

# Microcontact 5 years later

**Roberta D'Alessandro**  
**Institute for Language Sciences**



**AcqVA Guest Lecture**



**UiT Aurora Centre**

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# 5 years ago...



Utrecht University

## Microcontact:

How to take synchrony, diachrony, and sociolinguistics into account when studying variation

**Roberta D'Alessandro**  
UiL-OTS, Utrecht University

**Transdisciplinary Approaches to Language**  
Tromsø, April 19, 2018



Two kinds of language change: EC and CIC

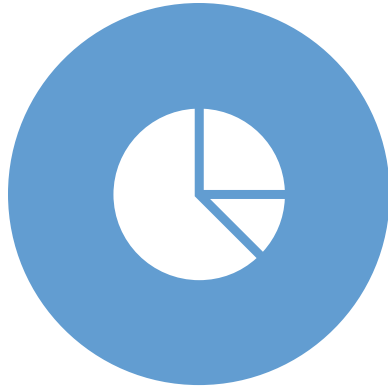
**Two kinds of language change:**

- **Endogenous change (EC)**
- **Change-in-contact (CIC)**

Are CIC and EC underlyingly the same mechanism?

Is there some sort of generalized tendency towards simplification / less markedness?

# Language Change



CHANGE IN CONTACT



EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN



DIACHRONIC/ENDOGENOUS  
CHANGE

When  
language  
in contact



### What we expect

Optionality is where change begins

- Endogenous change (spontaneous): the structure will become slightly less or more specific, slightly less or more marked (grammaticalization) probably as a consequence of neutralization)
- **EC will proceed along a hierarchy of markedness >> later**
- Contact-Induced-Change: the structure will (be able to) change more radically
- **CIC will be more random**

22

Can the output of

language change in

predicted,  
tutions?

ronic  
gly the

# Starting from the conclusions

Microcontact offers important insights into language change

Diachronic change and contact-induced change might or might not go in the same direction

Simplification or complexification? – is a vacuous question

Speakers resort to some universal strategies to 'solve conflicts'

Phi-feature based change is more predictable – it mostly depends on monotonic sequences

# Syntactic phenomena

- Pronouns and demonstratives
- Differential Object Marking
- Auxiliary selection
- Subject clitics
- Null subjects

# Peppino's grammars



**Auxiliary  
selection or  
not?**



**Many choices:  
Spanish vs  
Neapolitan**



**Differential  
Object  
Marking or  
not?**

**We can only see these optionality points through a  
microvariational approach**

# Two kinds of language change: EC and CIC

Two kinds of language change:

- Endogenous /Diachronic change (EC)
- Change-in-contact (CIC)

Are CIC and EC underlyingly the same mechanism?

Is there some sort of generalized tendency towards simplification / less markedness?

(How do we tell them apart, to start with?)

Is this the right question to ask? Is what we see totally accidental?



# EC

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- Language change (change in diachrony) scholars have mostly been preoccupied with:
  - the **directionality of change** (Kiparsky 1968, Hopper 1990, 1991, Keller 1994, and more recently Newmeyer 1998, Campbell 2001, Traugott 2001, Haspelmath 1999, 2004 and many others)
  - the **causes and mechanisms of change** (Roberts & Roussou 2003, Roberts 2007, Roeper 1993ff, Lightfoot 1991, Kroch 1994, Lightfoot & Westergaard 2007, Westergaard 2008| 2011 ...)
  - In typological terms: **universals of language change**, often called grammaticalization paths (Lehman 1993, Hopper & Traugott 1993, Haspelmath 1999)
  - Traditional historical studies all postulate some sort of direction for language change (Meillet 1912 ff)
- Keyword: **simplification**



# CIC (typological perspective)

- A totally different story: Socio-historical factors are much more relevant
- “Converging languages in an area are likely to adopt **new patterns from multiple sources**, or acquire new shared grammatical structures, creating a “compromise pattern”. Alternatively, **one language may adopt the grammar of another.**
- Balanced language contact, without one language trying to oust the other, goes together with long-standing multilingualism and promotes contact-induced **increase in language complexity.**
- **The opposite (‘displacive’ language contact) promotes language loss and tends to diminish diversity.** (Aikhenvald & Dixon 2006: 48-49)

# CIC

## Facilitating factors that have to do with grammar:

- Pragmatic salience
- Tendency to achieve word-for-word intertranslatability
- Frequency
- Existence of perceivable gap
- Typological naturalness
- Pre-existing structural similarity
- Existence of lookalike...

# CIC

## Facilitating factors that have nothing to do with grammar:

- Degree of knowledge of each other's languages ('lingualism')
- Kinds of contact
- Language attitudes
- Balanced and displacive contact
- Incomplete language acquisition
- Polyglossia

CIC / EC

**do not share the object of study**

**no diagnostics**

## Heritage

- **Avoid indeterminacy**: if an item has several syntactic functions, only one of them will be selected by the HL (Polinsky 2011)
- **Interface Hypothesis** (Hulk & Müller 2000, Sorace 2005): the more grammatical modules are involved in a phenomenon, the more vulnerable it will be to change
- **Avoid silent elements** (Polinsky 2006, Laleko & Polinsky 2016): because of IH, insert overt elements to make sure you avoid misunderstanding

# What changes

- Some common answers to the question about elements that change:
  - Complex segments and complex rules
  - Rare items (often on the lexical level)
  - Register-sensitive material
  - Interface phenomena
- An underlying problem: starting with a list rather than a set of principles

Where  
we're  
headed

If CIC and CID have the same underlying  
“force”:

- CIC is accelerated diachronic change
- There is a PATH
- The PATH often move towards **simplification**



# HOW we'll get there

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- A. Check whether CID and CIC have indeed similar outputs
- B. Check whether there is a PATH (like for CID)
- C. Check whether this path is towards simplification

# EC vs CIC

Kupisch & Polinsky (2021):



“Based on the example of article use, we show that heritage languages undergo the same processes of grammaticalization and degrammaticalization as (other) natural languages do. Therefore,

**GRAMMATICAL PATTERNS IN HERITAGE LANGUAGES CAN BE PREDICTED ON THE BASIS OF DIACHRONIC CHANGE,**

and heritage languages **can AMPLIFY and foreground developments that are known to take place in language diachrony and are potentially already taking place in the homeland variety**” (Kupisch & Polinsky 2021:2).

