



香港中文大學

CUHK

語言學及現代語言系

Department of Linguistics and
Modern Languages

Romance Verb-movement and Parameters of Clausal Microvariation: Synchronic Variation and Language Contact

Prof. Adam LEDGEWAY

University of Bergamo

Date: March 24, 2026 (Tuesday)

Time: 4:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m. (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)

Venue: Lai Chan Pui Ngong Lecture Theatre , Y.C. Liang Hall,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Abstract

This talk reviews some of the principal patterns of synchronic morphosyntactic variation in the clausal domain across Romance in support of a north-south Romance continuum from an approach which locates the relevant dimensions of (micro)variation between northern and southern varieties in the properties of individual functional heads (Ledgeway 2016; 2020; 2022). This approach, which builds on the insights of the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (cf. Baker 2008:353), assumes that the locus of parametric variation lies in the lexicon and, in particular, the (PF) lexicalization of specific formal feature values of individual functional heads (Borer 1984; Chomsky 1995). These feature values are not set in isolation, inasmuch as parameters ostensibly form an interrelated network of implicational relationships: the given value of a particular parameter may, in turn, entail the concomitant activation of associated lower-order parametric choices, whose potential surface effects may consequently become entirely predictable, or indeed render entirely irrelevant other parameters (cf. Roberts 2019). Through an examination of a selection of examples of major morphosyntactic variation between northern and southern Romance varieties, I shall show how these differences can ultimately be traced back to the activation or otherwise of the clausal functional heads T and v and the differential, and often complementary, composition of the features they carry, as witnessed most notably in the variable position of the finite verb across Romance, the so-called V(erb)-movement parameter. Finally, I shall test this hypothesis by reviewing two cases studies from Rossellonès Catalan and Italo-Greek of contact-induced change in the V-movement parameter and the knock-on microparametric effects these exogenous changes entail for other areas of clausal syntax.

Speaker

Adam Ledgeway is a full professor of Italian linguistics in the Department of Humanities, Philosophy, and Communication at the University of Bergamo. Prior to this, he had a distinguished career at the University of Cambridge from 1996 to 2024, serving as full professor of Italian and comparative Romance linguistics, dean of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, and head of the Department of Italian. He holds a PhD in comparative Romance linguistics and theoretical syntax from the University of Manchester. His research brings together traditional Romance philological scholarship with generative syntactic theory, focusing on the comparative history and morphosyntax of Romance languages, Italian dialectology, syntactic theory and linguistic change. He has published extensively in the field, including major monographs such as *From Latin to Romance: Morphosyntactic Typology and Change* (Oxford University Press, 2012) and *A Comparative Syntax of the Dialects of Southern Italy* (Blackwell, 2000). He also co-edited *The Cambridge History of the Romance Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). His work appears in leading theoretical and comparative journals, including *Journal of Linguistics*, *Glossa*, and *Lingua*.

All Are Welcome

Enquiries

Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, CUHK

Tel: (852)3943 1516 Fax: (852)2603 7755 E-mail: lin@cuhk.edu.hk