Over the last decades, intonation research presented special challenges for many scholars. The idea of this book grew out of The International Symposium on Prosody La variation diatopique de l’intonation dans le domaine roumain et roman held at Iaşi on 21 and 22 October. This event was viewed as a meeting of the AMPER (Atlas Multimédia Prosodique de l’Espace Roman) research groups.

The editor of this volume, Adrian Turculeţ, professor of Dialectology and Phonetics at the University Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iasi, is the coordinator of the Romanian research group which belongs to the international prosodic research atlas (AMPER). Following the methodology of AMPER, the linguist has attempted to offer a wider view of the Romanian prosody contributing to the realization of another Romanian atlas (AMProm) that studies a larger range of survey points. Both projects are in full swing. The initial results of the surveys, which were released in ten cultural centres in Romania and the Republic of Moldavia, are discussed in this volume. Indeed, this research presents different intonative patterns which depend not only on the dialects but also on the level of standard language.
This book is meant as a source of information for Romanian researchers concerning the state of investigation in prosody. Until now it was a difficult task to study the Romanian intonation, given that Laurenția Dascălu-Jinga’s works are based only on analysis of standard language. Her approach was a traditional one: she focused on the intonation as the ‘melody of the speech’ concerning the use of the syntax, and less on the pragmatics involved.

The volume might also be put to good use outside the Romanian space, and in particular in Europe, fulfilling a useful function.

As far as the structure of the book is concerned, it can be divided into two strands. First, there are papers that focus on Romance varieties and second, there are those that focus on the prosodic features of certain languages (Romanian, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Sarde and Occitan).

The twelve papers here constitute a point of entry for prosody in the whole Romance languages area. Another issue on which this volume sheds light is the international project AMPER (Atlas multimédia prosodique de l’espace roman). These papers allow clear recognition of the importance of this project, which launched a series of empirical investigations in the intonation field.

Linguist Michel Contini in ‘Vers une typologie intonative des variétés romanes’ presents the essence and a detailed description of the AMPER project. Contini emphasizes that there are important aspects of the dialectal variation of the Romance languages that have been left untouched.

The study of Romanian intonation is outlined by Turculeţ, Botoşineanu, Minuţ and Mladin. Much of the discussion is devoted to the main intonative features that are present in ten cities: Baia Mare, Braşov, Bucarest, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Iaşi, Oradea, Sibiu, Timişoara and Chişinău. The authors touch upon such questions as F0 and duration. The first point they noticed was that the speakers were mainly influenced by the dialect of the surrounding area, an influence that stems from the local differentiation. This fact, however, is a rather typical characterization of interrogative utterances, while the affirmative statements might go unnoticed.

A further dimension for intonation is added in ‘Aproximación al estudio de la entonación de la región de Murcia: Caravaca de la Cruz y Bullas’, by several researchers of AMPER-CAT (Martínez Celdrán, Fernández Planas and Roseano) who study Murcia intonation. The results of their study took into account the affirmative and interrogative statements with SVO structure without subject and object. Their main finding is that the Carava speaker’s affirmative contour is recognizably different from that of the informant from Bullas. However, in the case of interrogative productions, there are some features that
are variable but stable. To understand these contours better, the authors compare them to some of Valladolid and Seville, which led to the formulation of a number of important generalizations.

Intonation research is further enlightened by the paper by Lurdes de Castro Moutinho, Rosa Lidia Coimbra and Ana Margarita Vaz, who present a synthesis of some intonative patterns from Barlavento and Sotavento (Portugal), areas that involve a wider range of variation. This research exposed diverse intonative contours that will form the basis of a more in-depth study in the future.

In ‘Una nota peculiar en la prosodia asturiana: la entonación oriental’ Carmen Muñiz and Mercedes Alvarellos raise questions and issues about a rural (Meluerda) and an urban (Ribadesella) intonative variety. They discovered that the intonation of these areas is embedded in the Asturian and Spanish intonative model. The speech of the woman from Meluerda reflects an influence of the surrounding area dialect, while the woman from Ribadesella makes uses of the Spanish pattern.

Josefa Dorta’s chapter offers a walkthrough of F0, duration and intensity that affect the total interrogative utterances from the Canary Isles. She found that the speakers had a differential behaviour in the case of the F0. This led her to different conclusions, especially in the light of the final contour that she obtained: upstepped (El Hierro, La Gomera) or downstepped (La Palma) or circumflex (Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote).

One topic that runs through the next two articles is the Portuguese domain. Elisa Fernández Rei, Ana Escourido and Helena Rebelo lend new weight to research into Portuguese intonation, treating the intonative pattern of southern Portugal.

The discussion on the Italian intonation belongs to Antonio Romano and Helena Interlandi. ‘La variazione geoprosodica nelle varietà d’italiano parlante a Torino, Milano, Roma e Palermo: come l’intonazione veicola l’informazione pragmatica’ includes a diagram with examples of Italian intonation from four cities (Turin, Milan, Rome and Palermo). This paper argues that there are two models of affirmative utterances. The contrast between these is very clear in Turin, while in Rome or Milan it may not be so clear, and it disappears in Palermo.

In ‘Outils pour le calcul et la comparaison prosodique dans le cadre du project AMPER – l’exemple des variétés occitane et sarde’ Albert Rilliard and Jean-Pierre Lai provide new mechanisms for the methodology of the project AMPER. The paper deals with the ways in which intonative contours which present the same synthactic structure can be compared. To a large extent, the authors intend to put their proposal into action.
The next two works draw together some Romance intonative varieties. The quantitative study made by Antonio Romano and Renzo Minotti is not free of the implication of some failures, as the prosodic distances between some parts of the statement cannot be measured. Some further insight into the intonation methodology comes from Paolo Mariano and Antonio Romano who use Correlatore for the study of rhythmic distances.

Taken together, the papers presented in this volume discuss a variety of intonative contours and allow us to understand particular ones, making us think about them in greater depth. Indeed, it is refreshing that the intonative contours of various languages meet together in this way.

By and large, from a prosodic perspective, we underline that the great majority of these studies have contributed to a tremendous increase in our knowledge of the range of the Romance prosody.

Notes

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