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# Reading between the code choices: Discrepancies between expressions of language attitudes and usage in a contact situation

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## Abstract

According to a national survey on language usage, Veneto dialect (spoken in Veneto, one of Italy's northeastern regions) benefits from the widest usage range compared to other regional dialects spoken in the Italomance domain. We collected 35 hours of interactional data and conducted attitudinal interviews. From these data, we examined a family's language policy (nuclear and extended family) and its influence on a child's (Francesco, aged 17–30 months) language environment and acquisition of norms of usage. The juxtaposition of the attitudinal interviews of the adults in Francesco's environment with the interactional data collected revealed numerous discrepancies between the adults' expressed attitudes and their production. We argue that attitudes do not necessarily predict language choices and that the relationship between the two is more complicated than a cause-and-consequences one, in particular when these concern dialect usage. Rather, there is a dynamic link between attitudes and language choices as these are constantly (re)defined, negotiated and reconfigured during interaction.

## Keywords

Language contact, expressed attitudes, dialect, Italian, transmission

## Introduction

Irrespective of the theoretical background adopted, it is generally admitted that social structure surrounding the child plays a crucial role in the process of language acquisition. To the developing child, the members belonging to this social structure convey – through their language behaviours – information regarding, for example, the community's norms of usage and attitudes regarding languages and particular usages. Thus, language environment plays a fundamental role in language acquisition and socialization (Dunn, 1988; Ely & Berko Gleason, 1995; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Tomasello, 2003). More specifically in multilingual contexts, language attitudes convey

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information on the appropriate contexts of usage of the languages spoken in the repertoires. Hence, through verbal and non-verbal behaviour, speakers show their language preferences (Lanza, 1995). Early in development, children seem to be sensitive to this kind of information present in their environment. In fact, in multilingual settings, there are numerous studies showing that children are capable in adjusting their linguistic behaviours to the code choices effectuated in interaction. For example, they adjust to the parents' (Quay, 2008) and to unfamiliar interlocutors' preferred languages (Genesee, Boivin, & Nicoladis, 1996; Quay, 2008). Grosjean (2001) explains these processes of adjustment in terms of neural activation, depending on whether a particular language is used or not within the interaction (i.e. the language mode in the interaction). He details the factors influencing language mode, among others, participants, language proficiency, language mixing and attitudes.

In this paper, we investigate Francesco's (aged 17–30 months) language environment through two sets of data. The first are attitudinal interviews and the second are dyadic and multiparty interactions selected from a 35-hour corpus that reflected patterns of usage that occurred frequently in our data. By juxtaposing the attitudinal interviews with the language production observed in the interactions the child and his family members participated in, we will be able to gain a clearer insight of the child's environment.

All speakers are from Veneto, one of Italy's northeastern regions. We investigate the bilingual (Italian and Veneto dialect<sup>1</sup>) adults' linguistic behaviours when interacting with Francesco and with other adults. We examine more closely the ways these behaviours vary when speaking to Francesco and when responding to his bilingual production. We discuss how the different adults' attitudes and behaviours may limit or favour the child's dialect production.

Firstly, we review literature on language transmission and expressions of language attitudes. We focus on situations of language contact, particularly when minority languages are involved. Then, we present the methodology adopted in the study followed by the analyses of the data collected. Finally, we critically assess the degree to which expressions of language attitudes determine usage and minority language maintenance.

## **Expressed attitudes and usage: Transmission or language loss?**

Parents may feel hesitant when it comes to raising children with two or more languages, fearing language delay and/or social exclusion. These fears may lead parents to use only one language to the detriment of the other(s) when communicating with their children. A community's regard is likely to influence parents' educational choices. For instance, if the members of a society or public institutions view a language negatively, it is unlikely that parents of this community would want to transmit this particular language to their children (see examples in Grosjean, 1982). According to Brenzinger et al. (2003, p. 2), the ways languages are perceived has a direct influence on language choices and intergenerational transmission:

Language endangerment [...] caused by internal forces, such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. Many indigenous peoples, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining.

