiment 2 indicate that RING-FOCUS must be articulated and aligned with the relevant focalised constituents. Altogether this is

straightforward evidence that at least some co-speech gestures are externalizers of grammatical features, especially those related to discourse information.

Ángel Jiménez-Fernández, a scholar in the field of discourse features, supplies our volume with an analysis of locative and dative alternations in Spanish, in comparison with Brazilian Portuguese, English and Turkish. Considering the derivational (syntactic) and the non-derivational (lexical) approaches of verbal alternations, the author concludes that there is no homogeneous account for them. While the dative alternation is syntactically derived, the locative alternation is not, indicating, thus, that locative verbs, in contrast with datives, can have different lexical entries. Jiménez-Fernández argues that this difference interacts with information structure, particularly with broad focus, and, based on the hypothesis that discourse features are inherited by V from v in Spanish (Jiménez-Fernández & Spyropoulos 2013), a syntactic analysis of the argument structures of locatives and dative is proposed. As we stressed before, argument structure is a fruitful area of research within Romance Linguistics, and studies on information structure and the realization of discourse features within the vP domain is an important step forward in our theoretical understanding of variations in argument structure.

Since Hankamer & Sag (1976), ellipsis has been one of the most investigated phenomena in formal linguistics, raising hot and insightful debates on the recovery of meaning and its dependency on the structural context. Therefore, mapping the possible variations on the formal constraints grammars impose on ellipsis is one of the first steps towards building a robust theory of ellipsis. With this in mind, several researchers have dug out, based on Romance languages, generalizations about structural conditions imposed on ellipsis (e.g. Depiante 2000, Cyrino & Matos 2002, López 2000, Saab 2008, Rodrigues et al. 2009, Vicente, 2018, Brucart, Gallego & Fernández-Sánchez 2023). Adding to this and to Dias's contribution, the present volume contains Andrés Saab and Laura Stigliano´s paper that describes and analyzes an elliptical structure that has not been documented before. The authors bring forward cases of predicate ellipsis, in Spanish, where the complement copular verb undergoes elision. Although at first sight this looks like vP-ellipsis, it is not vP-ellipsis because Spanish does not license elliptical vPs. Saab and Stigliano show evidence that the complement of little v is the target of this type of ellipsis. They also show that the ellipsis of this constituent requires polarity to focus on the sentence.

Thus, authors derive this via a syntactic analysis of ellipsis in which the complement of little v is eligible for ellipsis only if v enters an Agree relation with a higher functional head responsible for focus.

In its turn, Ezekiel Panitz, following Bošković (2018), argues that sloppy constructed null objects in Brazilian Portuguese are generated via argument-ellipsis, involving a clitic doubling configuration, offering new evidence that the language has phonologically null 3Person accusative clitics (Kato 1993). In his analysis, the clitic and its associated DP are first merged together, forming a big DP, then the clitic moves upward (cliticizes into the verb), stranding the associated DP which is elided at PF. Panitz´ proposal accounts for the fact that argument ellipsis in BP cannot target DPs in subject position, and that it cannot target non-specific indefinite DPs and idiomatic expressions, as well. Panitz´ analysis adds to recent discussion on the nature of null pronouns in Brazilian Portuguese, showing that in its synchronic state a grammar may use more than one mechanism (lexical and syntactic) to build null arguments.

Although syntax and semantics seem to walk apart, their development goes hand in hand. To illustrate, consider that lambda abstraction corresponds to external merge, while internal merge is lambda conversion. All languages employ something like the lambda calculus[1]. This has several consequences and tells us about how our minds work in associating meaning with syntactic structures.

Natural language semantics[2] was born in the seventies from the close interaction between young linguists worried about syntax and meaning, Barbara Partee, Emmon Bach, and David Dowty, among others, and philosophers of language, Donald Davidson, David Lewis, Richard Montague, interested in natural languages and part of the Anglo-Saxon tradition that goes back to Frege, Russell and Plato. It changed the way syntax was understood. For instance, transformational grammar, which was designed based on sentences with simple noun phrases, such as proper nouns, led to wrong predictions with quantifiers. While 'Mary was eager to win' could be generated from 'Mary was eager for Mary to win', 'Everybody was eager to win' could not be generated from 'Everybody is eager for everybody to win',

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[1] See Heim & Kratzer (1998) for an introduction in a syntactic framework. Gamut (1991a, 1991b) is an introduction to the logics.

