

**Older speakers use more null subjects, but the variable is stable:
Accounting for contrasting reports of contact effects in Italian and Faetar**

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Because one can't generalize findings from studies of contact-induced language variation that vary widely in terms of methods, we apply consistent methods of data collection and analysis (cf. Nagy 2011) to examine variable subject pronoun presence ("pro-drop") in heritage and homeland varieties of Italian and Faetar. Faetar is a Francoprovençal isolate spoken by <700 people in Italy.

Pro-drop is a *conflict site* (Poplack *et al.* 2012): it distinguishes Italian, English, and Faetar. Italian, English, and Faetar have different null subject rates and constraints, making this variable useful in understanding the effects of language contact.

Thomason & Kaufman (1998), *inter alia*, note that a viable conclusion of contact-induced change requires establishing pre-contact differences that then diminished during contact. To this end, we compare parallel analyses of first and second generation heritage speakers of Faetar and Italian, homeland varieties of both languages, and English, represented by 12-20 speakers per variety, for a total of >6,000 tokens. Homeland Italian data comes from Rumpf & Di Venanzio (2011).

While a previous study of homeland Faetar (Heap & Nagy 1998) suggested a change in progress by comparing percentages of null subjects across age groups, the current work shows cross-generational stability in probabilities of pronoun presence and in the linguistic factors constraining the variation. Multivariate analyses of conversational speech data incorporate social factors (generation, age, sex, ethnic orientation) and linguistic constraints (person, number, and gender of the subject, the subject's clausal position, negation, presence of a non-subject proclitic, information status and tense).

This reanalysis highlights important differences between analyses comparing raw frequencies to those from Mixed-Effects multivariate regression: suggestions of a change in progress from the former are contradicted by the latter. Comparison across ages and generations in all varieties reveals that while a decline in null subject rates is seen as age decreases, age is not a significant effect in multivariate analyses. The apparent age-grading is due to a different *distribution of contexts* among speakers, rather than different effects of context-related constraints. The contrasting outcomes of univariate vs. multivariate analysis shed light on this vexing contradiction in studies of pro-drop:

the majority of reports in the language acquisition literature, via univariate analysis, conclude that Heritage Language speakers have a contact-influenced grammar (cf. Polinsky 2011)

vs.

variationist studies, multivariate by definition, produce little evidence of contact effects (cf. Flores-Ferrán, 2004:50)

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