In UNESCO's programme for the safeguarding of endangered languages, changing people's attitudes seems to be one of the key solutions guaranteeing intergenerational language transmission. An example illustrating the relation between expressions of language attitudes and language usage

in Italy is the study conducted by Cremona and Bates (1977) in southern Italy. At the time this study was conducted, the public school system overtly discouraged dialect usage, creating a conflicting situation exacerbating the breach between the languages spoken in the children's social repertoires and expressions of language attitudes: dialect was the object of scorn and Italian was viewed as the desirable language. The 95 children interviewed (from first to fifth grade) were fluent in dialect but not Italian. Nevertheless, they manifested negative expressions of language attitudes towards dialect. Cremona and Bates's study underscores the influence of the school's set of ideological stances on children and young adolescents' conceptions of the language in their repertoires.

Children may refuse to use the language spoken within the family, should this language be the object of disdain among their peers group and/or teachers. Would tapping into the school's ideologies have resolved the negativity towards dialect? Perhaps, but the thread linking attitudes and language transmission/change is intricate and difficult to disentangle (Kristiansen, 2011; Labov, 1972; Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog, 1968).

Through the review of the literature, we aim to have a better grasp of the complexity of the expressed language attitudes and language maintenance, by focusing on family language policies (FLP) and their consequences on language development.

### *The influence of family language policy on children's language repertoires*

There is an important body of research documenting FLP and their impact on transmission, in particular within migrant families. Although migration is not the sociolinguistic context of this study, migrant families' language policies share numerous characteristics with the family involved in this study, among others, the diverging status of the languages in contact (minority versus official/ national language). We will focus on aspects dealing with language maintenance and intergenerational transmission, investigating the relation between FLP and the construction of the young generations' language repertoires. Are they bilingual or do they opt for the usage of the dominant language? Who are the best transmitters of the minority languages (father, mother, grandparents, peers, etc.)? Curdt-Christiansen (2013, p. 1), in her introduction to the special issue of *Language Policy*, points at the complexity underlying FLP when it comes to studying intergenerational transmission:

[...] the study of FLP can make visible the relationships between private domains and public spheres and reveal the conflicts that family members must negotiate between the realities of social pressure, political impositions, and public education demands on the one hand, and the desire for cultural loyalty and linguistic continuity on the other.

The complexity to which Curdt-Christiansen alludes is linked to the pervasiveness of FLP in that they cross boundaries between various spheres, private and public. An example of such pervasiveness is provided by Deprez (1996), who examined three groups – Arabic, Creole and Portuguese – of migrant families living in the Parisian urban area. A total of 532 children and young adolescents (ages 12–16) were involved in the study. In the Arabic and Portuguese families, more than half of the mothers spoke in Arabic and Portuguese to their children. The fathers tended to use more French than the mothers. Interestingly, in the Arabic families, the mothers used more Arabic towards their daughters than towards their sons. Yet, the daughters used more French than Arabic and their Arabic production was lower than the sons'. Overall, the Arabic and Portuguese children/ adolescents opted for the use of multilingual utterances, thus using all their languages in the repertoires. Unlike the Arabic and the Portuguese migrants, the Creole community seemed to be more

reticent when it came to maintaining Creole and transmitting it to the younger generations. In fact, Deprez highlighted the intercultural variation in transmission and the apparently contradictory language behaviours, in particular of the mothers and children. Another important point is that transmission depends not only on the transmitters (caregivers, for example) but on the children too, underlying the importance of including the children's productions when tackling issues of transmission.

Looking at the Sri Lankan diaspora, Canagarajah (2008) studies the ways in which transmission varies within three Tamil-speaking communities living in Canada, the United States and in the United Kingdom, respectively. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the paradoxes and the tensions that arise within these communities where speakers seem to be torn between their allegiance to Tamil and to the social cultural elements it conveys and their desire to be integrated in their new community. Canagarajah (2008) reports that interviewees with condescending attitudes towards Tamil are those coming from an underprivileged background. Instead, those who have a seemingly apologetic attitude towards the fact that they are not actively putting their utmost efforts into the transmission of their home language are those who have a high socioeconomic status. The divergent expressions of attitudes lead the author (2008, p. 173) to critically reassess Fishman's *Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale* model. He concludes that the family is not a impermeable and independent construct as Fishman (1991) portrayed it to be, but can be described as "a dynamic social unit, situated in space and time, open to socio-political processes" and that it is "not self-contained, closed off to other social institutions and economic conditions".

