Introduction

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Much of the research on minority and understudied languages focuses on language policy and politics (maintenance, endangerment, and revitalization). In addition to these important considerations, a spotlight has been placed on the special theoretical import of these languages, and the role they play in shaping our understanding of the language faculty and the linguistic landscape (D'Alessandro 2015-2022; Coler & Nevins 2022; Nevins 2022).

Due to many of the same factors that have led to the minoritisation and endangerment of language varieties, the field of linguistics has often privileged well-documented national languages in the building of its theoretical understanding of language. This has led to an unintended skewing of perspective towards these monolithic standardised languages and, to some extent, it has obscured the diversity of the world's linguistic structures, especially in those countries with well-established state governed infrastructure and national language policies. In these places, now for a century, or many centuries, a vigorous and state-supported standard language conceals the non-standard varieties and their linguistic complexity, as it simultaneously endangers these now minoritised linguistic forms. This has been the case in much of Europe, consequently, it is an issue that concerns much of the territory covered by Romance languages.

Concurrently, the exoticisation and othering of creole linguistics (DeGraff 2003; Mufwene 2005) driven by overt and covert racist conceptions and misunderstandings, means that these systems and their linguistic complexity is both undervalued and miscaterogised. Since many 'creole' linguistic systems are of Romance origin, this has a special significance to Romance linguistics.

This all has an impact on our understanding of linguistic theory. Generative Linguistics, for instance, has primarily built itself on a dataset made up of these standard languages, thereby not fully reflecting the diversity of linguistic structures. Though the extent of this problem is overstated by critics of Generative Grammar, it is nonetheless true, that the better our empirical understanding is, the more confident we can be about our theoretical statements. In fact, this is particularly true when viewing language from a Generative perspective, since every speaker's system is *an* instance of *a* linguistic system, it is equivalent in theoretical significance to anyone else's linguistic system. This makes the study of any non-standard linguistic system equivalent in value to studying a state sponsored linguistic system with a myriad of resources and social prestige.

In recent years, researchers are appreciating just how many understudied linguistic systems exist; this includes many endangered and/or minoritized *bona fide* varieties/languages (or clusters of thereof): Lombard, Tuscan Sicilian, Rheto-Romance, Judeo-Roman, Arpitan, Occitan, Istro-Romanian, but also creoles or creolized languages, and languages resulting from colonial contact: Michif, Papiamentu, Palenquero, Louisiana Cajun French and linguistic codes that are so minoritized, they are barely considered 'varieties' at all: mixed and inter-languages (Llanito, Portuñol, Chavacano) (Ulfsbjorninn 2022), and often acategorical and idiosyncratic (but still linguistically revealing) speech of heritage speakers (D'Alessandro et al. 2021; Esher et al. 2021; Russo & Aprea 2022).

A great many of these minority languages are Romance in origin and since there has been active, intensive and systematic research on the major Romance varieties for over a hundred years, this provides a backdrop from which to ask highly specific, micro-dialectal, micro-parametric, formal questions that are relevant to linguistic theory (D'Alessandro 2015-2022).

Moreover, Polinsky's work on heritage languages (2018) provides a crucial framework for understanding linguistic attrition, restructuring, and incomplete acquisition, all of which are relevant to many Romance minority languages in contact with dominant national languages. Her research suggests that heritage and minoritized languages exhibit structural properties that traditional models fail to predict, particularly in domains such as case marking, verb movement, and cliticization. These phenomena are not mere 'simplifications' but they instead reveal systematic internal restructuring, challenging long-standing claims about language attrition.

The study of phonology in minority and heritage languages has revealed patterns of structural complexity that challenge conventional assumptions in linguistic theory (Polinsky & Putnam 2024). Traditionally, heritage and minority languages were thought to undergo phonological simplification due to reduced input, incomplete acquisition, or language attrition. However, recent research has demonstrated that these languages often develop unique phonological features, including systematic restructuring, variation in phonotactic constraints, and novel prosodic systems that differ from both the dominant national languages and their ancestral varieties.

This volume, in line with the scope of *Isogloss*, a journal dedicated to theoretical and experimental linguistics, aims to redress this historical imbalance by providing a platform from which to showcase empirical findings from lesser-documented Romance varieties that compel theoretical reassessments.