# What do they look at?

The formation of:

- Articles from demonstratives
- Numerals

(grammatical elements, having to do with phi-features)



*Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*

cambridge.org/bil

**Review Article**

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**Address for correspondence:**  
Tanja Kupisch,  
E-mail: [tanja.kupisch@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:tanja.kupisch@uni-konstanz.de)

**Language history on fast forward: Innovations in heritage languages and diachronic change**

Tanja Kupisch<sup>1</sup> and Maria Polinsky<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sprachwissenschaft, University of Konstanz, Germany/UIT The Arctic University of Norway and <sup>2</sup>University of Maryland, College Park, USA

**Abstract**

There has been a substantial amount of research on heritage language acquisition and diachronic change. Although recent work has increasingly pointed to parallels between those two areas, it remains unclear how systematic these are. In this paper, we provide a bird's eye view, illustrating how patterns of diachronic change are mirrored in heritage language grammars. In doing so, we focus on one of the best-described grammaticalization processes – namely, the formation of articles from demonstratives and numerals, reviewing studies on heritage varieties which mirror those processes. Based on this review, we make two main points: that change in heritage language can be predicted based on established diachronic scenarios, and that heritage languages often amplify incipient changes in the baseline. After discussing a number of attested changes in a bilingual context, we identify directions for future research in the domain of determiners in heritage languages.

**1. Introduction**

# HOW we'll get there

---

A. Check whether CID and CIC have indeed similar outputs

B. Check whether there is a PATH

**C. Check whether this path is towards simplification**

# Increase or decrease of complexity

... depends on a number of factors (Aikhenvald 2006:43)

TABLE 1. Balanced and displacive language contact: a comparison

Parameters	Balanced contact	Displacive contact
Relationships between languages	roughly equal, or involving a traditional hierarchy; stable	dominance; unstable
Linguistic effects	rise in complexity; gain of patterns	loss of patterns; potential simplification
Results	language maintenance	potential replacement of one language with another

# Problem #1. Simplification

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**Of what?**

---

(marked) phenomena becoming unmarked?

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observable in diachrony? (attested for several centuries)

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What is **marked** then?

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Twelve senses of  
markedness  
(and that's not even  
all...)  
  
(Haspelmath 2006:26)



## MARKEDNESS AS COMPLEXITY

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Trubetzkoyan markedness: markedness as specification for a phonological distinction | ‘In German, the phon opposition <i>t:d</i> is neutral in favor of <i>t</i> , which is the mark-bearing member of the opposition.’         |
| 2. Semantic markedness: markedness as specification for a semantic distinction         | ‘In the English opposition <i>dog/bitch</i> , <i>dog</i> is the unmarked member because it can refer to male dogs or to dogs in general.’ |
| 3. Formal markedness: markedness as overt coding                                       | ‘In English, the past tense is marked (by <i>-ed</i> ) and the present tense is unmarked.’  |

## MARKEDNESS AS DIFFICULTY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 4. Phonetic markedness: markedness as phonetic difficulty    | ‘On the scale $b > d > g > G$ , the consonants to the right are increasingly more marked.’                               |
| 5. Markedness as morphological difficulty/unnaturalness      | ‘A singular/plural pair like <i>book/books</i> is less marked than <i>sheep/sheep</i> because the latter is not iconic.’ |
| 6. Cognitive markedness: markedness as conceptual difficulty | ‘The plural category is marked because it requires more mental effort and processing time than the singular.’            |

## MARKEDNESS AS ABNORMALITY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 7. Textual markedness: markedness as rarity in texts                 | ‘For direct objects, coreference with the subject is marked and disjoint reference is unmarked.’   |
| 8. Situational markedness: markedness as rarity in the world         | ‘For marked situations, languages typically use complex expressions.’  |
| 9. Typological markedness: markedness as cross-linguistic rarity     | ‘The syllable coda position is marked in contrast to the onset position.’  |
| 10. Distributional markedness: markedness as restricted distribution | ‘Object-verb word order is the marked case: it occurs only with negation.’   |
| 11. Markedness as deviation from default parameter setting           | ‘Absence of noun incorporation is the unmarked case, and the presence of productive noun incorporation has to be triggered by a specific parametric property.’ |
| 12. MARKEDNESS AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CORRELATION                     | ‘The singular is more marked than the plural, and the plural is more marked than the dual.’  |

Table 1

# Defining complexity

What is complexity? What counts as simplification?

For this research we consider:

## Markedness

1. Morphological markedness (irregular paradigm, featural richness)
2. Syntactic markedness (reconstruction effects, dislocation for interface reasons)
3. Semantic markedness (expression of more meanings, or the same meaning more than once)

(D'Alessandro & Terenghi 2023)

D'Alessandro, R. & S. Terenghi. In press. **Non-monotonic functional sequences: A new metric for complexity in heritage languages**. In: Polinsky, Putnam & Salmons (eds), *Formal approaches to complexity in heritage language grammars*. Language Science Press.



# HOW we'll get there

---

- A. Check whether **CID and CIC** have indeed similar outputs
- B. Check whether there is a PATH
- C. Check whether this path is towards simplification

# Problem #2. Telling apart CIC and CID

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- Contact studies: **1-to-1**
- “if languages are genetically related, we expect them to develop similar structures, no matter whether they are in contact or not. And if genetically related languages are in contact, trying to prove that a shared feature is contact-induced and not a chance result of Sapir’s drift may be next to impossible”  
Aikhenvald (2006:9)
- **> genetically-related languages are the worst to understand the difference between CIC and EC**

one problem  
at a time

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To identify the primitives of CIC we need:

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**Two, three, or more (marked) phenomena**

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**observable in diachrony** (attested for several centuries)

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**in contact with similar phenomena**, within grammars that are exactly the same BUT for the phenomena we are checking

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**Grammars that come into contact at the same time**, in very similar socio-linguistic and historical conditions