The link binding the family sphere and the wider socio-political and historical spheres has also been emphasized by King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry (2008), who argue that children's developmental paths are shaped by their family's language policies and that these have an impact on children's schooling as well as on the maintenance of the minority languages spoken in the family repertoires. Pearson (2007) discusses five factors affecting minority language transmission. Among these, input, language status and attitudes are three of the most important factors influencing the transmission – or not – of a minority language. Since speakers' expressed attitudes play an important role in minority language maintenance, they influence the extent to which this language will be used in the home and/or in a wider social circle, with peers and other members of society.

Borland (2006) investigated intergenerational transmission within the Maltese community settled in Melbourne. Through a case study and numerous interviews, Borland notices that the second generation of speakers expresses more favourable attitudes regarding the maintenance of Maltese than speakers from the first generation. According to the author, the differences found in these expressed attitudes are due to differences in education levels, where the second generation benefits from a higher education and greater opportunities to visit Malta and to keep strong relations with the culture and the language.

Although the socioeconomic status seems to have an impact on the language transmission, the importance of transmitting a home language and perceiving this language as an asset for the future generations is critical. Curdt-Christiansen (2009) investigated these perceptions by observing the FLP within the Chinese community living in Montréal. The 10 families participating in the study used three languages in their daily activities: English, Chinese and French. The author explores the families' ideologies concerning the minority language usage and transmission. She found that within these families, multilingualism is perceived as an asset and, consequently, the transmission of Chinese is viewed as the carrier of their cultural heritage and is as important as the acquisition of French and English, the two official languages in Quebec. Perceiving multilingualism in a favourable light has an impact on transmission, in particular when the languages involved in the families' repertoires are valued on a sociocultural scale.

Family is a microcosm with a complex social structure. From the literature reviewed in this section, different factors influence FLP. Socioeconomic status seems to have an impact on the willingness of the individuals to transmit the minority language: the higher the status, the higher are the chances are of having a multilingual third generation. Within the extended family, the socioeconomic status may vary widely and thus lead to contradicting expressions of attitudes and visions of FLP, as was seen in Borland's study mentioned earlier. Moreover, the status of the language plays a decisive role in this as the transmission or not may be seen as critical to social upliftment. The latter assumes that the language policies implemented in the family are influenced by the educational choices and ideologies underlying language socialization, leading us the next section that discusses family members' perceptions of their roles as educator and their impact on transmission.

### *Perceived roles of caregivers as educators: A factor influencing transmission?*

Caregiver roles are not exclusively assigned to parents, but also to other members of the extended family, such as the grandparents, who often contribute actively to the transmission of the family's minority language, as was shown in Curdt-Christiansen's (2009) study.

In the late 1990s, De Houwer (1999, p. 83) introduced the notion of parents' *impact belief*:

... the parental belief that parents can exercise some sort of control over their children's linguistic functioning may influence their children's multilingualism.

This suggests that conceptions parents have of bilingual education and of language status may have a decisive influence on transmission. Thus, the scrutiny of parents' discourse strategies may shed light on their attitudes related to appropriateness of language usage and code choice. With this regard, Lanza (1992) details how multilingual parents' discourse strategies provide cues on the adequacy of language usage, especially on the parents' language preferences. More precisely, the author looks into the different ways parents behave when confronted with the production of mixed utterances. Lanza found that certain parents ignore their child's mixed utterances in an attempt to minimize language mixing in the child's production. Consequently, Lanza's findings suggest that parents' amount of code-switching is related to the amount their children effectively code-switch and especially to the amount their children *are allowed* to code-switch. This crossed perspective may reveal that children living in multilingual environments who are apparently monolingual (from their effective production) are in fact multilingual, yet they do not use all the languages in their repertoires because not all of these are viewed as appropriate or desirable by their caregivers.

