

Introduction

Morphological variation in Spanish



Abstract

In this article, we examine the current situation of studies that concentrate on the study of morphological variation in Spanish. We start discussing the place of morphology in current linguistic theory, and what its different aspects are, a question that is previous to the identification of the relevant phenomena. Section 2 provides an overview of the situation of variationist studies in Spanish, and Section 3 presents the main morphological variation phenomena. Section 4 introduces in the picture the different approaches to variation that are currently discussed in the relevant literature. We close with an overview of the articles included in this volume.

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1. Morphological variation

In order to explain what ‘morphological variation’ means, it is necessary first to define what is understood by ‘morphology’ and ‘variation’. This proves not to be an easy task, as the many different approaches show, both with respect to morphology (cf. Halle, 1973; Siegel, 1974; Aronoff, 1976, 1994; Bauer, 1978; Booij, 1977; Lieber, 1981, 1992, 2004; Lapointe, 1980; Selkirk, 1982; Scalise, 1983; Anderson, 1992; Halle and Marantz, 1993; Marantz, 1995, 1997, to cite only some of the most influential works) and variation (cf. Baker, 1996, 2001, 2008; Belletti and Rizzi, 1996; Biberauer, 2008; Biberauer et al., 2010; Borer, 1984; Chomsky, 1981; Kayne, 2000, 2005, 2013; Newmeyer, 2004, 2005; Roberts and Holmberg, 2005, keeping things to a few relevant works).

Let’s start with morphology. Traditional definitions were based on the assumption that words and phrases are ontologically different objects: morphology was the science that studied the issues that had to do with words (including their grammatical properties, their phonology and their semantics), while syntax studied the same range of issues but in word combinations, that is, phrases. However, relatively recent developments on the field have emphasised that the notion of word is pretheoretical and might not correspond to any object with specific significance in the core linguistic system. DiSciullo and Williams (1987) exhaustive study of how words are defined showed that ‘words’ are not entities with systematic properties in their phonology and semantics, or even with respect to whether they are listed or not in a learned lexicon – understood as a repository of idiosyncratic associations between phonology, meaning and formal properties. Their proposal that words should be defined as syntactic atoms (developing ideas that had been advanced in Chomsky, 1970; Lapointe, 1980; Lieber, 1981 or Selkirk, 1982; cf. Bosque, 2012 for recent discussion) was later challenged from two perspectives. On the one side, there have been studies that derived, rather than postulated as a distinctive property, the range of phenomena where ‘words’ seem to behave differently from phrases (for instance, Baker, 1988; Marantz, 1997, 2000; Huang, 2010). On the other side, there are studies that denied that the notion of word as a syntactic atom makes the right empirical predictions (e.g. Lieber, 1992; Hale and Keyser, 1993, 2002; Julien, 2000, 2007; Artstein, 2005). Morphology cannot be defined, thus, on a notion that has been disputed to that extreme.

The alternative notion of morphology that has emerged in the last 20 years or so is that morphology is the study of the relation between formal features – morphosyntactic abstract properties of the heads that are combined by the

computational system – and the exponents that spell them out – which introduce morphophonological² information that is essentially idiosyncratic. This approach capitalises on independent ideas that have been put forth as The Separation Hypothesis (cf. [Beard, 1995](#)) or the Feature Disjointness Hypothesis (cf. [Embick, 2000](#); see also [Ackema and Don, 1992](#); [Ackema, 1999](#)). The proposal is that, as the system that combines units and builds structures out of them is only sensitive to abstract formal features – EPP, Case, T, v, D, etc. – and never makes direct reference to their physical instantiation (Phonology-Free Syntax, [Zwicky and Pullum, 1986](#)), the units that the computational system contains only have those formal features. The morphophonological properties – that are necessary to externalise those structures as a physical signal – are added after the computational system has built the structures. This is referred to as Late Insertion: morphophonological information is added at a later stage.

- (1) Structure building → Externalisation
 (formal abstract features) (morphophonological features)

This necessarily implies anchoring exponents to parts of the structure; the simplest way to do so is to propose that exponents are part of a list where each entry is an association between formal and morphophonological features.³

- (2) Lexicon
 Entry N: /lk'speʊnənt/ <----> [X, Y, Z]

Lexical entries can – and plausibly should – be enriched with more idiosyncratic information, such as conceptual semantics or purely morphological features (such as conjugation or declension class), but (2) represents the minimum: morphophonology (including possibly \emptyset as a morphophonological representation) tied with morphosyntax.

What morphology means in this new theoretical universe is summarised by the following definition, taken from [Embick and Noyer \(2001:558\)](#).

- (3) Morphology [is a] covert term for a series of operations that occur on the PF branch
 [the externalisation system] following the point at which the syntactic derivation splits between PF and LF.

That 'series of operations' can be more or less complex, depending on other theoretical assumptions. At a minimum, an operation of Insertion is required to spell out the formal features, and this is as much as a system like Nanosyntax ([Starke, 2002, 2009, 2014](#); [Caha, 2007, 2009](#); [Fábregas, 2007, 2013, 2014](#); [Ramchand, 2008](#); [Svenonius et al., 2009](#)) assumes. But the framework where [Embick and Noyer \(2001\)](#) incardinate their study, Distributed Morphology ([Halle and Marantz, 1993, 1994](#); [Harley, 1995](#); [Marantz, 1997, 2000](#); [Harbour, 2003](#); [Embick, 2010](#); [Bobaljik, 2012](#)) proposes a longer series of operations – fusion, fission, morphological merger... – mediating between formal features and exponents before spell out.

Leaving these important differences aside, what remains constant is the claim that if something belongs exclusively to the domain of study of morphology (vs. syntax and phonology), that is the connection between formal and morphophonological features. From this perspective, there is no ontological difference between words and phrases, and the difference between exponents like *cat* and affixes like *-ation*, *-th* or *-ise* must be related to the externalisation system, that is, to their morphophonological information: simplifying things a lot (cf. [Bermúdez-Otero, 2012](#)), affixes are exponents whose morphophonology is defective in some respect. This strong hypothesis has of course some empirical problems (see for instance the critiques in [Anderson, 2005](#) or [Williams, 2007](#) against a theory where affixes are treated essentially as clitics), but it signals a programme of research which we will essentially assume here.

Let's now turn to variation. Although rooted in traditional – both comparative and typological – methods, much contemporary work within the Principles and Parameters framework (PPF, henceforth; cf. [Chomsky, 1981](#)) has carried out a new attitude towards the study and understanding of linguistic variation. What we find at the heart of the PPF is an attempt to solve the tension between descriptive adequacy (which was nicely handled by language-specific rule-based systems of the kind in [Chomsky, 1965](#) and subsequent work) and explanatory adequacy (which aimed at solving the

² Note the *morpho-* in *morphosyntax* and *morphophonology*. As Víctor Acedo (p.c.) points out to us, if the Separation Hypothesis is taken seriously, 'morphology' could be reduced to a mere collection of facts on the interface between syntax and phonology, perhaps following from lexical insertion and independent properties of the lexical repertoire. We keep *morpho-* in this overview simply because it is the standard terminology used in most current studies, and in order to be neutral with respect to whether that interface between syntax and phonology has its own set of operations.

³ There is, of course, the question of whether some of the lexical entries would be even simpler. See [Borer \(2013\)](#) for the proposal that the lexical entry of roots only introduce phonological information, without associated formal features.

logical problem of language acquisition; cf. [Berwick et al., 2011](#)). Such ever-present tension is captured by the following reflection:

The two tasks just mentioned are in conflict. To achieve descriptive adequacy, it often seems necessary to enrich the system of available devices, whereas to solve or case of Plato's problem we must restrict the system of available devices so that only a few languages, or just one, are determined by the given data. [from [Chomsky, 1986:52](#)]

The impact of the PPF modified the research strategies to approach variation, stimulating productive lines of inquiry that progressively – and particularly after [Borer \(1984\)](#) – focused on the morphological-lexical component. In particular, the PPF started a new wave of studies on the lexicon. As noted above, standard lexicalist approaches take lexical items (or words) to be complexes encapsulating idiosyncratic information constructed from the void. That is where variation lies, at least in most traditional and current approaches. However, if lexical items are complexes, then they must have parts, and a structure thereof, which is just at odds with in-a-vacuum generation, thus providing a good argument to pursue non-lexicalist approaches (Distributed Morphology, Nanosyntax, etc.).