[2] It was only in the 90's that the field was named Natural language semantics, before that it was formal semantics. See Partee (2014).

as meaning is not preserved. This is just one example of a place where lambda calculus within an intensional apparatus and types is a breakthrough into our understanding of how natural languages work. Since then, the field of semantics has flourished, and new questions arose.

Not all languages have nominal quantification, as predicted by Partee et al. (1987). Not all languages have articles.3 Thus, the nature of the mapping between logical forms and morphosyntax turned into a crucial research issue. What are the universal features and how to explain language variation? One of the big developments in this research area was the hypothesis of Semantic Parameters introduced by Chierchia (1998) to explain language variation in the nominal domain. by 1998, we already had an explanation for bare plurals in English according to which they denote kinds (Carlson 1977), semantics was already dynamic (Heim 1983), plurals and mass nouns already had a semantics that works with mereologies (Link 1983), and Barbara Parte (1986) had already shown the need of type shifting if we are to explain nominals phrases. Semantic Parameters involve differences in how the meaning of DPs are built across languages. Italian only accepts bare plurals in a highly restricted range of syntactic contexts, while French does not allow bare nouns at all. Chierchia's hypothesis is an explanation for language variation in the nominal domain. While English and French have articles, Mandarin has no articles nor plural inflection in the noun. On the other hand, English and Mandarin license bare nominals in argument position, while French does not. The idea, that was already in Chierchia (1984), is that nouns can be of type <e,t>, predicates, and of type e, that is, they are individuals. In Mandarin, nouns are always of type e, in French they are always type <e,t>, in English both types are licensed. Similarly to syntactic parameters (e.g null subject parameter), semantic parameters congregate clusters of properties. Type e languages, such as Mandarin, are those that do not have articles nor plural inflection, and classifiers are obligatory with numerals. The elaboration of Nominal Parameters established a research agenda with great impact on several areas - the semantics of plurality, the role of classifiers, and how meaning is mapped into morphology-, opening new areas of investigation, in particular with respect to languages that do not have articles - how is the logical form of such languages? Do all languages express the definite/indefinite distinction? Are DPs ambiguous between

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3 See von Fintel & Mathewson 2008.

iota and existential operators? Is there a hierarchy of those operations, or are choice function a third possibility that might not surface in English? Besides those theoretical issues, almost immediately after the publication of the nominal parameters, Schmitt & Munn (1999) showed that it blocked a language such as Brazilian Portuguese, that is, a language that has articles and bare plurals, but unexpectedly, licenses bare singulars. How to account for Brazilian Portuguese is still an open question (Ferreira 2022, Pires de Oliveira 2023). Thus, more than 25 years after Chiercha's breakthrough contribution, a lot of ink has been spent on the semantics of noun phrases, and Chierchia has proposed the number parameter (Chierchia 2021).

Another difficult topic in semantics is the interpretation of pronouns, even though so much has been written about these elements. The semantics of first and second person pronouns motivated Kaplan's distinction between content and character, in his two-steps semantics - first check the grammatical information, and assign a value to the speaker and addressee, then attribute a denotation in the set of possible worlds. In the present volume Isabelle Charnavel's paper -   « Je t'aime. – Moi aussi (je t'aime). »: Supersloppiness from a French perspective - is a contribution to the theory of indexicals and e-type pronouns, exemplifying beautifully how French data allows us to choose between theoretical proposals. The paper reports the experimental results of the interpretation of pronouns, and anaphora. Improving on Charnavel (2019) the paper scrutinizes the interpretation of pronouns in dialogues such as I love you. I do too (love you), and the semantics of you. The author shows that you cannot be fixed as in Kaplan (1989), nor can it be bound, since there is feature mismatching. The paper adds new and crucial experimental data in French. It examines cases of focus constructions in French and shows the availability of indexical e-type construals in those constructions. The data is evidence for the semantic view on pronouns (against the morphosyntactic view), where person features are weakened with focus. Moreover, the author shows that there are e-type pronouns, pronouns containing a bindable variable with a hidden description, that contain information about the person, so you is a variable that presupposes the feature Interlocutor.

All in all, the papers bound together in this volume are evidence that Romance Linguistics has been a fruitful field of research with many contributions to

linguistic theory. While acknowledging that none of the investigations reported in the following papers would be possible without the linguistic theory we built throughout the years, we are confident that these very same papers add new information to our understanding of how grammar works, empowering and inspiring us to keep progressing within linguistics.

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