EDITORS’ INTRODUCTION

This double issue brings together a selection of the papers1 presented at the workshop Syntactic variation, held in Bucharest on November 28–29 2014, within the 14th International Conference of the Department of Linguistics: Current Issues in Linguistic Variation. The general conference was organized by the Department of Linguistics of the University of Bucharest, under Rodica Zăfi’s general coordination; the convenors of the workshop were Adina Dragomirescu and Alexandru Nicolae (University of Bucharest and “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” Institute of Linguistics, Romanian Academy) together with Jenneke van der Wal (University of Cambridge, ReCoS project).

The issue of syntactic variation is very general and can be understood in different ways. This is reflected in the variety of topics, languages and theoretical and methodological approaches addressed in the papers of the workshop and represented in this volume. Nevertheless, the discussion at the end of the workshop brought out some common themes and raised certain questions as to how syntactic variation phenomena should be approached and understood, and it is these questions that we briefly address in this introduction.

The first question is data-related: Where is syntactic variation visible? Analyzing the papers gathered here, we can see syntactic variation manifesting as (i) diachronic variation within the limits of a branch of languages, i.e. across Romance (Ledgeway; Wolfe), of a group of Romance varieties (Southern Italian Dialects – Torcolacci; Abruzzese – D’Alessandro and Di Felice; Ibero-Romance – Corr) or of a single Romance language, i.e. old Romanian (Tănase-Dogaru and Uşurelu; Nicolae and Niculescu) or as (ii) synchronic variation, within the limits of a branch of languages, i.e. Bantu (van der Wal) or of a broader linguistic family, i.e. Indo-European (Manzini and Savoia), as a comparison between two branches, i.e. Romance and Germanic (Cruschina, Giurgea and Remberger) or as a comparison between Romance varieties (Barese/Standard Italian/Romance – Andriani).

It should also be mentioned that whereas certain papers are mostly dedicated to the theoretical predictions and conceptual developments related to variation in syntax, others are more data oriented, due to the fact that they bring into discussion understudied (stages of) languages and/or dialects (for instance, D’Alessandro and Di Felice; Nicolae and Niculescu; Tănase-Dogaru and Uşurelu). Nevertheless, bringing into discussion new data is also important from a theoretical perspective, since it is possible to make new analogies and predictions or to better explain certain theoretical concepts (for example, Nicolae and

1 Except for the papers included here, the workshop also included the following presentations: Michelle Sheehan and Jenneke van der Wal, The Worst Case Scenario; Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin, SE-marking and the syntax of Voice: Th-structure and Case; Blanca Croitor, Clitic Doubling in Old Romanian: Between Syntactic Variation and Grammaticalization; Martin Elsig, Variation due to Impeded Grammaticalization: Possessives in Spanish; Alexandra Cornilescu and Alexandru Nicolae, Diachronic Variation in the Syntax of Romanian Demonstratives.

RRL, LX, 2–3, p. 103–104, Bucureşti, 2015
Niculescu’s account of old Romanian clitics can contribute to a better understanding of the V2 grammar of Old Romance, discussed here by Wolfe; or the diachronic data from Abruzzese from D’Alessandro and Di Felice may throw light on Ledgeway’s account of clausal microvariation in Romance.

The second question is *Where does syntactic variation reside?* Since most of the papers adopt a minimalist framework (some couched in particular developments of generative grammar, e.g. Distributed Morphology (Torcolacci), on the basis of the papers included here, we can formulate two answers. (i) One of the sources of syntactic variation (either synchronic or diachronic) is the different positions targeted by Ns and Vs on their extended projections (Ledgeway; Wolfe; Andriani), and the specific type of movement (XP vs. X0 movement) involved (Andriani; Nicolae and Niculescu). (ii) A second possibility is that syntactic variation is found in the presence or absence of features on syntactic heads and phrases, and their linking. Thus, in many papers, variation is conceived, explicitly or not, in the terms of the *Borer-Chomsky Conjecture* (formulated by Baker 2008): “All parameters of variation are attributable to differences in the features of particular items (e.g., the functional heads) in the Lexicon”. The features taken into account are: φ-features (van der Wal; Torcolacci), Case (Manzini and Savoia), (In)Definiteness, V-features (Ledgeway), or an Exclamative feature (Cruschina, Giurgea and Remberger).

The third question is *How does synchronic variation relate to diachronic change?* As we have already suggested, the two types of variation rely on the same mechanisms. What happens diachronically is that movement starts targeting higher heads (Ledgeway, Corr, Wolfe, Andriani) or features change their distribution/their values (Ledgeway; Cruschina, Giurgea and Remberger).

Finally, it also worth mentioning that many papers included here support the idea that syntactic variation also has implications for morphology, as famously summarized in Givón’s aphorism “today’s morphology is yesterday’s syntax” (Torcolacci; van der Wal; Nicolae and Niculescu; Tănase-Dogaru and Uşurelu), and it is sometimes determined by discourse issues, as known from the less famous quotation from the same linguist “today’s syntax is yesterday’s pragmatic discourse” (Corr; Cruschina, Giurgea and Remberger).

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