For the most part, perspectives on linguistic variation fall into two broad categories:

- (4) Approaches to linguistic variation
 - a. Macro-parametric (cf. [Baker, 2001, 2008; Rizzi, 1978](#))
 - b. Micro-parametric (cf. [Belletti and Rizzi, 1996; Borer, 1984; Biberauer et al., 2010; Fukui, 1986; Kayne, 2000, 2005; Ouhalla, 1991; Webelhuth, 1992](#))

The distinction in (4), which we dwell on in section 4, can be seen as one locating parameters in core components of the grammar or in its periphery (cf. [Chomsky, 1981](#)).⁴ If we pursue a macroparametric approach, then we are saying that variation has its locus in UG operations (Merge, Move, Agree, Transfer, etc.). If we pursue a microparametric approach instead, we are assuming that the burden of variation is to be found where irregularities are already expected: the lexicon. Both macro and micro approaches to variation can be pursued in different ways, but all of them must somehow go through the intricate question of what morphology is.

In addition to these popular views on variation, many researchers have also considered the possibility that variation is restricted to the way externalisation mechanisms (Spell-Out, Fission, Empoverishment, etc.; see section 4.3) operate (cf. [Berwick and Chomsky, 2011; Chomsky, 2007, 2010](#)). Chomsky in particular has speculated that the different modes of externalisation may be responsible for the availability of different languages ([Chomsky, 2007:4; Chomsky, 2010:60](#)). Implicit here is the hypothesis that there is an inherent asymmetry in the way the narrow syntactic computation is handed over to the Conceptual-Intentional and Sensorimotor systems, being optimal only with respect to the former. This idea is largely compatible with micro-parametric views, so we will treat it as part of them.⁵

Some of these ideas are under investigation at present (cf. the collection of essays in [Picallo, 2014](#) for up-to-date discussion) and although much debate has emerged about the foundations and validity of the PPF (cf. [Newmeyer, 2004, 2005; Roberts and Holmberg, 2005](#)), we believe the macro and micro positions can be seen as complementary. A division of labour may actually be necessary in order to approach the non-trivial list of morphological phenomena manifesting variation. In the following pages we will see that such an eclectic attitude proves healthy a much useful when addressing different facts of Spanish grammar.

1.1. Three areas of morphological variation

As we have just pointed out, a key question of PPF-based approaches is where variation is. Let us address this question by assuming two versions of the customary Y-Model stemming from [Chomsky and Lasnik \(1977\)](#): the first (lexicalist) version has a pre-syntactic lexicon (full of words/lexical items), while the non-lexicalist variant has two independent lists whose members (features or feature structures and exponents, list A and B respectively) are arbitrarily associated⁶:

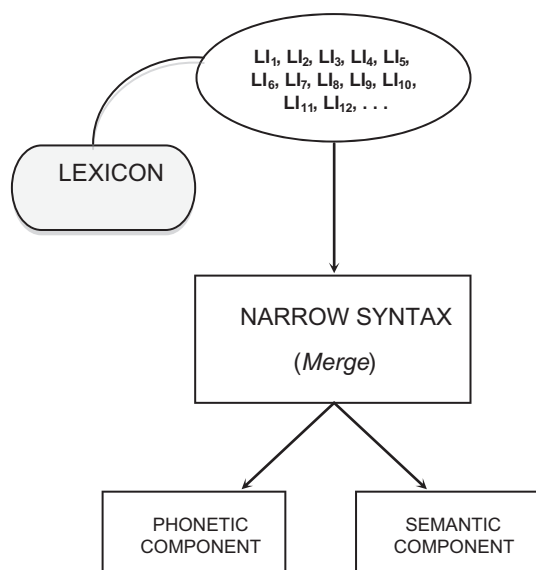
⁴ In [Chomsky \(1981\)](#), the core grammar is regarded as an idealised and homogeneous version of UG while the periphery has many traits of what we can call a Bloomfieldian-Saussurian lexicon – a list of exceptions and idiosyncratic phenomena that must be learned.

⁵ We rush to note, however, that the approach is not incompatible with a macroparametric approach. Its microparametric flavour comes from the fact that it includes operations that take place over lexical items and without any expected cascade effect in syntax or semantics; however, in most implementations, a spell-out operation does not apply to one single token of a category, but to whole sets of elements sharing some formal properties – e.g., insertion of dissociated morphemes to any functional head and not just *v*, as in [Oltra-Massuet \(1999\)](#).

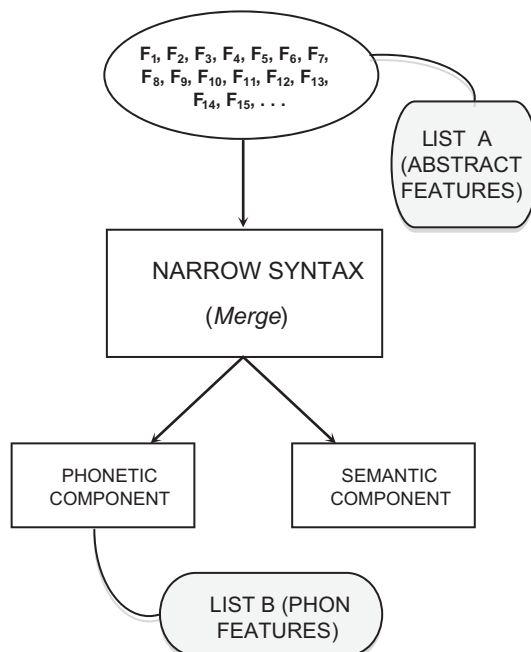
⁶ We are putting aside the “list C” of the distributed lexicon in (5b). Such list contains grammatically irrelevant semantic information – the encyclopaedia – which has no direct impact on syntactic/morphological computation (cf. [Embick, 2010; Harley, 1995; Marantz, 1997, 2000](#)).

(5)

a. Lexicalist Architecture



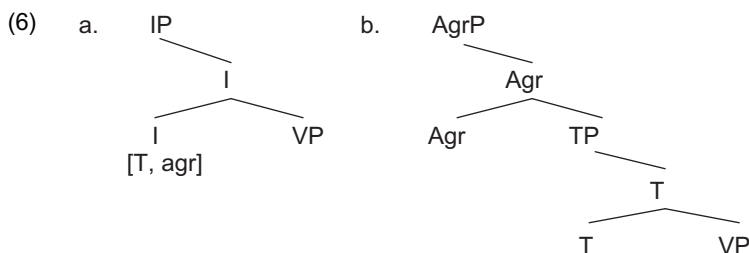
b. Distributed Architecture



Under either scenario, we expect in principle three logically possible kinds of variation that will be relevant to morphology.

- (a) The formal features that exponents spellout might be different or might be distributed differently among the syntactic heads
- (b) Even if the features and the exponents are identical, the operations that relate those features to exponents might be different in nature, be specified in different ways or – even – a system might have an extra operation that other systems lack
- (c) The exponents themselves might be different, either because their morphophonological properties are distinct or because – even when they are identical in their morphophonology – they are associated to minimally distinct sets of features

The first case could be illustrated with a situation in which two given 'languages' (as a cover term for what tradition calls languages, but also dialects or other varieties of a language), even having the same set of features, distribute (or 'bundle') them differently. Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) argue that languages can (a) include tense and agreement features in the same head (represented as I) or (b) associate tense to a different head than agreement (6) (cf. Pollock, 1989; Chomsky, 1991).



Next to some syntactic consequences – the second choice allows for an intermediate subject position – there are some morphological repercussions. Specifically, *ceteris paribus*, a language like (6a) would either spell out agreement or tense, but not both at the same time (because there is only one head to introduce the exponent), while a language like (6b) would be able to materialise with distinct exponents agreement and tense at the same time. English would illustrate the first

situation (7), while Spanish would illustrate the second (8) – see, however, [Alexiadou and Fanselow \(2000\)](#) for some empirical problems with this approach.

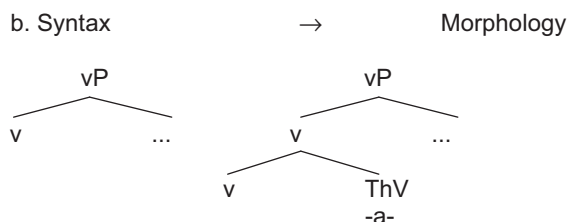
- (7) a. I live
b. He live-s
c. He liv(e)-ed
d. *He liv(e)-ed-s
- (8) a. Canta-mos
sing-1pl
'We sing'
b. cantá-ba-mos
sing-past-1pl
'We sang'

Other analyses following this line of reasoning (already present in [Belletti \(1990\)](#), [Chomsky \(1991\)](#) and [Pollock \(1989\)](#)), where languages vary with respect to how (possibly identical) sets of features are distributed among heads are [Amritavalli and Jayaseelan \(2005\)](#) – with respect to whether C is split or not – [Pylkkänen \(2008\)](#) and [Svenonius and Ramchand \(2008\)](#).