Romance minority and minoritized languages are the essential objects of investigation. Each paper highlights the theoretical significance of their

morphosyntax, morphology, and phonology, which remain largely understudied both within and beyond Europe.

The contributions in this volume examine a range of linguistic phenomena across various Romance minority varieties, each adopting a well-defined theoretical framework. These studies offer new insights into core domains of linguistic theory, particularly through morphological and phonological analysis, from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

Scope and Contributions

The volume includes contributions from every domain of grammar, often crossing the subdomains, phonetics/phonology, phonology/morphology, morphology/syntax, syntax/pragmatics and so on. Eight of the papers are largely focused on the P-side of things: phonological phenomena, including also the interface with experimental phonetics and computational linguistics. The other papers are on the M and S–side of things. One paper primarily investigates morphophonology, and two others instead focus on contributions to our understanding of syntax.

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Crucially, all papers explicitly demonstrate how the documentation and analysis of minoritized languages challenge, refine, and reshape established theoretical assumptions, underscoring their essential role in advancing linguistic research. We briefly outline each contribution as follows.

The article "Palatal sonorants in Portuguese-based creoles", from **Carlos Silva and Fábio Barcellos Granja**, investigates the adaptation of Portuguese palatal sonorants (/ʎ/ and /ɲ/) in 19 Portuguese-based Creole languages, analyzing their phonological representation and cross-linguistic variation. Using data from APiCS (*Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures*) and additional doculects, the authors identify five adaptation strategies, including replacement with palatal glides, coronal consonants, and affricates. The findings reveal that /ʎ/ is more frequently eliminated or restructured than /ɲ/, suggesting a greater phonological complexity. The study challenges the traditional view of these sonorants as phonological geminates, instead proposing that they consist of a coronal consonant with a floating palatal element. This research contributes to the understanding of language contact effects on minority languages and the structural evolution of Portuguese-derived phonological systems.

The article "Clusters and complex segments in Strict CV: Insights from Gascon and Languedocian", from **Kaitlyn Owens**, examines the phonological representation of complex segments in Gascon and Languedocien, two varieties of Occitan, within the Strict CV framework. Focusing on the palatal lateral /ʎ/, the author investigates whether it remains a single segment or it is reanalyzed as a consonant-glide sequence /ʎj/. Using data from the OcOr Corpus (*Occitan Oral Narratives*), the study analyzes word-final consonant clusters and the realization of /ʎ/ across different phonetic environments. The results show that Gascon treats /ʎ/ as a single unit, whereas Languedocian allows reanalysis into two segments, subject to structural constraints. Additionally, Gascon permits word-final consonant clusters due to a parameter allowing the Final Empty Nucleus (FEN) to govern preceding segments, a feature absent in Languedocian, leading to greater cluster simplification. The findings

highlight variation in the phonological structure of minority languages in France and demonstrate how phonetic and phonological processes interact in historical language change.

The article "The stress-conditioned split of ŪNU, ŪNA as seen from the Croissant", from **Fabian D. Zuk**, explores the phonological evolution of the Proto-Romance numerals *ūnu* 'one (masc.)' and *ūna* 'one (fem.)' into distinct numerals and indefinite articles in the Gallo-Romance Croissant varieties, with a focus on Saint-Pierre-le-Bost (Creuse, France). Using dialectal data and autosegmental CV phonology, the study demonstrates how stress conditions triggered palatalization in tonic forms (*yod* insertion) while cliticization led to phonetic reduction in indefinite articles. The formal analysis contributes to understanding grammaticalization processes in Romance and highlights the role of minority languages in tracing diachronic phonological changes absent from national standards.

The article "Branching onsets and empty nuclei: lessons from the Croissant", from **Noam Faust**, investigates the phonological representation of branching onsets and empty nuclei in the Croissant Romance variety of Saint-Pierre-le-Bost (SPLB), using Strict CV Phonology. The author examines how epenthetic vowels split branching onsets and distinguishes them from weak, non-epenthetic vowels, which can bear stress despite identical phonetic quality. Based on fieldwork data and analysis within the Government Phonology framework, the study argues that SPLB supports the Strict CV model (Lowenstamm 1996, Scheer 2004) over Classical Government Phonology by demonstrating that branching onsets contain an internal empty V-slot, which allows vowel insertion. Furthermore, the study introduces a novel distinction between two types of empty nuclei, explaining how phonological constraints regulate their realization in SPLB compared to French. The findings contribute to our understanding of phonological variation in minority Romance languages and illustrate how structural parameters shape phonetic outcomes in contact varieties.