Scheffner Hammer, Miccio, and Rodriguez (2004, p. 28) corroborate this view and add that

... parents' global beliefs about language development, bilingualism and their perceived roles in the educational system may have a considerable effect on their linguistic behavior towards their children.

In a context where there is a minority language in the social repertoire, parents' code choices favouring or not minority language usage may cast a light on their views on linguistic education and, more generally, on their expressed language attitudes. De Houwer (2009) corroborates this point of view and states that parental discourse strategies may reflect their ideologies on the languages spoken in the home environment.

Analysing *declared* usages, Yamamoto (2001) and De Houwer (2007) provide a portrait of family practices and suggest which ones ensure transmission. In both studies, the importance of a



stable source of input is underscored. These two studies give useful information on transmission, although their conclusions underline the importance of exposure to language production without using production data. Hence it is all the more important to carry out a joint observation of effective *and* declared usages in order to better comprehend issues of language transmission and language loss.

### *Can we speak of language death in the Italomance domain? The case of Veneto*

Wolfram (2002, p. 768) details the possible causes of language death, two of which are linked to political and ideological factors, the latter referring to the “assumed belief systems and underlying values about language use and diversity”. Concerning the political factors, asymmetric relations of power amongst the social groups may lead to the stigmatization of the languages spoken by the weaker groups. Yet, as Wolfram points out, this is not always the case, since Fasold (1984) found that the language of the dominated group was maintained to the disadvantage of the one of the dominant group.

Once again the question of what factors are critical and when they are so needs to be addressed.

The Italomance domain provides a vantage point for the observation of the power relations between Italian (the national language) and the regional dialects. Dialects in the Italomance domain are not simplified versions of Italian (see Berruto, 2005; Coseriu, 1981), but are various Latin-derived languages. Berruto (1993, p. 5) describes the Italomance domain as an endogenous bilingual situation where the languages in contact are structurally close and tend towards a situation of *dilalia*, meaning that the languages in contact (Italian – the high variety – and dialects – the low varieties) influence each other considerably across contexts of usage.

Depicting Italy’s sociolinguistic situation merely in terms of dominant (Italian) and dominated (the regional dialects) languages would categorize the subtleties of language variation into two homogenous blocks. The presence of intergenerational variation in the usage of Italian and dialect illustrates the limitations of such a categorization. National surveys conducted have shown that the regional dialects are used in particular by the older generations, whereas the younger generations use Italian or mixed utterances more often. This was particularly noticeable in the last survey conducted in 2006 (see Tosi (2001) for a summary on past surveys).<sup>2</sup> Language dominance varies according to the sociological characteristics of the individual (age, sex).

Furthermore, when reading national surveys on declared language usages in Italy, many times have linguists and non-linguists predicted the regional dialects’ imminent death. As Radtke (1995, p. 44) states in a humorous tone, the only “problem” with these predictions is that the dialects are not dying and some, on the contrary, are still vital. Nagy (2000) provides an example from the Faetar-speaking community in Southern Italy. Faetar, according to Kattenbusch’s (1979) predictions, was bound to die within 20 years. Yet Nagy, 20 years later, found that this dialect was still spoken in Southern Italy.

Berruto (2007, p. 133) comments on the decrease in the use of dialects and talks about the “new role of dialect as communicative potential”, increasing the value of local varieties. This “communicative potential” is particularly noticeable in the dialect used in mixed utterances. According to Berruto, dialects will benefit from this “potential” as long as it is useful to its speakers. This view underscores the limitations of categorizations and especially the difficulty in making predictions for the survival of the regional dialects, because predictions cannot be made merely on figures representing speakers of a particular language, but also on the values and utility associated with it. The latter is difficult to capture when adopting a predictive stance on dialect’s destiny, because too many factors may come into play and may change the expected course of a language, whether it be a dialect or a heritage language.