The second potential place of variation is in how features are mapped to exponents. Even if the features, their distribution and the exponents are identical, the surface morphology can be different if the principles that regulate the insertion of the exponents is different.

The richer the spell out procedure is in your theory, the more one expects this kind of variation. In Distributed Morphology, where before insertion there is a number of operations taking place at PF, this situation has been proposed regularly. An immediate illustration is the case of dissociated morphemes, extra positions of exponence that are not represented in the syntax but are added at PF (see specially [Halle, 1997](#); [Oltra-Massuet, 1999](#)). One way to formalise the existence, in Spanish, of theme vowels – that is, markers of the conjugation class of a verb, without any incidence in their syntax or semantics – is to propose that Spanish has an extra spell out operation that introduces a dissociated morpheme in a verbal structure (7) – thus reflecting a property that has been claimed to be autonomously morphological, conjugation class. As this operation takes place after the point where PF and LF part ways, the insertion does not change any syntactic or semantic property. In contrast, a language which does not mark conjugation classes morphologically, like English, would be one which lacks this operation, at least in this domain.

- (9) a. Cant-a-mos
sing-ThV-1pl
'We sing'



Another way in which morphological variation can arise in this level would be if the spell out rules are sensitive to the context – adjacent features or exponents, not just the features the exponent is matched with – and different varieties have different sensibility to that context. [López \(2012:59–64\)](#) proposes that the alternation known as Differential Object Marking (DOM, [Bossong, 1985](#)), whereby a direct object DP is sometimes marked prepositionally – with *a* – is the result of a spell out rule which allows two realisations of the same formal feature, an accusative case value.

- (10) K[acc] → a / In context A
 In context B
 ...
 ∅ / Elsewhere

Given this variability, it is expected that different varieties could define contexts in slightly different terms, accounting for variation in DOM in cases where presence or absence of a does not have immediate syntactic or semantic effects.

The third area of variation which would immediately affect morphology is the exponents themselves (what Chomsky, 2007, 2010 labels “externalization”). Trivially, variation in this domain is manifested in different morphophonologies being associated to the same features across languages; in simpler terms, the fact that the same notion is denoted by exponents that sound differently in different varieties: *clock* in English, *reloj* in Spanish, *vaatama* in Estonian, etc. As we will see, this area of variation is the one that has received most attention in traditional dialectological studies: the fact, for instance, that ‘car’ is associated to *coche* in some areas, *carro* in others, *auto* in yet another group, etc. The interest of this variation is extensive if one adopts a cultural or historical approach to variation, as this variation can be very telling about what cultural influences a particular language has received through history; if one adopts a formalist approach, though, this variation is quite peripheral.

Although the nature of the variation is essentially the same, the superficial result is quite different when the same morphophonological representation is associated to two distinct (sets of) features in two varieties. In such cases, even though the superficial result might be identical in both languages, their interpretation and syntax would be different. (11) illustrates this with a quite studied case in Spanish. In both sentences, we have what superficially looks like present perfect forms. The interpretation of (11a) – from European Spanish – is an aspectual one: a situation that started in the past but continues in the moment of speech (cf. Smith, 1991; García Fernández, 2000); in contrast, the interpretation of (11b), from Ecuadorian Highland Spanish, is modal: it is a mirative statement, used to introduce a situation that goes against what was expected in that context. Other distinct properties of their respective syntactic behaviour follow from here.

- (11) a. Ha habido muchos problemas (últimamente).
has been many problems (lately)
‘Lately, there has been many problems’
b. Ha habido solo dos números.
has been only two issues
‘It turns out that there are only two issues (of that journal)’

[apud Olbertz, 2009:67, ex. 3]

The usual description of this pattern is that the perfect morphology has been reanalysed in this variety to express modal information – evidentiality, mirativity, etc.; undoubtedly the existence of specifically mirative and evidential exponents in Quechua, a language that has been in contact with Spanish for centuries in Peru, must have played some role in this situation. The data allow a treatment whereby the same morphophonological representation is, in the lexical repertoire of each variety, associated to different features. In its simplest form, we could represent it as (12).

- (12) a. European Spanish
habe- → [Asp, Perfect]
b. Ecuadorian Highland
Spanish
habe- → [Mood, Mirative]

When confronted with data of variation, then, one first question to ask is at which one of these three areas variation belongs: the formal features and their distribution, the rules of spell out, or the nature of the entries for each exponent. The answer is not simple, and might depend on specific theory-internal assumptions.

2. The state of the study of morphological variation in Spanish

Arguably, morphological variation – in the restricted sense we will make explicit in this section – did not receive a lot of attention in studies of Spanish grammar during the 20th Century. Even though since the beginning grammars by the Spanish Royal Academy (RAE, 1771, 1870, 1895, for instance) always included a section on morphology, this was the part where the paradigmatic properties of single word classes were discussed – what traditional grammars called *accidentes de la palabra* ‘accidents of the word’ and *sintaxis categorial* ‘syntax of categories’ – and it almost never mentioned phenomena where variation was found.

For instance, in the *Esbozo* (RAE, 1973), the section on morphology covers almost two hundred pages, which mainly concentrate on the inflection of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs, but the take was still quite normative and the occasional reference to phenomena of variation is very restricted (e.g. the non etymological use of the dative pronoun *le* in accusative contexts, known as *leísmo*, §2.5.2c-d). Other early works, such as Alemany Bolufer (1920) had paid more attention to word formation processes – Alemany has 130 pages of discussion just of the suffixes used to derive nouns

and adjectives – but observations related to the variation in the use of these morphemes are non-existent, except for some references to their historical evolution and their relative productivity in early stages of the language. The same takes place in the work of Malkiel (e.g. Malkiel, 1958), Fernández Ramírez (1951 [1987]), Lapesa (1968) and Lázaro Carreter (1980), who sometimes concentrate on non inflectional morphology but still leave aside the description of variation proper. Perhaps behind the scarce attention to morphology beyond categorial syntax and inflection we could find the fact that in two of the greatest grammars of Spanish during the 19th Century (Salvá, 1835; Bello, 1847) the focus was never word formation, even though there were always some reference to it – generally with focus on the relation to Latin – (e.g. Bello, 1847:§86–98).

Later works, such as Alvar and Pottier (1983), kept some of these general properties, but shifting focus so that word formation would also be included; four chapters of this book are devoted to it. Varela (1990) is a very influential work in morphological studies, but the goal of the book was to present the theoretical machinery associated to morphological research in the Government and Binding framework (the first incarnation of the PPF), so no direct reference to variation was made. Lang (1992) and Alvar (1993) are more descriptive studies of word formation which, however, only rarely make reference to variation, and arguably not in a systematic way. Rainer (1993), finally, is extremely rich in data, but his focus is on neologisms – new forms coined, which allows him to describe the productivity of different affixes with respect to different semantic and stylistic domains – but reference to variation phenomena is not systematic; moreover, the fact that this work has not been translated from German into Spanish yet has probably limited the impact it should have had in Spanish morphological studies.

This situation is perhaps surprising to the extent that one could expect that this field could have been benefited from the existence of a strong and active school of Hispanic dialectology (starting with Menéndez Pidal, 1904 and the early group of researchers he created; Navarro Tomás, 1919; Castro and de Onís, 1916). However, perhaps for accidental reasons, the focus of this school was inside European Spanish, as their more ambitious work (the so-called *Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica* (ALPI), ‘Linguistic Atlas of the Iberian Peninsula’) shows. Moreover, the attention was directed towards phonology, lexical variation – different terms to refer to the same realities across different linguistic areas – and only occasionally to syntactic or (inflectional) morphological processes, reflecting the relative weight each one of these areas had in the current characterisation of different Romance languages inside the Peninsula and their historical influences.

The same unequal attention on different areas is reflected in two works that attempt to synthesise and systematise the present body of knowledge on dialectology: the two volumes of dialectology (Peninsular and American) directed by Manuel Alvar (Alvar, 1996), the reference manual on American varieties by Lipski (1996), and the recent one by Palacios (2008) include much more about lexical variation and inflectional properties than about morphological variation proper – and in any case, their proportional extension is considerably smaller than that dedicated to phonology. Similarly, the history of Spanish compiled by Cano (2004) includes several chapters on lexicon, but references to morphological changes referred to word formation are relatively scarce. This simply reflects the fact that, across the years, some areas of variation have received more attention than others.

