

Introduction

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In 2010, the Laboratory Approaches to Spanish Phonology (LASP) conference was expanded to include work on all Romance languages and the name changed to Laboratory Approaches to Romance Phonology (LARP). The fifth conference in this series, which was held at Brigham Young University in September 23-25, 2010, attracted numerous eminent scholars from around the world who presented on the phonology of Catalan, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Following a rigorous review process, fourteen of these papers were selected to appear in this volume, which is divided into two sections. The first contains seven papers dealing with aspects of segmental phonology; the second, which also contains seven papers, focuses on prosody.

Over the last several years, the study of phonology has moved steadily away from introspective studies or studies that relied on the impressionistic coding of phonetic phenomena toward empirical studies relying on acoustic analysis and experimental conditions to answer important questions regarding the phonology of natural language. The articles in this volume continue the tradition of empirical examination of the phonology of Romance languages. In the first section, four papers closely examine fricatives in different varieties of Spanish. Thus Schmidt and Willis' exploration of the voicing of /s/ in Mexican Spanish discovers that the regressive assimilation of voice so often cited in the literature is not categorical and also that there is a "consistent [...] manifestation of progressive voicing from the preceding vowel into the sibilant." In an important article for those interested in acoustic measurements and methodologies, Gradoville's study, which involves testing the validity of ten different ways to measure fricative voicing, reveals the inadequate inter-rater reliability of impressionistic methodologies, thereby underlining the need for care when selecting a method for documenting acoustic phenomena. Brown's examination of the lenition of syllable-initial /s/ in Dominican Spanish follows a usage-based model that employs the techniques of both corpus linguistics and acoustic analysis, while Colotoni and Kochetov use electropalatography to examine fricatives in both Cuban and Argentine Spanish. The three remaining papers look at other segmental features of Romance. Stevens' paper, which addresses the status of preaspiration in Italian, concludes that it is an enhancement of the voiceless geminate stops. Rapozo de Medeiros uses aerodynamic and duration data in an analysis of nasal codas in order to argue for the phonemic status of nasal vowels in Brazilian Portuguese. And Gooden-Mayeda discusses whether universal perceptual mechanisms may help listeners overcome the acoustic effects of nasality in Portuguese vowels or if language experience is more relevant.

The second section in this volume is devoted to aspects of the prosody of Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and French. Robles-Puente provides a description, validated by a perception study, of absolute interrogative intonation in Bilbao Spanish. Lang-Rigal also provides important perceptual evidence in an examination of narrow focus intonation in Buenos Aires Spanish. In another study, Robles-Puente explores the intonational cues to imperativity, backed with perceptual evidence, in Peninsular Spanish. Of the four remaining papers, two deal with Brazilian Portuguese and two with French. While Baia and Santos compare naturalistic and experimental data with a view to identifying the initial prosodic template for children learning Portuguese as L1, Peres *et al.* use visual cues to explore the perception of Brazilian Portuguese absolute interrogatives. Finally, Smith examines the perception of prosodic boundaries in spontaneous French speech, and Stewart identifies a unique stress pattern that can function as a sociolinguistic marker, which is viewed negatively by French listeners, who assign it low prestige.

Taken together the papers in this volume make a significant contribution to our understanding of the sound systems of Romance. They also underscore the value of employing a variety of empirical

approaches to the study of phonology while highlighting, in several instances, the relevance of perceptual data.

I would like to thank the many people who helped in the evaluation of manuscripts for the current volume, reviewed abstract submissions for the conference, and generally helped in the organization and administration of LARP 2010. Neither the conference nor the production of this volume would have been possible without the collaboration of many fine colleagues.

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