# Microcontact

**Grammars: A, B, C, D, E**

**...identical (in the same domain) but for one element X**

- **Feature X in grammar A in contact with**

**Grammar B**

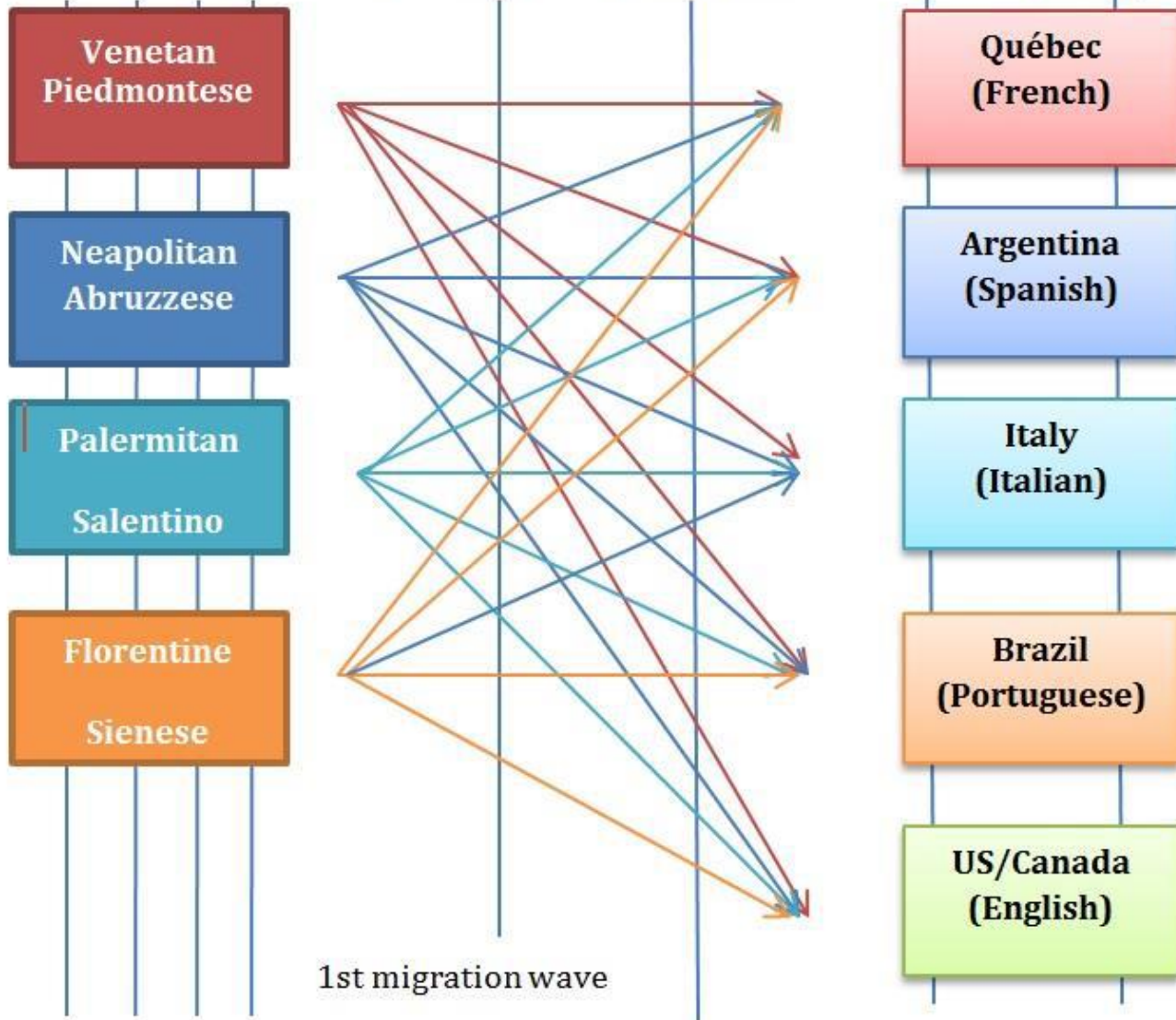
**Grammar C**

**Grammar D**

**Grammar E**

- **Feature X in grammar A in isolation**
- **AND with one and the same external setup**