In the last 15 years, however, this situation has improved considerably. First, the description of Spanish grammar had a cornerstone with the appearance of the almost 5.500 pages long *Gramática Descriptiva de la Lengua Española* (Bosque and Demonte, 1999), which devotes a significant part of its third volume to morphology – both inflection and word formation. Arguably, as different authors took care of different chapters, the attention to variation was not equal in all topics – and it would have been impossible, as this grammar reflected the state of the art at the time – but there are numerous instances where morphological variation is one of the main topics – if not the central topic – of chapters; see for instance Fernández-Ordóñez (1999), Luján (1999), Cartagena (1999) and some parts of Rainer (1999), Ambadiang (1999) or Lázaro Mora (1999).

The second important cornerstone has been the development of projects and groups of researchers working on dialectology and variation that have put the focus on syntactic processes and, with them, the morphology that accompanies them. Some examples of this are Company (1995, 1998, 2002) – and as director, the series of *Sintaxis histórica de la lengua española* (Company, 2006, 2009) – and Fernández-Ordóñez (2007, 2012), who has been directing since 2005 a corpus of oral rural Peninsular Spanish (Corpus Oral y Sonoro del Español Rural, COSER, ‘Oral and Audible Corpus of Rural Spanish’).

Finally, the Spanish Royal Academy published in 2009 the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE-ASALE, 2009). The special property of this work, which singles it out from the previous grammars published by this institution, is that it is the first one written in systematic and coordinated collaboration by the 22 Spanish academies around the world – with appointed committees from each academy that contributed to the final result. This meant an excellent opportunity to cover to an extent that had not been reached before the empirical ground with respect to the variation inside the different varieties of Spanish. To date, this is the most complete work that exists and its 700 pages dedicated to morphology make systematic reference to variation phenomena in inflection, derivation and compounding.

However, both Bosque and Demonte (1999) and RAE-ASALE (2009), which are the two works that have the widest empirical coverage, are *descriptive* grammars. In what refers to morphological variation, therefore, there is still a

significant gap between the descriptive and the theoretical work that makes that the relevance of many of the phenomena described in these work for the current theoretical debates has not been assessed, and conversely, that the empirical search of data might ignore some areas of potential variation where specific theories make predictions and one would want to see whether the facts confirm or deny those hypothesis. The main goal that has driven us to compile this volume is to try to make this gap smaller by asking leading scholars with different theoretical viewpoints to address specific phenomena of variation which we consider central – and representative of many other arguably similar phenomena – in the hope that this will help strengthen the dialogue between variationist studies and theoretical linguistics inside Hispanic linguistics.

3. Main phenomena of morphological variation in Spanish

In this section, we will make a cursory presentation of the main variation phenomena which are arguably related to morphology in Spanish. This overview is necessarily selective, but its goal is to show a taste of the variety of phenomena of different type that fall within the definition presented in the previous section.

3.1. Phenomena related to the spell out of verbal interpretable features

Among the identified cases of variation involving aspect, tense and mood features in Spanish verbs, one of the main areas of variability is the exponents related traditionally to perfect tense. Next to the mirative use in Ecuador that was just illustrated, Peruvian Spanish in contact with Quechua has been reported to show evidential uses of the perfect (cf. [Klee and Ocampo, 1995](#); [Escobar, 1997](#); [Sánchez, 2004](#)), where this morphology is used to mark a statement as coming directly from the speaker's own experience.

- (13) Se lo ha llevado a casa [el pájaro].
 SE it has taken to home [the bird]
 'From what I see, she took it home'

It is also well-known that the use of perfect to report recently finished eventualities (as in 14a) is not general across all varieties of Spanish. The available descriptions show that this use of the perfect is found in Central and Southern European varieties, and is not extended in America, with the exceptions of part of the Peruvian coast, part of Bolivia and Northern Argentina and, occasionally, Cuba and other Caribbean areas. In most of the other areas, this recent event reading is expressed anyways with the *pretérito indefinido* 'preterite' (14b) ([Cardona, 1978](#); [Lope Blanch, 1983](#); [Almeida, 1987](#); [Cartagena, 1999](#); [RAE-ASALE, 2009](#):§23.7-8).

- (14) a. Hoy ha corrido por el parque.
 today has run through the park
 'Today, he has run in the park'
 b. Hoy corrió por el parque.
 today ran through the park
 'Today, he has run in the park'

With respect to mood, some variation in the use of subjunctive has been noted in different areas. It has received a great deal of attention the fact that some varieties lose, with respect to ethymological uses, subjunctives in several cases. This is the case of Spanish in contact with English in Los Angeles ([Silva-Corvalán, 1994](#)) and New York ([Carando, 2008](#)) (15). The strength of the loss correlates with the duration of the stay in USA and is stronger – roughly – in contexts where the semantic contribution of the subjunctive (uncertainty, purpose...) is already marked by a different constituent, like the main predicate or the conjunction.

- (15) Para que ellos entienden
 so that they understand.ind

[apud [Carando, 2008](#):ex. 49]

Other properties of subjunctive have been less studied. Some recent studies have noted that subjunctive also shows variation connected with the pronoun used. In Argentinian Spanish, three second person singular forms compete – each with different sociolinguistic associations: *vos*, *tú* and *usted*. The form *vos* in this variety triggers a special inflection, characterised – roughly – by stress in the last syllable (16a):

- (16) a. Cantá-s
sing-vos
b. Canta-s
sing-tú

Estomba (2013) reports that in some subjunctive contexts, generally in uncertainty contexts, the *vos* form is impossible for many speakers, who then have to use the form of *tú* even if it is generally associated to a different sociolinguistic role.

- (17) {No creo / dudo de} que {gan-es / ? gan-és}.
not think doubt of that win-subj.tú win-subj.vos
'I doubt that you will win'

Less attention has been devoted to the fact that also in some American varieties, like Mexico, Argentina or Perú subjunctive is used in contexts (18a) where it was not expected ethymologically, such as indirect interrogatives (18b).

- (18) a. No sé si sea necesario.
not know if is.subj necessary
b. No sé si será necesario.
not know if is.fut necessary
'I don't know whether it will be necessary'

3.2. Phenomena related to the spell out of nominal interpretable features

Relatively, phenomena having to do with the spell out of number and gender distinctions in the nominal domain have received less attention. It is reported in several descriptive and sociolinguistic studies that varieties (not only geographical, but also stylistic and related to social class) vary with respect to whether they mark overtly gender distinctions in animate nouns (cf. Vargas et al., 1998). These studies, however, concentrate on social factors and not on the grammatical causes or consequences of these alternations. In some varieties of Spanish, the nouns in (19) do not mark gender differences in the noun – although they can do it through the determiner – but, as seen in (20), some other varieties can do it.

- (19) a. Bebé
baby
b. Miembro
member
c. Testigo
witness
d. Juez
judge
- (20) a. Bebe ~ Beb-a
baby.masc ~ baby.fem
b. Miembr-o ~ Miembr-a
member-masc ~ member-fem
c. Testig-o ~ Testig-a
witness-masc ~ witness-fem
d. Juez ~ Juez-a
judge.masc ~ judge-fem

With respect to number, one area where variation has been observed is among compounds (cf. Kornfeld, 2003; Fábregas, 2005; RAE-ASALE, 2009:§3.5e-3.5i) involving two nouns or one noun and an adjective. Across varieties, we find doubly marked plural forms next to forms with only one mark for the whole structure (21). Semantic motivation, stress patterns and availability of modification have been reported to correlate with the double marking.

- (21) a. Un cara-dura
a face-hard
'a rascal'

- b. Un os cara-dura-s
some face-hard-s
- c. Unos cara-s dura-s
some face-s hard-s

Without doubt, the single most studied phenomenon related to the spell out of nominal features in Spanish – and perhaps cross-linguistically – is the alternation between phonologically empty and overt pronouns, famously called *pro-drop* (cf. Rizzi, 1982). The literature on this macro-parameter is extremely rich, and among the debated issues we have the problem of whether the alternation between $\emptyset \sim$ strong pronoun is due to different ways of spelling out the same set of features (as Neeleman and Szendroi, 2007 analysis might suggest) or there are different sets of formal features associated to each spell out. Among the plethora of data that have been described and discussed in this field one issue stands out: the presence of overt subject pronouns in non contrastive contexts in some Caribbean varieties, like Dominican Republic or the coast of Venezuela and Colombia (cf. Jiménez Sabater, 1984; Heap, 1990; Toribio, 1993, 2000; Goodall, 1999; Ordóñez and Olarrea, 2006; Sheehan, 2007; Cabrera, 2008; Gutiérrez-Bravo, 2008; Camacho, 2013).