The article "Computer modelling of innovations relative to Latin in contemporary Romance dialects", from **Philippe Boula de Mareüil, Marc Evrard, Alexandre François, Antonio Romano**, applies computational methods to model linguistic innovations in contemporary Romance dialects relative to Latin. Using a corpus of dialectal recordings from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, 145 phonetic, morphosyntactic, and lexical innovations were encoded for analysis. The study employs dialectometry, the Comparative Method, and historical glottometry to classify Romance varieties and uncover dialectal structures. Results confirm a North/South divide, with Oïl varieties showing the highest rate of innovations, and a secondary split between South-West (Ibero-Romance) and South-East (Italo-Romance). Key features include the palatalization of Latin /ka/ in northern Gallo-Romance, geminate simplification north of the La Spezia-Rimini line, and morphosyntactic restructuring in peripheral dialects. These findings offer new insights into the structural divergence of Romance dialects, highlighting the role of phonetic and morphosyntactic innovations in shaping linguistic boundaries. By identifying patterns of change across minoritized linguistic varieties, the study deepens our understanding of the historical evolution and internal classification of minority Romance languages.

The article "Transparency and locality in Piveronese vowel harmony" from **Stefano Canalis**, examines an intriguing pattern of vowel harmony in the Piemontese variety of Piverone. In this variety word-final vowels alternate between high and mid

depending on the height of the (preceding) stressed vowel. This even happens in proparoxytones, even though the intervening, penultimate vowel does not itself alternate for height. The ostensible non-locality of harmony has a strong relevance for various phonological theories of vowel harmony (and phonology in general). The author, drawing from patterns of neutralization and syncope, argues for a metrical analysis of the phenomenon whereby the intervening vowel occupies a metrically weak position from which its transparency in the system is explained. In both word-types, therefore, 'openness' percolates from the word-stress node to the immediately lower metrical node to its right. The existence of this non-local vowel harmony, for the property of openness, taken from this minoritised Romance variety, establishes in the literature a new and important case study for phonology.

In the article on the minoritised variety of Portuguese from São Tomé and Príncipe (STPP), "Stressed Vowels in São Tomé and Príncipe Portuguese (STPP): Acoustic Space (F1 and F2) and [ə] Production", **Amanda Macedo Balduino** and **Shirley Freitas** explore the formant structure of oral stressed vowels and compare these with the findings known from both Brazilian (São Paolo) and European Portuguese (Lisbon). Unlike what is reported for other Portuguese varieties, STPP shows evidence for the following distinctive system: [i, e, ɛ, a, ə, ɔ, o, u]. STPP presents a more compressed acoustic space than BP and EP, while BP presents the largest. A noteworthy result is the presence of [ə] in STPP and its urban microvarieties. This has not been observed in São Paulo or Lisbon varieties. In EP, /a/ also has variable realizations in the tonic position with alternation between [a] and [ɐ] in some dialects, but not between [a] and [ə]. This suggests that, among the documented varieties of Portuguese, [ə] in stressed syllables seems to be uniquely found in STPP and its microvarieties. This joins STPP with the few Romance linguistic varieties that also have [ə] in the tonic position, and adds a case study of stressed schwa for the field of typology. This finding may also have consequences for theoretical accounts of vowel reduction and stress, as well as the diachrony of these phenomena.