Xc. → XVc. → 1920- → 1950-60 → today

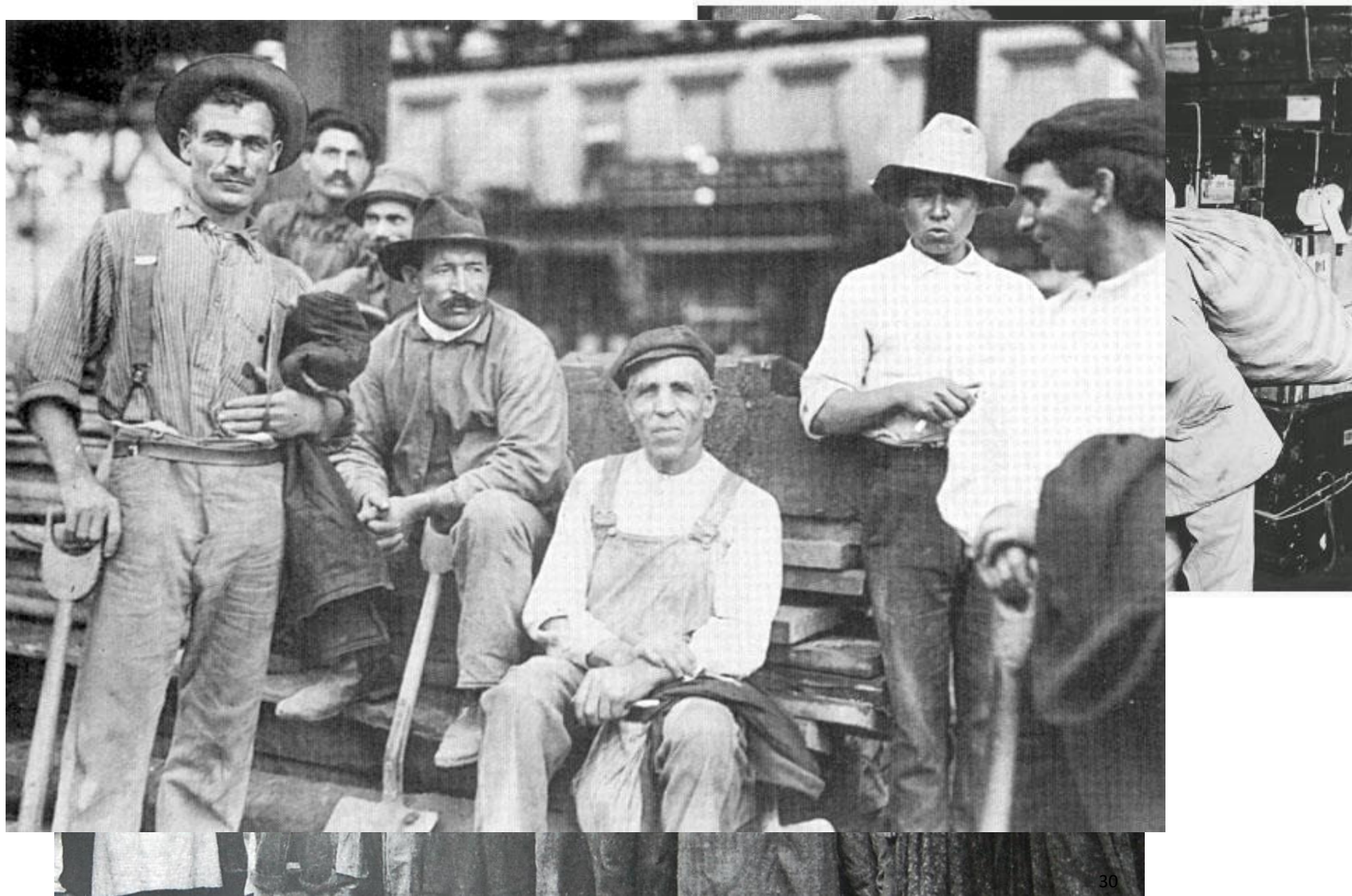


1st migration wave

2nd migration wave



# Italian emigrants



The socio-historical conditions in which the languages came in contact are practically identical; we can factor out most external factors

We can still observe optional structures in 1st generation emigrants

We can observe internal factors at work, by selecting the right features  
D'Alessandro (2015)