- (22) Nosotros a veces nos descuidamos
we at times us neglect
'Sometimes we neglect ourselves'

[apud Toribio, 2000:319, ex. (3d)]

The sentence in (22) would be interpreted, in the vast majority of varieties, as a statement that contains a constative topic subject: we, in opposition to another salient set of individuals in the discourse which is explicitly excluded from the assertion. However, in Dominican Spanish this pronoun is used overtly without any marked informational contribution, much like in the English equivalent.

3.3. Phenomena related to agreement

When it comes to verbal agreement, some work has been done with respect to the presentative/existential verb *hay* 'there is/are', which is etymologically invariable in person and number. In many varieties, however, the verb agrees in number with its only argument (23a, 23b), specially in past or future forms. This has been interpreted (cf. Fernández-Soriano and Táboas Baylín, 1999) as evidence that number agreement is blocked in the present indicative by the presence of -y, historically a locative pronoun. However, some varieties – rural areas in Argentina, Antioquia (Colombia) or Venezuela – register a plural form also of the present indicative (Kany, 1945; Montes, 1982; Lapesa, 1941): *hayn* or *haen*.

- (23) a. Había-n muchas personas.
there-are many people
'There are many people'
- b. Hay muchas personas.
there.is many people
'There is many people'

It has also been noted (see Rodríguez Mondoñedo, 2007 for a recent analysis) that in some American areas person agreement is also possible (the facts are also found in substandard European Spanish, and typically regarded as vulgar).

- (24) Habe-mos dos estudiantes en la clase.
there.is-1pl two students in the class
'We are two students in the class'

It is also known that with copulative verbs involving structures with two nominal constituents, and with mismatches in number (RAE-ASALE, 2009:§33.10), there is variation with respect to which one of the two members controls verb agreement, as shown in (25).

- (25) a. Todo era imaginaciones suyas.
all be-3sg imaginations his
'All was something he imagined'

- b. Todo eran imaginaciones suyas.
all be-3pl imaginations his
'All was something he imagined'

In the domain of nominal agreement, it has been noted that adjectives might lose their canonical agreement with nouns, specially but not exclusively in predicative position in several areas where Spanish is in contact with Mayan, Guaraní, and Andinian languages (cf. [Mendoza, 1992](#); [de Granda, 1992](#); [Caravedo, 1999](#)). We see this in (26):

- (26) a. Ahora está carísim-o la vida.
now is expensive-masc the life-fem
'Now life is very expensive'
b. Camisa blanco.
shirt.fem white.masc
'White shirt'

[apud [Vaquero de Ramírez, 1996](#)]

Another phenomenon which – depending on the analysis – might have connection with noun-verb agreement (cf. [Fernández Soriano, 1993](#), [Fontana, 1994](#)) or perhaps case (cf. [Jaeggli, 1982, 1986](#)) is direct object clitic doubling. While in most Spanish varieties a direct object cannot be doubled by a clitic unless it is left-dislocated or it is a personal pronoun (27a), some Andinian areas, as well as some Argentinian and other Rioplatense areas, allow clitic doubling in a wider class of contexts ([Barrenechea and Orecchia, 1979](#); [Suñer, 1988](#); [Hurtado, 1989](#); [Franco, 1993](#); [Sánchez, 2006](#); [Zdrojewski, 2008](#), among many others). The debate here includes whether it is crucial to allow this construction to have a particular focus interpretation of the doubled DP or case considerations are more important.

- (27) a. Lo vi a él.
him saw A him
'I saw him'
b. Juan la saludó a Cecilia.
Juan her greeted A Cecilia
'Juan greeted Cecilia'

In varieties that show number and gender mismatches between nouns and adjectives those mismatches typically extend to these doubled pronouns.

3.4. Phenomena related to case marking

The biggest phenomenon of case marking in Spanish is of course Differential Object Marking (DOM), the situation where some direct objects receive null marking and others are marked with *a*, seemingly a preposition. While the behaviour of the phenomenon is relatively stable, there are some areas where variation is observed; specifically, they tend to involve *a*-marking of non animate nouns with some verbs. [RAE-ASALE \(2009:§34.10ñ-p\)](#) notes that some verbs, like *caracterizar* 'characterise', *modificar* 'modify', *afectar* 'affect', *acompañar* 'accompany' or *preceder* 'precede' can mark their direct object with or without *a*. However, in the examples provided, it can be noted that most of the instances without prepositional marking come from American texts, while most of the texts from Peninsular varieties show *a*-marking. This might suggest that for the group of verbs where *a*-marking has been claimed to have a distinctive function – to tie apart subject and object – there is some sort of lexical variation which could be easily formalised using a [López \(2012\)](#)-style of spell out entry.

Perhaps related to DOM – to the extent that *a* is also used to introduce dative arguments – might be the phenomenon of *leísmo*, already presented. [Ormazábal and Romero \(2013\)](#) suggest that *leísmo* in Central Peninsular Spanish might be different from the superficially similar *leísmo* in Basque Spanish. While in the latter it is possible to clitic double an *a*-marked object with *le*, the former does not allow it (28).

- (28) Le vi a mi padre.
him saw A my father
'I saw my father'
Basque Spanish: OK; Central Peninsular Spanish: *

Their proposal is that *leísmo* has two different natures in these varieties. In Basque Spanish, it is a phenomenon of variation that involves a difference in formal features: *a*-marking is dative case assignment; doubling is possible for the same reason that any other dative systematically allows doubling in Spanish (28). In contrast, in Central Peninsular Spanish *leísmo* is due to different lexical entries: there is morphological syncretism between dative and masculine animate accusatives; the features are not affected, and the constituent behaves like a normal accusative, which rejects doubling in that variety.

- (29) (Le) di un libro a Juan.
 him gave a book to Juan
 'I gave a book to Juan'

Although most of the variation related to case marking takes place in Spanish in the accusative-dative area, there is another documented phenomenon. The standard marking of personal pronouns with prepositions in Spanish is an oblique case which, in the case of the preposition *con* 'with', adopts a special morphological form, *-igo*.

- (30) a. Con-m-igo
 with-me-obl
 'With me'
 b. Con-t-igo
 with-you-obl
 'With you'

However, [RAE-ASALE \(2009:§16.3e\)](#) notes that in rural areas around the Hispanic world (Argentina, Central America, Andinian Areas, Venezuela, parts of Aragón in Spain) the pronouns appear in a form that is syncretic with nominative. Similarly to *leísmo*, the question that emerges here is whether this suggests some lexical syncretism or is a symptom of a deeper difference in feature structure.

- (31) a. con yo
 with I
 b. con tú
 with you.nom

3.5. Phenomena related to the different role of what seems to be the same exponent

Some works have concentrated on the distinct productivity and restrictions of several affixes in word formation. Sometimes what is noted is the preservation in some varieties of an affix that used to be productive in earlier stages of Spanish, such as *-dero* ([Fábregas, 2010](#)), which until the 16th Century was a productive adjectiviser meaning 'that can be V' (*casa-dero* 'marry-dero, that can be married') and nowadays is preserved in several Latin American varieties as a nominaliser of intensification (*tose-dera*, 'cough-dera, repeated action of coughing'). In other occasions, what is analysed is the fact that some varieties contain special derivational exponents inherited, in some cases, from native languages, like the adjectiviser *-eco* in Mexican Spanish (*yucat-eco*, 'from Yucatan'). The likely interpretation of these facts is as cases of variation where the affected area is the lexical repertoire, either because an extra exponent is available with respect to other varieties or because some aspect of the lexical entry of the exponent has changed – the features it is associated with, its conceptual semantics, etc.

The situation is perhaps more interesting in other cases where variation in the productivity of an affix means that it can combine with structures and categories that are otherwise impossible for other varieties; these cases might show that there is a deeper difference related to the structure of the formal features themselves. It has been repeatedly noted that diminutive affixes – like *-it(o)* – which in most varieties attach to (some) nouns and adjectives and a few adverbs are, in Ecuador and Colombia ([Toscano Mateus, 1953](#); [Lipski, 1996](#)), actually able to combine with a wider range of items, and sometimes with what seems to be whole clauses, involving then a modal meaning, the weakening of an order or petition.

- (32) a. Ya no más-ito
 already not anymore-ito
 'Not anymore, please'
 b. Bája-me-l-ito
 lower-me-it-ito
 'Lower it for me, please'

Another example of this variation that might be due to differences in formal features is the use of participial morphology in eventive nominalisations (*un lava-do* ‘a wash-ed, a wash’). [Mondoñedo Campodonico \(2012\)](#) has studied these formations in Peruvian Spanish and has noted that, unlike what happens in other varieties, it can take unergative verbs as bases, as in *una bosteza-da* ‘yawn-ed, a yawn’ or *una nada-da* ‘swim-ed, a swim’.

