

Never have I ever changed my syntactic system

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In this talk we discuss two cases of syntactic variation and change, first focussing on syntactic change within the community and later focusing on syntactic change within the individual. In order to do so, we will discuss two different examples of Spanish, found in rather different environments.

The first one refers to the behaviour of *ojalá*, a word broadly meaning ‘I wish’ and whose categorial ascription is not agreed upon, for it shares properties of interjections, adverbs and verbs. *Ojalá* shows a fairly restricted behaviour in Standard Spanish, just being able to introduce inflected clauses in the subjunctive (*Ojalá María venga mañana* ‘I wish María comes tomorrow’). In some registers this behaviour has changed, a change that seems to have spread through online social networks. In such registers, *ojalá* is now able to introduce non-finite clauses (i.e., with infinitives and gerunds and even absolute clauses with no verb, e.g. *Ojalá María tumbada a mi lado* ‘I wish María was lying right next to me’).

The second study case deals with comparative correlatives (*cuántos más somos, mejor nos lo pasamos* ‘the more we are, the most fun we have’), which show a high amount of formal variation in Spanish, but always showing a combination of a main and a subordinate clause, introduced either by a relative pronoun, a conjunction or a preposition. We will focus on a variant found in the idiolect of the Spanish journalist Rubén Amón, who shows an individual comparative correlative construction, most likely due to language contact with French. This variant differs greatly from other variants found in Spanish, since it shows paratactic syntax, with no subordinating element in any of the two clauses (*más somos, mejor nos lo pasamos* ‘the more we are, the most fun we have’).

These two study cases will give us the opportunity to discuss different aspects of syntactic variation and change, both from a methodological perspective, specifically regarding the use of online data and the challenges they pose, and a theoretical one, concerning the motivations of syntactic innovation on the one hand and language change within one’s lifespan on the other.