## Microcontact

# The team



Manuela



Roberta



Gigi



Francesco



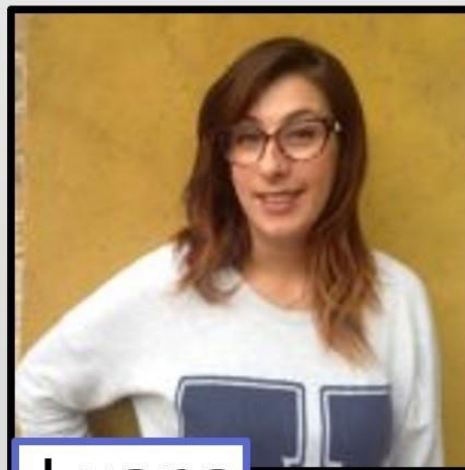
Jan



Alberto



Silvia



Luana



Brechje



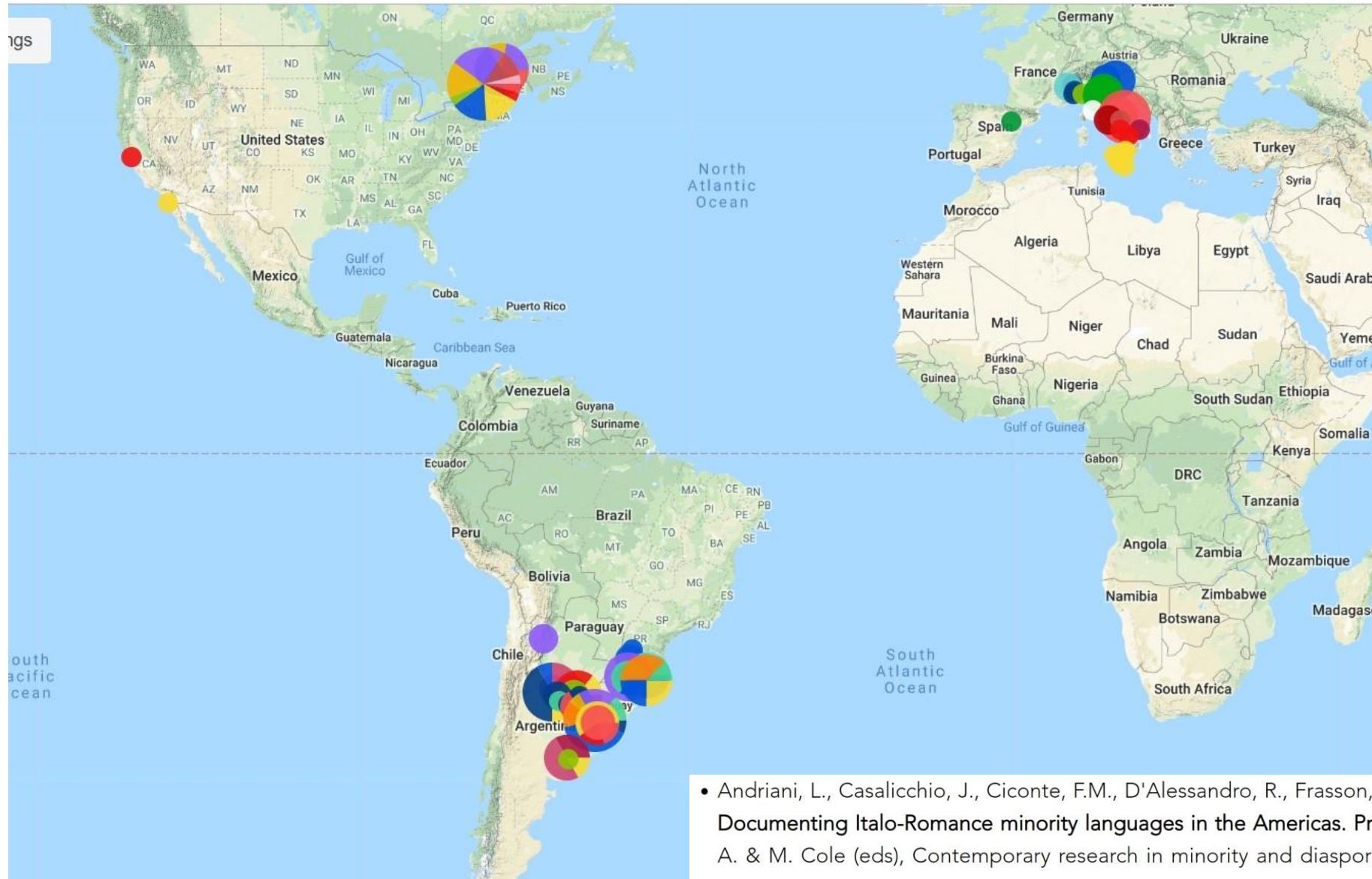
Julian





-  Spanish
-  English
-  Portuguese
-  French





## Atlas for data crowdsourcing

- Andriani, L., Casalicchio, J., Ciconte, F.M., D'Alessandro, R., Frasson, A., Van Osch, B., Sorgini, L. & S. Terenghi. Documenting Italo-Romance minority languages in the Americas. Problems and tentative solutions. In: Nevins, A. & M. Cole (eds), Contemporary research in minority and diaspora languages of Europe, Language Science Press.

<https://microcontact.hum.uu.nl/>

# What we found/ speakers

Fieldwork 1 / interviews

Brazil	Argentina	Canada	US	Belgium	Italy	Total
<b>50 total</b>	<b>74 total</b>	<b>36 total</b>	<b>58 total</b>	<b>8 total</b>		<b>226</b>
<b>G1: 7</b>	<b>G1: 50</b>	<b>G1: 34</b>	<b>G1: 32</b>	<b>G1: 6</b>		<b>129</b>
<b>G2: 1</b>	<b>G2: 14</b>	<b>G2: 2</b>	<b>G2/G3: 26</b>	<b>G2: 2</b>		<b>45</b>
<b>G3ff: 42</b>	<b>G3ff: 10</b>					<b>52</b>

# What we found/ speakers

Brazil	Argentina	US	Belgium	Italy
29 total	24 total	4 total	8 total	75 total

DOM in Italy	SCLs in Veneto
389	788

**E-fieldwork**

BR	ARG	US	Canada	Belgium	Italy
46	94	17	35	8	83

# Syntactic phenomena

- Pronouns and demonstratives
- Differential Object Marking
- Auxiliary selection
- Subject clitics
- Null subjects



# Pronouns and demonstratives

Terenghi (2022) PhD  
dissertation  
Also: D'Alessandro &  
Terenghi (2022)

# Pronominal and possessive paradigms

- **In diachrony:** they are **stable** > they don't restructure

(1) *Pronominal paradigms in diachrony*

	1SG	2SG	3SG.M	1PL	2PL	3PL.M
Latin	ego	tu	ille	nos	vos	illi
Galician	eu	ti	el	nós	vós	eles

Terenghi (2021:2-4)

(2)

*Possessive paradigms in diachrony*

	POSS.1SG	POSS.2SG	POSS.3SG	POSS.1PL	POSS.2PL	POSS.3PL
Latin	meus	tuus	suus	noster	vester	suus
Italian	mio	tuo	suo	nostro	vostro	loro

# Pronouns in contact

- Pronouns in contact also stay stable (29 Romance-based creoles, Terenghi 2021:3)

(3) *Pronominal paradigms in contact varieties*

a. Ternary

(4) *Possessive paradigms in contact varieties*

	POSS.1SG	POSS.2SG	POSS.3SG	POSS.1PL	POSS.2PL	POSS.3PL
French	mon	ton	son	notre	votre	leur
A Reunion C.	mon	ton	son	nout	zot	zot
B Haitian C.	mwen	ou	li	nou	nou	yo
C Tayo	pur mwa	pur twa	pur lja	pur nu	pur usot	pur sola
Zamboangueno	(i)yo	etu	éle/'le	kamé	kitá	kamó silá



Interim  
conclusion

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personal and  
possessive  
pronouns are stable

---

no change in the  
system (we'll  
discuss why later)



# Demonstratives in diachrony

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- Demonstratives are more telling (Terenghi 2021)

(5)

*Demonstratives in diachrony: from ternary to binary systems*

a. Participant-oriented: Catalan ([Ledgeway and Smith 2016:886](#))

	near the speaker	near the hearer	far from both
Conservative	aquest	aquess	aquell
Innovative	aquest	aquest	aquell

b. Speaker-oriented: Italian

	near the speaker	near the hearer	far from both
Tuscan varieties	questo	codesto	quello
Standard Italian	questo	quello	quello

# Demonstratives in contact

- Reduction > simplification

(6)

*Demonstratives in contact: from ternary to binary systems*

	near the speaker	near the hearer	far from both
Portuguese	este	esse	aquele
Sri Lanka Portuguese	isti	aka	aka

# Demonstratives

Diachrony and contact  
> both go toward  
**simplification**

The distal /close to  
addressee feature is  
the one which is  
reduced

- It is sometimes included in the “close to speaker” and sometimes in the “far from both”

Demonstratives seem  
to show that indeed  
contact accelerates  
diachrony (at least as  
far as semantic  
complexity is  
concerned).

Morphology:  
reinforcers (questo  
qua/quello là) > no  
simplification

Kupisch &  
Polinsky  
are right

**GRAMMATICAL PATTERNS IN HERITAGE  
LANGUAGES CAN BE PREDICTED ON THE  
BASIS OF DIACHRONIC CHANGE**



# Differential Object Marking (DOM)

# DOM in diachrony

- Emergence in different syntactic environments (Irimia & Pineda 2021)
- Relevance of **TOPICALITY**

lemmolo (2009, 2020): overview of > 100 languages  
Topics are DOM-ed

- (7) 14<sup>th</sup>-c. Neapolitan *Romanzo di Francia* (Ledgeway 2009:834-36)
- a E a **mene** me 'de volleva mandare in outramare (1SG, C-top)  
and DOM me me= hence want.PST.3SG send.INF in oversea  
'And he wanted to send me overseas'
- b vóy fare morire **mene** (1SG, v-top)  
want.PRS.2SG make.INF die me  
'you want to have me die'

# DOM in contact

- In contact DOM tends to disappear (Silva-Corvalán 1994; Montrul 2004; Luján & Parodi 1996; Montrul & Bowles 2009; Montrul & Sánchez-Walker 2013; Montrul, Bhatt & Girju 2015) have shown that DOM weakens in Heritage Spanish spoken in the US.
- Italo-Romance in NYC: same (Andriani et al, 2021)

(10) Oh, salutə Ø **questo qqua**, salutə Ø **questa persona qqua**.  
hey greet.2SG DOM this here greet.2SG DOM this person here  
'hey, say hi to this one here, say hi to this person here.'