We still lack, however, global studies that explore in a systematic way the differences in productivity and restriction of individual affixes across geographical varieties. Some information provided in [RAE-ASALE \(2009 – see especially §5.11, §7.13\)](#) are a promising source of some preliminar differences that hopefully will be widened in future research.

3.6. Phenomena related to the ordering of exponents

Finally, some phenomena of variation are also found with the ordering of exponents in a sequence. One typical source of variation is the enclitic or proclitic position of weak pronouns with respect to the verb. With complex verb forms involving infinitives and gerunds (33), pronouns can encliticise to them, but this is impossible with participles (34).

- (33) a. Va a comer-lo
goes to eat-it
‘He will eat it’
b. Está comiéndolo
is eating-it
‘He is eating it’

- (34) *Ha comido-lo
has eaten-it
‘He has eaten it’

One interesting exception is rural Costa Rican Spanish ([Quesada Pacheco, 2005](#)), which allows enclitisation to participles that are reinforced by a preposition. It is likely that this phenomenon involves a distinction in formal features between this and other varieties.

- (35) Ya por sacádo-los, se van recto.
already by taken.out-them, SE go straight
‘Once they are taken out, they walk straight’

[apud [Quesada Pacheco, 2005:12](#), ex. (20)]

Finally, another relevant phenomenon is that clitic pronouns follow agreement markers in most varieties of Spanish (36a), but it has been observed that clitic pronouns can precede agreement in Mexico, the Caribbean and other areas (36b, [Halle and Harris, 2005](#)).

- (36) a. Venda-n-lo
sell.imp-3pl-it
‘Sell it’
b. Venda-lo-n
sell-it-3pl
‘Sell it’

4. Possible causes of variation in morphology

Let us finish this introduction with a short review of what could be the main causes of variation in morphology. The biggest traditional divide has been made in the contrast between internal and external explanations. Internal explanations emphasise the role of specific properties of the language system as a mechanism of variation – instabilities in parts of the system, alternative derivations which are equally compatible with some central data but which differ with respect to their consequences for other patterns, etc. (cf. [Lightfoot, 1979](#); [Alexiadou and Fanselow, 2000](#); [Roberts and Roussou, 2003](#)); in contrast, external explanations put the focus on the influence of other systems through language contact situations, preservation or innovation with respect to previous historical stages or the introduction of loans – whole words or affixes – in that variety, which would lead to a restructuration of the system.

Notice that given the different possible sources of morphological variation both approaches are in principle compatible and equally possible. One way of interpreting the influence of other languages, or other historical stages of the language, would be to analyse the subsequent variation as one that takes place in the lexical repertoire, by introducing new exponents

that might indeed lead to the revision of the lexical entries of the already existing ones, modifying the lexical entries so that the same exponents are associated to different sets of features, etc. Similarly, depending on one's take on the source of variation (see sections 4.1 and 4.2 below), one could propose that a sustained language contact situation in a bilingual or near-bilingual setting would lead speakers activate some formal features in language B because of the overt morphophonological evidence for their existence in language A, ultimately giving rise to internal feature differences (as [Sánchez, 2003](#) proposed).

In our current theoretical universe, the real opposition to a variation approach based on formal features + spell out does not come from proposals that emphasise the role of language contact and historical stages, but from those that deny the existence of a modular language faculty which is distinct from the general human cognitive capacities and is endowed with a set of principles that limit the range of variation in what can be a possible human natural language. These approaches – like [Evans and Levinson \(2009\)](#) and [Everett \(2012\)](#), and related work – associate variation to cultural differences, which are in principle unbounded, and whose motivation might be even connected with geographical distinctions. We will, however, leave aside these approaches to variation from our review, focusing on PPF-rooted approaches instead.

4.1. Macroparametric approaches: wide-ranging parameters

Concentrating only on those approaches that assume some version of a specific linguistic system, one first approach to morphological variation would be macroparameters, that is, wide-ranging choices over a restricted space defined by the shared human language capacity.

A key property of macro-parametric approaches is that changes in a single parameter can have massive, cascade-like, effects, with “proliferating consequences in various parts of the grammar” ([Chomsky, 1981:6](#)). Such “proliferating consequences” are typically known as “clustering effects”, and they result from fixing a given parameter in one way or another. In the case of [Rizzi's \(1982, 1986\) Null Subject \(or pro-drop\) Parameter](#), the cascade of syntactic consequences in (37) emerge as the result from the positive fixation of the parameter.

- (37) Pro-drop Parameter: fixed positively
 - a. missing subject
 - b. free inversion in simple sentence
 - c. “long wh-movement” of subject
 - d. empty resumptive pronouns in embedded clause
 - e. apparent violation of the *[that-t] filter

[from [Chomsky, 1981:240](#)]

As noted in [Gallego \(2011:527\)](#), similar clustering effects can be seen in the case of another famous macro-parameter, namely [Snyder's \(1995\) Compounding Parameter](#).

- (38) Compounding Parameter: fixed positively
 - a. productive N-N compounding
 - b. verb-particle constructions
 - c. double object constructions
 - d. manner incorporation (satellite-framed languages)
 - e. preposition stranding
 - f. non-adverbial/true resultatives

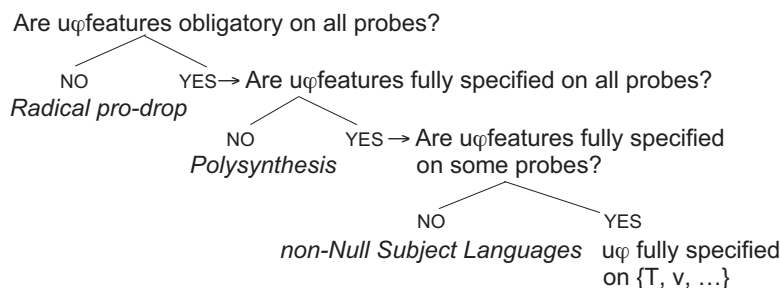
Further well-known examples of macro-parametric parameters are the *Polysynthesis Parameter* (cf. [Baker, 1996](#)), which relates the possibility of pro-drop with free word order, non-configurationality and agreement, and the *Extreme Analyticity Parameter* (cf. [Huang, 2010](#)), which determines whether a language tends to associate each exponent to a single head or whether it will allow – through some formal means – cumulative exponence, whereby the same exponent covers formal features distributed across different heads.

Notice, therefore, that macro-parameters are the way UG principles look after fixation. Consequently, anyone working on parameters is, as a matter of fact, working on principles – as Richard S. Kayne pointed out, “the study of syntactic parameters and the study of syntactic universals go hand in hand” ([Kayne, 2000:vii](#)). In order to pin down the properties of a macro parameter we therefore have to keep in mind the following:

- (39) Properties of macro-parameters (M)
 - a. M instantiates the degree of variation of universal principle (UG principle)
 - b. M requires experience (access to primary linguistic data) to be fixed
 - c. M can have syntactic consequences (clustering effects)

Typically, the fixing step (39b) is severely restricted: there are only two options (as argued by Chomsky, 1986:146). Such a binary scenario was in part due to methodological assumptions, apparently supported by more general learnability factors, like Berwick's (1985) *Subset Principle*, which states that one of the choices (the unmarked one) generates a subset of the expressions generated by the other. Assuming this much, many authors have put forward several parameter schemas that follow from the fixation of the relevant UG principle in one way or another, as can be seen in (40) for the pro-drop Parameter, taken from Biberauer et al. (2010):

(40) Parameter schema (pro-drop Parameter)



Note that all of this is in principle orthogonal to the question of whether one adopts a view where morphology is an autonomous generative component that defines some structures or one which has one generative engine, syntax. Although a macro-parametric approach is more obviously compatible with the second kind of system – to the extent that one would have to accept that ‘morphological’ structures are subject to essentially the same kind of variation than ‘syntactic’ structures – it is in principle conceivable that these parameters act inside an autonomous morphological component, delimiting the possible morpheme combinations.

