

58th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea Call for Abstracts

Workshop title: Diachronic Studies on Minoritised and Under-researched Romance Varieties

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Keywords: *diachrony, language change, Romance languages, minoritised languages, under-researched languages*

Call for abstracts: We invite abstract submissions for a Workshop on ‘Diachronic Studies on Minoritised and Under-researched Romance Varieties’ as part of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (26-29 August 2025, University of Bordeaux Montaigne). Each oral presentation will be assigned a 25-minute slot (20 min. presentation, 5 min. discussion, 5 min. room change).

Submission: Provisional abstracts should be **no longer than 300 words** and focus on language change in minoritised and/or under-researched Romance varieties. The deadline submission is **November 10th 2024**. Abstracts should be sent to the convenors (marc.olivier@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk and afra.pujolicampeny@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk).

1. Background

Linguistic research on Romance languages is vast and has given rise to the production of significant cross-linguistic studies (Harris 1982; Fleischman 1983; Squartini 1998; Baurer 2006; Sheehan 2010, Ledgeway 2012; Vincent 2016; Schifano 2018, Wolfe 2018, to list just a few), further enhancing our understanding of this family, with a particular focus on non-minoritised and official languages like Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, French, Italian, and Romanian. In between these major areas, within the cracks of ‘Romania’, lies a significant number of minoritised varieties, and varieties that have received less attention (e.g., Gallo, Occitan varieties, Corsican, Moianese, Mirandès, Aromanian) which deserve to be included in the debate and thoroughly researched.

We adopt a broad definition of ‘minoritised varieties’, including varieties in a situation of diglossia which may or may not enjoy official and institutional recognition, which may or may not have a low number of speakers, and which may or may not have been or be persecuted or banned, and/or endangered. Minoritised Romance varieties are not necessarily under-researched (i.e., Catalan), yet a number of them have not been the focus of much research to date, in contrast with official state languages like Spanish or French.

Given the fact that all Romance varieties share Latin as a common ancestor yet have become distinct entities, the question of trajectory paths is an extremely relevant one, stretching from fragmentation and Romanisation on the one hand to language-specific innovations on the other (Ledgeway 2012). The area of Romania is akin to a controlled experiment, where genetically related varieties undergo unique developments. By including minoritised varieties in the study

of Romance linguistics, we gain better understanding of the factors driving diachronic linguistic developments.

2. Putting neglected varieties to the front

This workshop will create a forum of discussion for scholars working on minoritised and/or under-researched Romance varieties and their diachrony. Its overarching goal will be to inform diachronic accounts of the Romance family with languages and varieties that are often ignored in comparative studies, therefore revising the methodologies and theories used to approach these varieties to integrate them in the forefront of the Romance diachrony debate.

The past two decades have witnessed the publication of important studies on minoritised and under-researched Romance varieties, notably in Italo-Romance (Ledgeway 2000, Remberger 2010, Tortora 2014, D'Alessandro 2017), in Gallo-Romance (Kasstan 2015, Esher et al 2021), in Ibero-Romance (Gravely & Gupton 2022), and in Romanian varieties (Dragomirescu & Nicolae 2018). These contributions are vital to the general linguistic enterprise, as they are revealing of the last traces of a linguistic continuum that once existed in the area and are furthering our understanding of the evolution of this linguistic continuum. Crucially, they build a bridge connecting major and standard varieties in exposing rich linguistic variation, valuable to all subfields of linguistics.

3. New lines of research

Recent advances in linguistic methodology, such as the use of large corpora, computational modeling, and sociolinguistic fieldwork, have improved our ability to study language change. These advances allow for more data-driven approaches to understanding language evolution, yet the question of whether the same methods can be applied in the same way to both non-minoritised varieties on the one hand, and minoritised and under-researched varieties on the other, or if further improvements are needed.

Language contact plays a crucial role in shaping change in both minoritised and non-minoritised varieties. In minoritised varieties, contact with non-minoritised languages often accelerates processes of borrowing, code-switching, or linguistic shift, as speakers may adopt features of the dominant variety. The reverse, however, appears to be a weaker phenomenon.

Additionally, there is an ongoing debate about the use of historical labels for modern varieties (see notably Smith 2002 for French), and periodisation should therefore be applied carefully, taking into account both the linguistic evolution and the socio-historical context of each variety. At the same time, linguistic labels and classifications should reflect systems in both diachrony and synchrony (e.g., is Gascon still part of Occitan? Or has it become a distinct variety?)

4. Potential research questions:

The aim of the workshop is to explore diachronic change in minoritised varieties from all possible perspectives, from methodological matters to theoretical ones, and case studies. We invite abstracts engaging with the following research questions and related issues:

1. What are the similarities and differences in the way language changes between minoritised/under-researched varieties and non-minoritised varieties?
2. To what extent does the lack of homogenisation/standardisation influence change?
3. How do current methodological and theoretical advances allow us to approach language change in minoritised/under-researched varieties? What improvements are needed?
4. To what extent does language contact between minoritised/under-researched varieties and non-minoritised varieties influence change?
5. How does research on minoritised/under-researched varieties complete our understanding of language change in Romance?
6. Periodisation: should we use historical labels for modern varieties? How should diachronic changes in linguistic structure be reflected in the terminology and classification of minoritised varieties? (i.e., Gascon/Occitan).
7. Should non-standard varieties (i.e., sociolects, etc.) of standard Romance languages be considered under-researched and/or minoritised? Where to draw the line?

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