(11) Mi zio [...] portato Ø **tutta la famijja** là.  
my uncle brought DOM all the family there  
'my uncle [...] brought all his family there.'



# DOM in microcontact

- Things are rather different in microcontact: extension of DOM

(12) *Heritage Abruzzese in Argentina*

Lu lopə s'a magnatə **a nu gnillə.**  
the wolf SI=has eaten DOM a lamb  
'The wolf ate a lamb.'

Extended DOM

Emergent DOM

(13) *Heritage Friulian in Argentina*

Tu as fât un sium. Tu as bussât **a to fie.**  
you.SCL have made a dream you.SCL have kissed DOM your daughter  
'You had a dream. You kissed your daughter.'

# CIC vs EC

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Microcontact behaves like CID



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**COMPLEXIFICATION**

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Macrocontact/ “normal” contact  
doesn't

---

**SIMPLIFICATION**

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**What can we conclude from this?**



# Auxiliary selection



# Romance: spreading of HAVE

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- HAVE > generalized in stative/unaccusative syntax (at the expense of the selection of BE) in old Spanish (Stolova 2006), old Catalan (Mateu 2009), old Portuguese (Huber 1933:221), old French (Nordhal 1977), old Neapolitan (Formentin 2001:94-99; Cennamo 2002:198; Ledgeway 2009:§15.1.1.6), old Sicilian (La Fauci 1992: 202ff.) (see Ledgeway 2003, 2012: 334-335; Loporcaro 2016: 803; cf. also McFadden & Alexiadou 2006, 2010 for old English).

(14) Old Neapolitan (Ledgeway 2009:602)

Averria=me	ben	potuto bastare,	commo èy	bastato ad onnuno
have.COND.3SG=me	well	been-able suffice	like is	sufficed to each-one

‘it could have sufficed me, like it sufficed each one’

# Aux in contact

Extension of HAVE

Andriani & D'Alessandro (in prep)

**Table B: Heritage Barese auxiliary selection - 4 speakers (US)**

(15)

sp	Heritage Barese	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	U_bar_ JC_009 Casamassima	B	H	H(≈B)	B	---	H
2	U_bar_ B_011 Bitetto	B	B	H(≈B)	H	---	H
3	U_bar_ B_012 Bitetto	B	B	H(≈B)	H	---	H
4	U_bar _B_013 Bitetto / Grumo Appula	H	H	H(≈B)	H	---	H

Parallel  
development?

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CIC and EC seem to have the same  
result



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## **SIMPLIFICATION**

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BUT: we need to be careful  
because

- 
1. we might be comparing apples  
with pears
  2. HAVE is not simpler than BE
-

# Upper-Southern Italo-Romance

Spreading of BE into HAVE-selecting predicates, Upper Southern Italo-Romance

(16)

Different outcome than in the rest of Romance  
(Andriani & D'Alessandro (2021))

	1SG	2SG	3SG	1PL	2PL	3PL
[+active] transitive/unergative	H	H	H	H	H	H
Introdacqua (AQ)	H	B	H	H	H	H
Lanciano (CH)	H/B	B	H	H/B	H/B	H
L'Aquila/Avezzano/Pescara	B	B	H	B	B	H

Tuttle (1986:270)

# Upper-Southern Italo-Romance

Spreading of BE into HAVE-selecting predicates, Upper Southern Italo-Romance

(17) Casi particolari – attività non dinamica (Acerno)

Izzo &  
 Cerullo  
 (2021)

	Anziani classe medio-alta	Adulti classe medio-alta	Giovani classe medio-alta	Anziani classe medio-bassa	Giovani e adulti classe medio-bassa
1sg	sorrur'mutə E	addzə rur'mutə A	addzə rur'mutə A	sorrur'mutə E	addzə rur'mutə A
2sg	sirrur'mutə E	arur'mutə A	a rur'mutə A	sirrur'mutə E	arur'mutə A
3sg	Èrrur'mutə E	arrur'mutə A	a'rrur'mutə A	Èrrur'mutə E	arur'mutə A
1pl		amma rur'mutə A	amma rur'mutə A		amma rur'mutə A
2pl	sitə rur'mutə E	ata rur'mutə A	ata rur'mutə A		atə rur'mutə A
3pl	surur'mutə E	annə rur'mutə A	annə rur'mutə A	surur'mutə E	annə rur'mutə A

Estensione di ESSERE sui domini di AVERE (?)



# Simplification?

Paradigmatic > YES

HAVE or BE? HAVE is more complex featurally

- Freeze (1992): possessive HAVE = BE+preposition
- Kayne (1993): auxiliary HAVE = BE+ preposition

Is this simplification?

**YES** for the paradigm (2 >1)

**NO** for the single auxiliary (HAVE>BE)



# Subject clitics



# Anti-agreement effects in Venetan

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Unaccusative verbs in Veneto and Trentino: anti agreement with post-verbal subject

D'Alessandro & Frasson (2022)

(18)

- a. Le tose ze rivade.  
the girls are arrived-PL.F  
'The girls have arrived.'
- b. Ze rivà le tose.  
is arrived-SG.M the girls  
'The girls have arrived.'

# Heritage Venetan

Same aae but specialized subject clitic

**L'è** (invariable) + postverbal subject

D'Alessandro & Frasson (2022)

(19) L'è vegnesto la nona.  
is come-SG.M the grandmother  
'My grandmother came.'

L'è rivà i bisnoni quà tal Brasil.  
is arrived-SG.M the great-grandparents here in=the Brazil  
'The great-grandparents arrived here in Brazil.'

# Heritage Venetan

**Ze** with preverbal subject + PPA

D'Alessandro & Frasson (2022)

- (20) La so mare ze nasesta in Italia.  
the his mother is born-SG.F in Italy  
'His mother was born in Italy.'

# Heritage Venetan

È with 3rd person plural subjects

D'Alessandro & Frasson (2022)

- (21) I noni è vegnesti de navio.  
The grandparents are come-PL.M by ship  
'The grandparents came by ship.'