Marko Simonović, in the article titled "Three Theme Vowels, Zero Conjugation Classes: A Classless Analysis of Fiuman Verbs", examines an endangered variety of a minoritised language (Venetian) spoken in Rijeka/Fiume, Croatia (and its diaspora). Following Lampitelli & Ulfsbjorninn (2023), Simonovic proposes to eliminate Romance Theme Vowels as identifying conjugation classes and instead he proposes a classless analysis based in phi-feature exponence. Phi-features are exponed by the same Vocabulary Items, regardless of adjacent theme vowels. The various apparent conjugation classes emerge entirely in the phonology, some of which have underspecified phonological structures, containing floating vocalic features. This is modelled in an OT grammar that is sensitive to phasal spell out, and it is sensitive to the faithfulness constraint: *UNREALISEDMORPHEME. The implications of this sort of analysis for the linguistic architecture are far reaching and this analysis opens up the question for the myriad other minoritised linguistic systems of Romance that show irregular inflectional classes and theme vowels.

In their article "Temporal organization in sibilant-stop clusters in Moenat Ladin", a variety of Val di Fassa Ladin spoken in the village of Moena in Trentino (Italy), **Yigan Yang** and **Rachel Walker** explore the temporal organization of word-initial consonant clusters, especially focusing on sibilant-stop clusters. The authors carry out an experimental investigation of the temporal coordination of gestures, which speak to the organization of the syllable structure. They use an acoustic method, since

this is more amenable to a fieldwork setting. Using this technique, sibilant-stop, sibilant-stop-rhotic, and stop lateral clusters are compared. The authors find that word-initial sibilants before a stop in Moenat are organized external to the syllable onset, which is similar to the syllable structure of Italian. This research also highlights the utility of the acoustic methodology for probing the temporal organization of consonant clusters. The findings of the study support theories where sibilants are specially excluded from the class of onsets, word-initially; lending further support for theories that capture/oblige this fact theoretically. Moreover, the methodology employed by the authors is shown to be reliable in a fieldwork setting, opening up its use by others gathering minoritised phonetics/phonology data in the field.

In an article on Martinican Creole, "Common ground management in wh-questions: The case of Martinican Creole LA-marked wh-questions", **Stéphane Térosier**, investigates a particular type of wh-question, those marked by LA-. These are compared with those that are not so marked. It is shown in this paper that, despite the two question types being identical in terms of their internal and external syntax, the La-marked wh-questions have unique properties connected to their pragmatic function. The author proposes that LA is the spell out of a [+familiar] feature, as proposed by Wiltschko (2021), consistent with the management of the common ground. This minoritized linguistic variety contributes to our linguistic understanding by suggesting that certain aspects of pragmatics are part of the grammatical component. The paper opens up the investigation of other languages for the ways in which they handle the grammatically handle the common ground.

In his article on the minoritised variety of Majorcan Catalan, titled Majorcan Catalan: a window to analyse past participle agreement as an epiphenomenon, **Sebastià Salvà**, examines past participle agreement (PPA). This phenomenon has decreased over the last hundred years with the object remaining *in situ* (PPA$_{OIS}$), but it is still robust in cases where the object is preposed, such as in clitic, *wh*-, and other fronted constructions. The author finds that PPA is not a unified phenomenon, but an epiphenomenon, which can be regarded as the by-product of several syntactic mechanisms, a conclusion also reached by Georgi & Stark (2021) for French. As well as *Agree*, PPA could also be the result of *Concord* (as in passive constructions) or "resumption by extraction, stranding, and incorporation" of a functional head H as a strategy for marking information structure. The author finds that, additionally, at least for some speakers of some villages (like Llucmajor and Montuïri), PPA with the object *in situ* can also be used for marking the internal arguments which are given or aboutness-shift topics, while it is simultaneously affected by a dynamic event with [+bounded] or [resultative] aspect. Investigation of these minoritized varieties, village by village, exemplifies that what is commonly thought of a phenomenon can in fact be epiphenomenal drawn from various distinct areas of the grammar.

Conclusion

The contributions in this volume align with the argument that minority linguistic varieties have the capacity to inform and reshape linguistic theory rather than merely adding to pre-existing models. The data in these papers present challenges to long-standing assumptions about phonological representations, morphosyntactic structures, the contents of syntax and language change. In doing so, this volume contributes to a

more inclusive, empirically grounded linguistic science that fully acknowledges the importance of linguistic diversity. By integrating formal analysis with computational, experimental, and corpus-based methodologies of endangered and minoritised varieties, this volume not only adds to the documentation of endangered and minority languages but it also demonstrates their critical role in shaping contemporary linguistic theory.

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