Introduction

This festschrift celebrates Anna Cardinaletti's 65th birthday, an opportunity to acknowledge her scientific achievements, her relevant contribution to the field of linguistics, as well as her solid institutional commitment at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and her constant dedication to building and enlarging a research network open to different scientific areas.

To list Anna's many research interests, awards, publications, national and international collaborations and institutional roles would be too long and, we feel, would not meet her desire.

We would rather like to thank her for supporting young researchers, for encouraging intellectual independence and for always stimulating novel research questions. On a more personal level, we thank her for being a generous and reliable friend, and for her integrity and strong moral principles.

The contributions collected in *Language Optionality and Variation* reflect, in different ways, the wide scope of Anna's research interests. The volume is organised into three thematic sections.

The first section, *Theoretical Linguistics*, brings together studies addressing a range of linguistic phenomena through comparative and formal analysis, with the aim of understanding how linguistic structures vary and how apparently optional patterns are constrained by grammar. This section spans a wide range of languages, including Italian, Brazilian Portuguese, Gascon, and Turkish.

The second section, *Sociolinguistics and Language Variation*, explores variation from a cross-linguistic, diachronic, diatopic, and cross-modal perspective. These studies show how patterns

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of variation and optionality emerge across languages, varieties, historical stages, and modalities. Their analysis contributes to a more fine-grained understanding of linguistic diversity. Several languages and regional varieties, including Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Anconetano, Dutch, earlier stages of Spanish, as well as Italian Sign Language are investigated.

The third section, *Language Acquisition, Bilingualism, and Multilingualism*, brings together studies on how linguistic structures are acquired, processed, and used across different populations and contexts. These contributions highlight how theoretical linguistics and formal syntax contribute to explaining the developmental trajectories of monolingual and bilingual typically developing individuals and individuals with deafness or language disorders. The languages object of research within this section are Italian, Dutch, Romanian, Spanish, Catalan, English, Greek, and Italian Sign Language.

Taken together, these studies address topics that have been central to Anna's work throughout her career: the interplay between variation and structural constraints, cross-linguistic and cross-modal comparison, and the search for explanations connecting linguistic diversity and the architecture of the language faculty.

We are deeply grateful to all the authors who enthusiastically accepted our invitation and offered their important contributions to this volume. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers, whose careful reading and constructive comments significantly contributed to shaping the volume in its final form.

The final, warmest gratitude is for Anna.

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