Complexification

...which is however in line with **one form-one meaning** -> a typical strategy of heritage language speakers

# Null subjects in microcontact

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Catalan-Spanish

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Spanish-Portuguese

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Italian-Portuguese

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Different output of CIC in micro- vs  
macrocontact

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Null subjects tend to be preserved, or  
even extended



## Some generalizations on heritage languages

- **Avoid indeterminacy**: if an item has several syntactic functions, only one of them will be selected by the HL (Polinsky 2011)
- **Interface Hypothesis** (Hulk & Müller 2000, Sorace 2005): the more grammatical modules are involved in a phenomenon, the more vulnerable it will be to change
- **Avoid silent elements** (Polinsky 2006, Laleko & Polinsky 2016): because of IH, insert overt elements to make sure you avoid misunderstanding

# NS in microcontact



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**Heritage Friulian SCLs (Frasson,  
D'Alessandro & Van Osch 2021)**

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They are pronominal (Frasson 2021)

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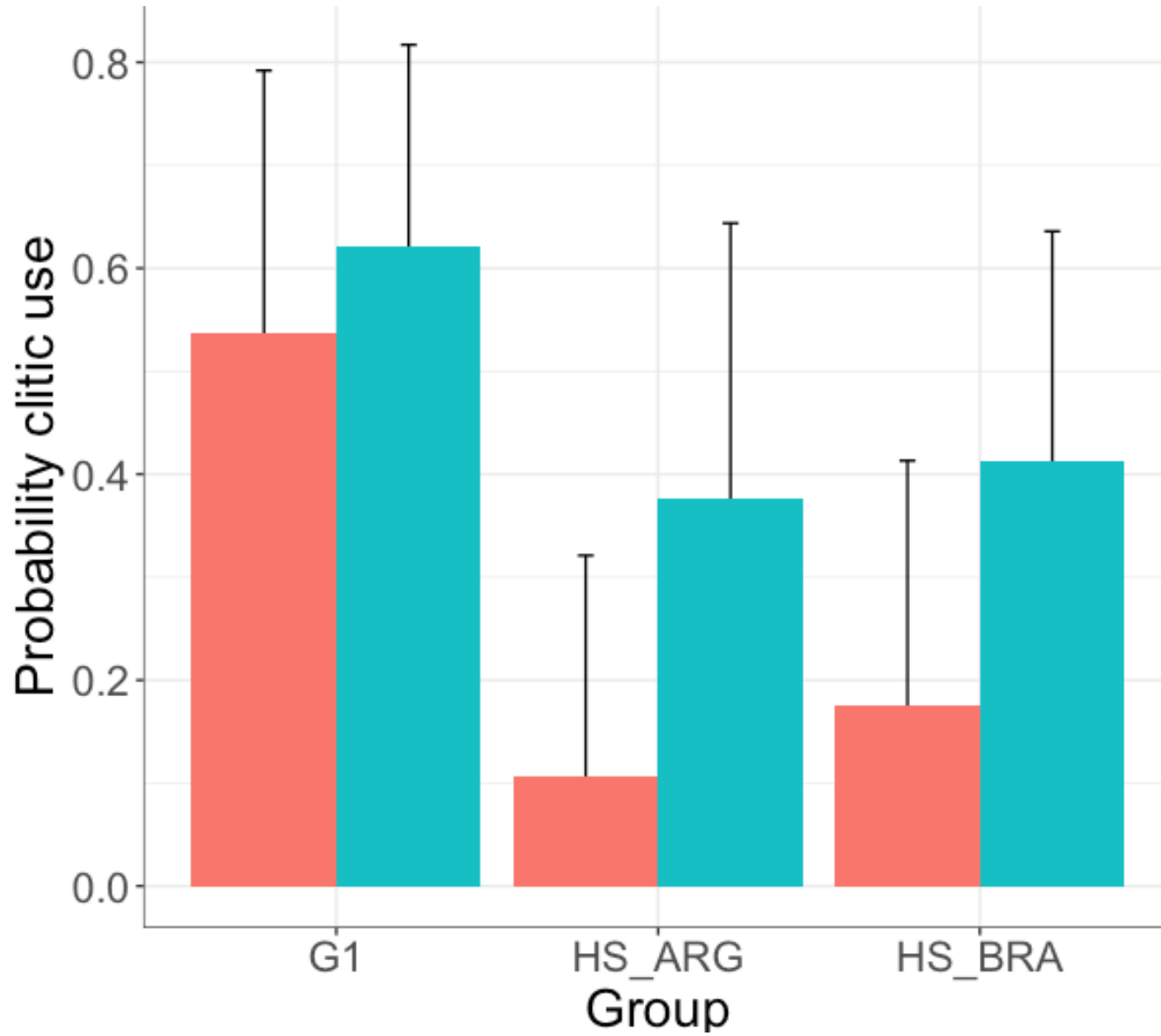
They get dropped much more than in  
the homeland variety

---

---

They get dropped in topic continuation  
contexts (old information)

---



# Topicality



Argentinian HSs were significantly more likely to produce clitics in topic shift contexts than in topic continuity contexts. Frasson & Van Osch (2020)

**More in Frasson (2020)**

Complexification

Null subjecthood emerges in  
microcontact

It tends to disappear in  
macrocontact



Are no  
generalizations  
possible then?

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# Two kinds of items

D'Alessandro & Terenghi  
(2023)

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Phi- features, grammatical items

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> Monotonic functional values <

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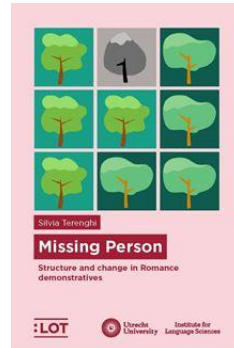
Edge features / interface items

---

Change is more random

# Pronouns & Demonstratives

Terenghi (2023)



- sequences of consistently positive features ([+F]) can be construed as sequences of additions
- sequences of consistently negative features ([−F]) can be conceived as sequences of subtractions
- sequences which include both positive and negative features ([+F,−G] or [+G,−F]) are to be conceived as sequences of both additions and subtractions.
- These sequences can be flagged as being **more complex due to a third-factor rooted monotonicity bias** (Terenghi 2021)

Terenghi (2021)

- a. 1st person: [+speaker, +participant]
- b. 2nd person: [-speaker, +participant]
- c. 3rd person: [-speaker, -participant]

- (3)
- a. singular: [+atomic, +minimal]
  - b. dual: [-atomic, +minimal]
  - c. plural: [-atomic, -minimal]

Monotonic sequences are more stable



# Interface phenomena

- DOM
  - Subject clitics and null subjects
  - Person-driven auxiliaries?
- Unpredictable?

