Preface

Pages v–vi of
Semantic Issues in Romance Syntax
Edited by Esthela Treviño and José Lema
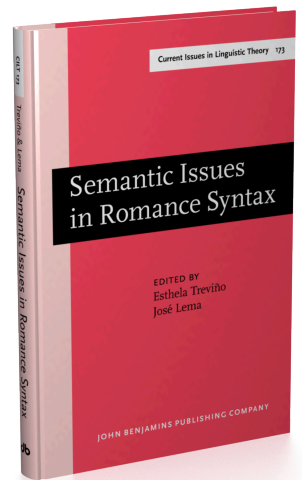[**Current Issues in Linguistic Theory**, 173]
1999. viii, 309 pp.

PREFACE

The idea that certain aspects of meaning impose conditions on the form of linguistic expressions has propelled a wealth of linguistic works oriented towards the discovering of semantic features which account for certain syntactic behaviors. This view has led linguists to propose more abstract and more complex syntactic computations in order to reflect those aspects of meaning which can be properly seen as part of an autonomous mental system of grammatical knowledge. Such approach has been prompted by the most recent theoretical inclination in linguistics, now commonly referred to as *The Minimalist Program*.

This volume presents a collection of articles on semantic issues directly dealt within the syntactic component of the language processing faculty. The articles here included are revised versions of works originally presented at the *XXVI Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages* in Mexico City, a fact which, along with the relevance and quality of these works, warranted the publication of the present edition specially dedicated to studies on *Semantic Issues in Romance Syntax*. A shared characteristic in all of the articles, is that they focus on issues having to do with the interaction of form and meaning, and most of them are developed under the principal thesis of the Minimalist Program.

Semantic notions like *focus, completive, directional,* and *telic,* and still others of a more abstract nature, appear as morphosemantic features to be syntactically computed. It is further proposed that some such features may project an independent syntactic structural position; others are claimed to justify the appearance of a functional projection, and still others are suggested to participate as members of a cluster of features which define an already existing lexico-functional projection. Depending on an abstract property associated with morphological *strength*, the morphosemantic features may force the realization of certain syntactic operations, such as particular word order instances or changes, unique agreement properties, and so forth. Moreover, it is argued that certain syntactic categories, like particular prepositional phrases or particles, emerge as a consequence of the spell-out of relevant morphosemantic features, in those languages exhibiting the appropriate morphological *strength* properties. It is evident from these works that the theoretical linguistic trend, is to discover the

semantic aspects which are assumed to have visible syntactic repercussions through morphosyntactic and morphosemantic features. These features are "visible" if they appear holding a position in the structural projection of a given computation. If so, these features will be accountable for a wide range of syntactic properties like those related with word order, c-command relationships, constraints on predicate modification or predicate composition, or even with the surfacing of "unexpected" morphophonological (PF) material (expletives, particles, (dis)agreement markings), and so forth. Whether the Minimalist Program is the right theory or not, it is undeniable that such an approach has launched the development of new and creative analyses in theoretical linguistics whose particular and specific outcomes, well integrated and with a high level of internal cohesion, cannot be ignored.

We believe that this book offers a collection of works developed under a body of tight assumptions and principles which will contribute to strengthen and to open new routes of inquiry to the fields of morphology, syntax, semantics, and even phonology. In a very particular manner, we think this volume should be of interest to philosophers, logicians and pragmatists whose interests directly touch on language issues. Of great importance to the growth of linguistic knowledge are the language acquisition studies which substantively nourish the linguistic theory but which are also fashioned after the current theoretical discoveries and innovations. The many proposals presented in this book might prove to be quite a challenge for the design and investigation of language acquisition facts, but the general shared expectation amongst the contributing authors, seems to be well summarized by one of the authors: "For now, we hope to have shown that certain facts, commonly attributed to human experience and said to be outside the realm of the Grammar, can be described in configurational terms within the minimalist program."

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Konrad Koerner and Anke de Looper for their interest, and for actually promoting the publication of this book. We must also acknowledge Javier Torres Oyarzún 's expert and careful technical edition. We owe the authors our sincerest appreciation for their understanding and patience in view of the "change of plans" which, fortunately and ultimately, benefitted us all. This edition was sponsored by the *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, grant No. 400200-5-04545H.

<div align="right">

Esthela Treviño & José Lema

UAM-I, Mexico City
November 1998

</div>