

Introduction to the special issue

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The idea for this special issue developed from a conversation at an international workshop where this guest-editor, the general editor of this journal, and several other linguists working on Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan and Basque were present. The topic of the conversation was the perceived need to have a new linguistics journal focusing on the languages of the Iberian Peninsula (including their extra-Peninsular expansion). This, it was agreed, should be an international journal with a rigorous reviewing process, to ensure its quality. After considering several options, all of us thought that the recently established JOURNAL of Portuguese Linguistics could very well serve this purpose by expanding its purview to encompass the other languages that have their origin in the Peninsula, both Ibero-Romance and Basque. I agreed to edit a special issue with this coverage, as a way to jump-start the process.

This special issue has the title “Variation and change in the Iberian languages: the Peninsula and beyond”. All papers in the issue deal with variation and/or change in some way or another. The papers have been selected to include the major “Iberian” languages and to represent a wide range of linguistic fields: phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax and sociolinguistics. An attempt has also been made to include the projection of these languages beyond the Peninsula. Thus, A.M. Escobar’s contribution is concerned with syntactic developments in Andean Spanish and B. Echevarria’s paper deals with patterns of language use in California’s Basque community. Clements argues in his paper that the analysis of present-day immigrant Spanish speech can shed light on certain features of Portuguese-based creoles. Even Recasens & Espinosa’s paper, on an aspect of variation in Catalan phonetics, deals with an extra-peninsular variety of the language, Majorcan Catalan. The other three papers in this special issue study aspects of these languages in their original homeland or pan-geographically. The Brazilian scholars C.Galves, H. Britto & M.C. Paixão de Sousa discuss the

evolution of clitic placement in European Portuguese from the 16th to the 19th centuries. M. Perez-Saldanya & G. Rigau study the development of ‘postpositions’ in Spanish and Catalan since the middle ages. J. Ortiz de Urbina analyzes the distribution of nominalized subordinate structures in Basque and establishes a comparison with Spanish infinitival clauses, arguing that, in spite of obvious differences in morphology, similar semantic factors are at play in both languages. I believe that, taken together, these papers make a forceful argument for a journal with the characteristics mentioned in the first paragraph.