# NS in microcontact

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**Heritage Friulian SCLs (Frasson,  
D'Alessandro & Van Osch 2021)**

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They are pronominal (Frasson 2021)

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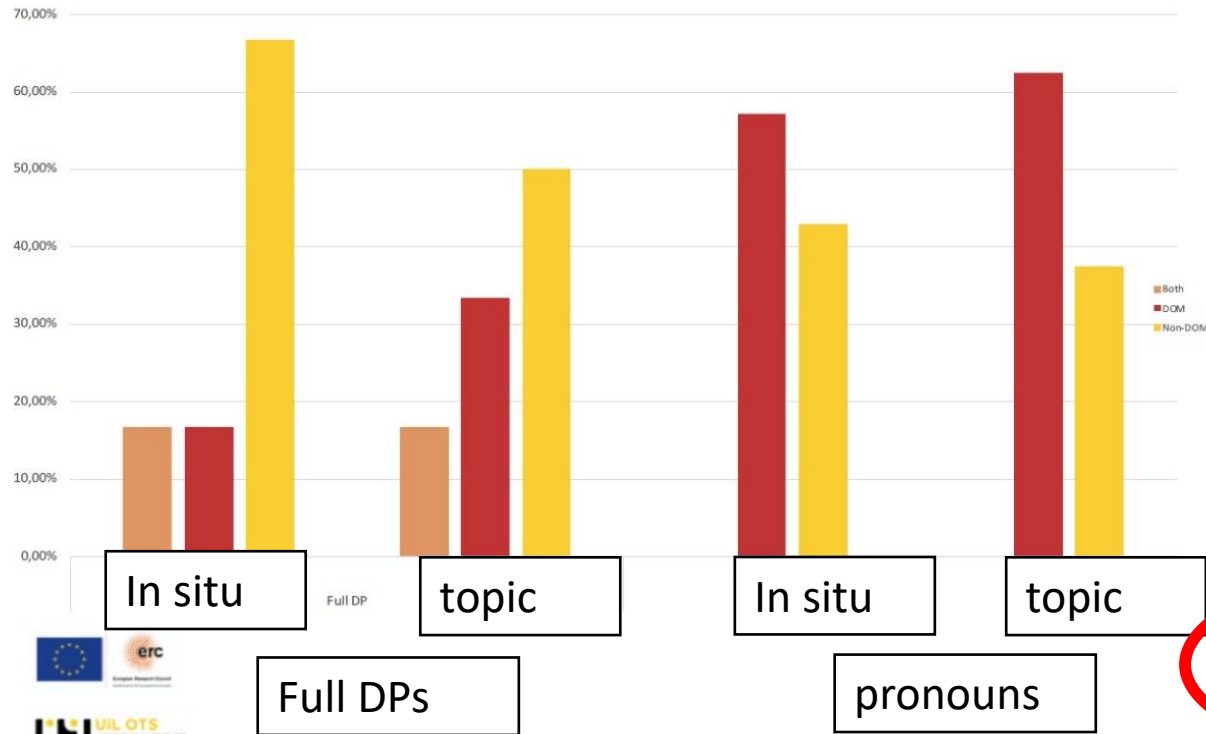
---

They get dropped in **topic continuation**  
contexts (old information)

---

# Topics

DOM with topics



**Non-DOM meets DOM:  
Friulian in Argentina,  
G1**

RED is DOM

Speakers chose the DOM options more often with DOs in topic position.

# Linkers

Topics and deixis are linkers

Link to what was said before or to share knowledge

Link to the external world

- When speakers need to make order among conflicting inputs, they start systematizing from the linkers
- Universal strategy of human languages

# Two strategies

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## Two contexts of Change in Contact (CIC)

A. Phi-features and grammatical elements

> Monotonic bias < disruption of the monotonic functional sequence is where change happens

B. Interface-determined phenomena

# In between grammar and cognition: Perception of the locus variation



Perceived typological similarity (Kellerman 1978, Rothman 2011 *ff.*)



Speakers borrow more readily from the language that is perceived to be more similar typologically (starting from the lexicon, going on with morphology/phonology etc) > vacuously apply in Microcontact



If speakers cannot perceive **the locus of variation** they don't follow the macro-contact pattern, and rely instead on general cognitive strategies, the same that children adopt for language acquisition

# Interface phenomena

A. a strategy involving “grammar” (lato sensu)

- If speakers are able to perceive the point of variation (macrocontact): Strategy linked to interfaces/performance/avoid pronouns (grammar/simplification)

B. a cognitive strategy, involving general principles at work in language (but not necessarily language-specific)

- If speakers are NOT able to perceive the point of variation: they resort to general cognitive strategies to resolve CIC output, like *linking*

# Some evidence from creoles

	Macrocontact	Microcontact	Extreme MacroContact
<i>Null subjects</i>	Weakened /rarely stay unaffected	Stay unaffected/ strengthened	Stay unaffected (if they exist at all)
<i>DOM</i>	Weakened	Strengthened/unaffected	Might exist
<i>Deixis/indexicals</i>	Unaffected	Unaffected	unaffected



## Linkers (next steps)

### Link to the external world

- Pronouns depending on discourse – HONORIFICS (more subject to change)
- Emerging of topic markers as extension of domains
- DOM as a battering ram for alignment change in Indo-Aryan

# Conclusions

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Microcontact offers important insights into language change

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Diachronic change and contact-induced change might or might not go in the same direction

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Simplification or complexification? – is a vacuous question

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Speakers resort to some universal strategies to ‘solve conflicts’

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Phi-feature based change is more predictable – it mostly depends on monotonic sequences

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... we’ve only just started!

# References and questions

THANK YOU!

reference list and questions:

r.dalessandro@uu.nl

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