4.2. Microparametric approaches

In the last twenty years, the alternative to macroparameters that has been more widely extended has been the micro-parametric approach (cf., Borer, 1984; Biberauer et al., 2010; Fukui, 1986; Kayne, 2000, 2005; Ouhalla, 1991; Webelhuth, 1992). Developing ideas originally formulated as the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (BBC; cf. Borer, 1984; Baker, 2008), the proposal is that variation is restricted to the formal features carried by each head – that is, that the computational system does not differ in the range of operations or structures that it can create in principle, but the effects look different because the building blocks that each language uses have different needs and restrictions. Granted, asking what formal features a head H of a language L can carry requires having a theory of the lexicon – and there are quite a few in the market. We believe any such theory must bear in mind (and of course try to address) the following issues, which directly concern the creation of language-particular lexicons:

- (41) a. UG provides a set of features ($\{F\}$) and operations (*Merge*, *Agree*, etc.)
 b. A language L selects $[F]$ from the universal set $\{F\}$
 c. L assembles the members of $\{F\}$ to create a lexicon

[from Chomsky, 2000:100–101]

(41) poses challenging issues to the investigation of variation, although some of them have received a more serious and systematic attention than others. Perhaps the most ill-understood point concerns the inventory of features contained by UG. The literature is replete with proposals about features that trigger operations (somehow stretching, and also distorting, the intuition in Chomsky, 1993), but so far there is no agreed-upon feature typology that can be used as departing point, at least not for morphosyntactic purposes (cf. Adger, 2010; Adger and Svenonius, 2011; Corbett, 2010, and references therein for discussion). The issue in (41b) concerns language acquisition, the role of primary linguistic data, and how the child accesses the information she needs in order to construct the grammar G of her language L. Finally, the formation of the lexicon itself (how features are combined to create words/lexical items) is the focus of much recent non-lexicalist work.

Let us now consider the formulation of the BCC offered in Baker (2008)

(42) *The Borer-Chomsky Conjecture*

All parameters of variation are attributable to differences in the features of particular items (e.g., the functional heads) in the lexicon.

[from Baker, 2008:353]

As has often been noted in the literature, micro-parameters are parameters of the BCC-type, with few and limited consequences that result from features being associated to specific words/lexical items. Baker (2008) sees the issue in the following way:

The standard microparametric view is that the primitive, scientifically significant differences among languages are always relatively small-scale differences, typically tied to (at most) a few closely related constructions [...] Large differences between languages always reduce to lots of these small differences [...] In contrast, the macroparametric view is that there are at least a few simple (not composite) parameters that define typologically distinct sorts of languages. For example, there might be a single parameter in the statement of Merge that induces the core difference between head-initial and head-final languages (Stowell, 1981). There might be a single parameter that lies down the core structure of a nonconfigurational polysynthetic language as opposed to more configurational, isolating languages (Baker, 1996). And so on.

[from Baker, 2008:355–356].

In Gallego (2011:532), the main differences between macro-parametric and micro-parametric studies are summarised as follows:

(43) Rough differences between macro-parameters and micro-parameters.

	MACROPARAMETERS	MICROPARAMETERS
The locus of variation	syntax (P&P principles)	lexical (functional) items
The extent of variation	strong (and manifold) effects	small (easily detectable) effects
The methodology of comparison	comparison of historically unrelated languages (language families)	comparison of related languages (or dialects)

Different arguments have been provided to cast doubt (if not abandon) the macroparametric perspective. For some authors (cf. Biberauer et al., 2010), macro-parameters are actually a side effect of clustering effects. The arguments were mainly empirical (there are different UG principles that can hardly be parametrized), but there were some of the methodological type too. The study of linguistic variation is more feasible from a micro-parametric viewpoint, simply because it is easier to find similarities and differences between, say, Italian and Catalan, than between Yoruba and French. As Richard Kayne puts it: “it is not that microcomparative syntax is eas[ier] to do, nor that one is guaranteed of success [...] It is rather, I think, that the probability of correctly figuring out what syntactic property is parametrically linked to what other one [...] is higher” (Kayne, 2005:282).

But all of this said, we hasten to emphasise that macro and micro approaches are not necessarily exclusive. A good example of this, it seems to us, comes from Juan Uriagereka’s work on the left periphery of Romance languages (cf. Uriagereka, 1988, 1995). In order to capture the variation of those varieties, this author argued for the existence of an additional functional projection in the syntax of certain Romance languages (a morphosyntactic parameter) coupled with an additional parameter regulating the morphological richness of said head in some of those languages (a morphological parameter).

Micro-parametric approaches do not expect the clustering effects or cross-categorical incidence that macro-parametric ones predict, so it makes it possible to make more fine-grained distinctions inside a system – e.g., in cases where the head ordering has one value in the verbal domain but the opposite one in the nominal domain. These approaches are also directly applicable to the domain of morphological variation, where one could say that the head that, say, the diminutive affix spells out has some features in standard Spanish varieties that force combination with a nominal category, while absence of those features would make it possible to combine with a wider array of categories in Colombian or Ecuadorian Spanish.

A second way of interpreting micro-parametric approaches, which would be specifically lexicalist, is as the different constraints and restrictions associated to each individual morpheme used by a language. Those specific and sometimes parochial differences between morphemes that, on the surface, might instantiate the same categorial information would give rise to morphological structures with distinct properties, that, once projected as heads in the syntax, would start a chain reaction through the properties that they still have to satisfy.

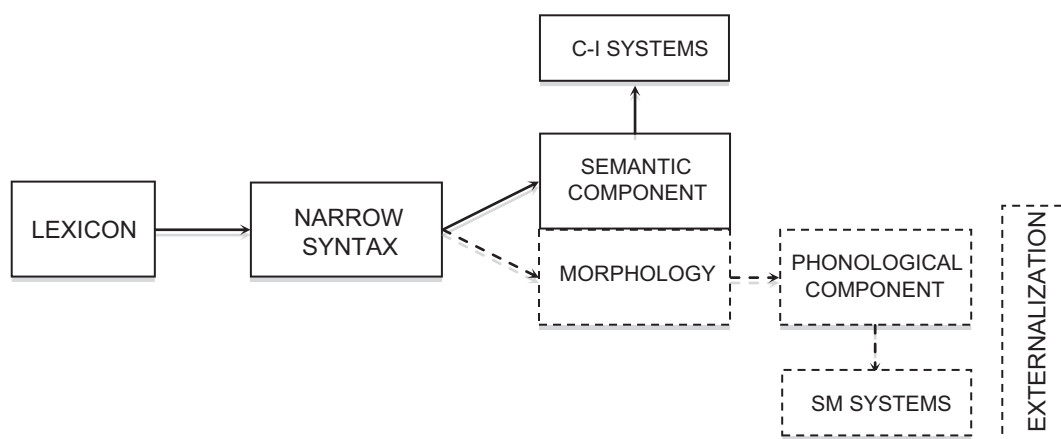
If we remove from the previous explanation the concept of morpheme – which Item-and-Process and Word-and-Paradigm approaches to morphology deny (Matthews, 1974; Aronoff, 1976; Anderson, 1992; Stump, 2001) – we obtain a system where individual words – or the paradigms formed by all the forms associated to a word – would be endowed with minimal formal differences which would start the same kind of reaction. Essentially, most lexicalist approaches to morphological variation are microparametric in nature.

4.3. Externalisation approaches

In Minimalism, specially since Chomsky (2004, 2005), attention has shifted to the role that third factor principles have in determining why the linguistic system is designed in the way it is. The enquiry of the current minimalist enterprise has concentrated on the question of whether it is possible to derive from independent principles, rather than postulate as endowment of UG, the principles that limit the human language faculty. This has led to a rejection of macro-parametric approaches, inasmuch as they presuppose enough UG endowment to define a restricted space of options. Although the hypothesis of a highly impoverished UG does not enter in conflict so clearly with a micro-parametric approach, the difficulties in independently defining a finite set of formal features where variation could concentrate has led some authors to explore a different view of variation: variation is an effect of the externalisation component, where different solutions to how to spell out, all equally compatible with the requisites of the computational system, can be chosen by different languages.

Slightly more precisely, Chomsky (2007, 2010) argues that the different mechanisms of externalisation may suffice in order to account for the majority of parametric variation. As already pointed out in section 1, the implicit assumption here is that there is a crucial asymmetry in the way the narrow syntactic computation is handed over to the Conceptual-Intentional and Sensorimotor systems. If correct, the Strong Minimalist Thesis would only hold with respect to the C-I systems, doing 'its best' in the case of the SM systems. This bifurcated behaviour of the grammar is pictured as follows (dashed lines indicating a non-optimal mapping):

(44)



In an obvious way, this emphasises views of morphology where the variation phenomena are an effect of differences on the spell out mechanism or the lexical repertoire itself. Distributed Morphology and Nanosyntax instantiate, each in its own way, this set of solutions.

Distributed Morphology attempts to reduce as much as possible of morphological variation to the availability of PF operations in each language, and distinctions in their domain of application: differences in the order among morphemes can be a result of whether a reordering operation is applied or not to a construction; differences in the range of features identified overtly by exponents can follow from whether a fusion operation that spells out together two syntactic nodes has been applied, whether a fission operation has divided the features of one single head in two exponents, or whether specific items are underspecified enough to allow insertion in two in principle distinct heads. Nanosyntax, in turn, tries to keep a very simple spell out procedure where there are no non-syntactic operations mediating between the structure and the insertion of exponents, but allows for some extra flexibility in the way exponents spell out syntactic subtrees. The crucial phenomena of variation in nanosyntax depend on the features an exponent is associated with. As it assumes that each single syntactic feature must be identified by lexical insertion, a construction might not be available in a language if there is no exponent that can spell it out in its lexical repertoire.

5. Organisation of the volume

The papers gathered in this volume exemplify the different phenomena, approaches and concerns involved in the analysis of morphological variation across varieties of Spanish. Let us briefly summarise the main goal and claims of the papers.

One of the main areas of variation which is surprisingly more understudied is the different constraints that word-formation phenomena display across varieties. **Castroviejo and Oltra-Massuet** discuss the morpho-syntactic properties

of Spanish verbs formed by *-ear* affixation (EAV), which covers deadjectival (e.g. *amarillear* 'to go yellow'), denominal (e.g. *fanfarronear* 'to behave like a boaster'), and deverbal verbs (e.g. *bailotear* 'to dance in an irregular manner'). Their goal is to develop a unified decompositional analysis of EAV in order to account for cross-dialectal variation in the productivity of EAV. These authors group EAV into three basic syntactic classes that share a core structure V + P, arguing that a large subset of unergative verbs must be analysed as events with a specifier that select for a relational/predicative complement, a type of structure that is shown to underlie verbs with an adverbial argument. In this paper, the *-ear* suffix is further compared against unmarked *-ar* (e.g., *cantar* 'sing', *probar* 'try', *gustar* 'like'), the default verb-forming suffix in European Spanish, arguing that an underspecified analysis of EAV is compatible with cross-dialectal variation accommodating the (non-) predictable range of meanings found across American varieties where *-ear* has become the default verbaliser.

Three of our articles deal with inflectional morphology, on the boundary between nominal agreement and case marking. **Gutiérrez-Rexach and Sessarego** deal with adjectival agreement; they put forward an analysis of gender agreement in three little studied Afro-Andean dialects of Spanish: Chinchano Spanish (Perú), Yungueño Spanish (Bolivia), and Chota Valley Spanish (Ecuador). The data these authors discuss are presented showing a variety of DP-internal gender agreement configurations (e.g., *Tod-O I-A cerveza-A frío* 'All-masc the-fem beer-fem cold-masc') significantly divergent from standard Spanish (cf. *Tod-A I-A cerveza-A fría* 'All-fem the-fem beer-fem cold-fem'). A unified account for these phenomena is proposed combining quantitative methodology and several forms of data collection with a minimalist approach to data explanation and interpretation. The analysis takes into consideration evolution and variation of gender agreement, arguing that the parallel development of gender agreement in these three Afro-Hispanic contact varieties can be explained by an approach in which change takes place along paths set by universal properties of grammar (feature valuation, locality of agreement, gradience of fitness in grammatical development, etc.).

The nature of clitic pronouns in Spanish is the topic that **Zdrojewski and Sánchez** study, through an analysis of clitic-doubling phenomena in three varieties of Spanish (Andean, Buenos Aires, and Lima Spanish). They argue that, in Buenos Aires and Lima, Spanish expresses full agreement (i.e. agreement in gender and number) between the clitic and a doubled direct object (e.g., *Lo atacaron al Papa* 'They attacked him the Pope (masc.)' and *La saludé a la abogada* 'I greeted her the lawyer (fem)'), whereas the Andean variety neutralises gender and number distinctions in 3rd person clitics (*Se lo llevó una caja* 'He/She took it a box (fem)'). Zdrojewski and Sánchez endorse the commonly accepted view that clitic doubling is derived through object movement to [Spec, vP] for Lima and Buenos Aires dialects, but they claim that the doubled constituents remains *in situ* in Andean Spanish. A second source of variation explored in this paper is Kayne's Generalisation, with respect to which Buenos Aires Spanish differs from Lima and Andean Spanish. The overall discussion is coupled with two final issues: (i) to what extent it is possible to trace a correlation between clitic doubling via object movement and the full agreement pattern and (ii) to what extent these conditions on clitic doubling can be linked to [Baker's \(2008\)](#) work on agreement parameters.

Also inside the verbal domain, **Montrul** studies the nature of DOM as observed in Spanish heritage speakers who are second generation immigrants in the United States. The author starts by observing that previous studies of these speakers found that they omit the obligatory use of a with animate, specific direct objects in oral production (cf. [Montrul and Bowles, 2009](#)). In the paper, the potential effects of quantity and quality of input on the degree of DOM erosion are assessed by controlling for age of onset of bilingualism and by establishing whether this phenomenon would also be subject to attrition in the first generation of immigrants. A total of 64 young adult heritage speakers, 23 adult immigrants from Mexico, and 40 native speakers from Mexico matched in age and socio-educational status were tested with a written/auditory comprehension and a written production task. Montrul shows that the main findings indicated that native speakers from Mexico performed largely at ceiling in both tasks, whereas the three immigrant groups, including the first generation immigrants, omitted obligatory *a* in written production and made errors in comprehension. These findings suggest, the author concludes, that structural changes with DOM in US Spanish occur at the representational level in some individuals are due to both insufficient input in middle childhood and different parental input in adolescence and early adulthood, in addition to potential transfer from English.

As we noted, another of the central issues in the study of morphological variation is the way in which different meanings are mapped to exponents in each variety. Two central challenges in this enterprise are represented by our two last papers in the volume: how to determine the specific semantic contribution of an affix, and whether it is possible to associate its uses to a specific, invariable semantics, and how the influence of other languages can lead to the development of new grammaticalizations for the expression of semantic notions. **Rivero's** contribution explores the use of Spanish future and conditional morphemes, which may display inferential readings, as in *Elena ganaría la carrera ayer* ('Elena must have won the race yesterday'), which can be used to convey a present deduction about a past event. Such morphology may also display readings known as concessive (dubbed 'mirative' by the author), as in *Elena ganaría la carrera ayer, pero no está contenta* ('Elena might have won the race yesterday, but she is not satisfied'). The proposal put forward by Rivero is that such future and conditional affixes encode an evidential modal involving a body of indirect information, which the speaker may vouch for or not. This modal contributes to propositional content and can be syntactically and semantically embedded, so it cannot be treated as an illocutionary marker. The author thus argues that it is a degree expression that

does not reduce to necessity or possibility, hence reminiscent of gradable adjectives such as ‘tall’ or ‘probable’. Ordering sources and anchoring behaviour combine in such a modal to trigger various levels of confidence in the information, resulting in variability in force, which may range from certainty/necessity to doubt/possibility in both inferentials and miratives.

Finally, Lipski’s contribution focuses on the Andean highlands of South America, where the predominant indigenous language, Quechua, frequently produces phonetic and morphosyntactic effects on regional varieties of Spanish. Standard accounts of Quechua-influenced Spanish depict a picturesque jumble of mismatched vowels and erratic morphological agreement, while linguistic descriptions have concentrated on double possessives, O-V word order, and the overuse of gerunds. The underlying assumption is that Quechua-dominant bilinguals inconsistently mix Quechua-like configurations into their imperfectly acquired Spanish, while fluent Andean Spanish retains only slight traces of language contact. This paper draws on data from northern Ecuador, where Quechua-dominant bilinguals exhibit the beginnings of a hybrid morphological system based on two discourse markers that reflect the realities of both Spanish and Quechua: *-ca* (derived from the Quechua topicalizer *-ka*), and *-tan* (apparently derived from Spanish *también* ‘also’). An analysis of the Ecuadoran data reveals that *-ca* in Quechua-influenced Spanish often signals topic (assumed information) much as in Quechua. It is also postulated that *-ca* has its origin in non-fluent bilinguals’ incomplete suppression of Kichwa grammar when producing Spanish. Lipski further argues that the Ecuadoran data also suggest that *-tan* has developed into a syncretic marker combining reflexes of Kichwa *-pash* ‘also, even’ and the validator *-mi*, variably indicating focus and/or evidentiality as well as embodying innovative characteristics not directly derivable from Quechua sources. Data from a (Quechua-influenced) Spanish-to-Quechua translation task are used to further explore possible Kichwa sources for *-ca* and *-tan*.

Obviously, there are many topics and approaches that are not represented in this volume. We hope, in any case, that the papers presented here are representative enough of the wide variety of interests and analyses that deal with morphological variation in the field nowadays. Hopefully, this contribution will encourage others to consider carefully the rich array of variation to which morphology is subject across varieties of Spanish.

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