Cavanaugh's (2009, 2013) research corroborates the difficulty in predicting the Romance dialects' fate. In her anthropological research conducted in Bergamo,<sup>3</sup> Northern Italy, she found a striking contradiction between the perceptions of the inhabitants of Bergamo of their dialect as a dying language and the statistics showing the actual usage. She points at the importance of including the affective dimensions of language usage as well as the language ideologies. The latter provide a more rounded picture of the complexity underpinning the usage of Bergamo's dialect, which is associated with traits of "roughness and masculinity", yet is "precious and authentic" as opposed to Italian, viewed as "impersonal" and potentially "distancing" (Cavanaugh, 2013, p. 53).

Studying language usage and expressions of language attitudes in Veneto, one of Italy's north-eastern regions, especially when these concern dialect usage and transmission, could add an interesting dimension to the studies conducted hitherto. This region's dialect is one of the most vital dialects in Italy (Coveri, Benucci, & Diadori, 1998; Tosi, 2001). However, according to the 2006 survey on language usage declarations, its usage is decreasing among the younger generations, who seem to prefer Italian as the language medium for their daily communication.<sup>4</sup> Despite the Italianization of the social repertoires among the younger generations, dialect shows resilience to Italian, especially in the repertoires of the older generations. Moreover, even if Veneto dialect and Italian share the same genetic grounds, it is important to bear in mind that Veneto dialect (as all the other Italo-Romance varieties) is not the impoverishment of Italian and was, and still is, a language on its own right (Berruto, 2005). Moreover, Veneto dialect is a Romance language that benefits from a prestigious literary and historical background (Cortelazzo, 2004; Marcato, 2002). Prior to Italy's unification in 1861, the Veneto dialect was the official language of the Republic of Venice (*La Serenissima*), which was a renowned political and maritime force (Cortelazzo, 2001; Cortelazzo & Paccagnella, 1997). Today, Internet sites (ex. <http://raixevenete.net/>), written in dialect, refer to the prestigious past and militate for Veneto's independence.<sup>5</sup> The presence of these sites shows that the region's historical and literary background still plays an important ideological role within this community. Generally, dialect is mainly diffused within informal contexts of interaction and in the Internet.

In sum, Italian benefits from the widest media coverage and all administrative and official documents are written in Italian. The medium of instruction (school and university) is Italian; however, this does not preclude the possibility of hearing dialect in these spheres, for example, in conversations between peers and/or (close) friends.

From the theoretical considerations above, it seems that the link between the expressed language attitudes and language maintenance is subject to various sources of variation (socioeconomic status, intercultural, sociological, etc.).

In our study, we focus on Francesco's nuclear and extended family's production and on each adult speakers' expressed language attitudes on transmission and on the appropriateness of language choice, in order to gain a better understanding on the link between the expressions of language attitudes and issues of language transmission.

## Presentation of the case-study: Method and data

The present 13-month longitudinal study followed Francesco's language development between the ages of 17 and 30 months. The data was collected between April 2005 and May 2006. At the times of the recordings, Francesco was an only child and did not attend day-care. During this particular period, the child's main interlocutors are his parents. He sees his paternal grandparents once a week and his maternal grandparents on average three times yearly.<sup>6</sup> In Table 1, we present a synoptic view of the speakers involved in the interactions recorded.

**Table 1.** Adult participants: kinship relation to Francesco, age and profession.

Speaker	Relation to child	Age between 2005–2006	Profession
DS	Father	30–31	Lawyer
MG	Mother	31–32	Lawyer
FG	Maternal grandfather	64–65	Surgeon
MCZ	Maternal grandmother	60–61	Retired teacher
AG	Maternal aunt	25–26	Author
GS	Paternal grandfather	62–63	Retired janitor
GeS	Paternal grandmother	62–63	Retired factory worker

In this family, the socioeconomic status of the parents and the maternal grandparents is middle upper class, whereas the paternal grandparents come from a more modest background. We collected and orthographically transcribed 35 hours of interactions. We paid particular attention to the code choices in Francesco's environment, in the direct input and overheard speech as well as the codes choices in the child's output. We transcribed and performed a two-staged coding. Firstly, we assigned each word to a language category and then we categorized the utterances. On the word level, we established three categories: Italian, dialect and cognates, the latter in its psycholinguistic definition, being two words that share the same form and meaning. An inter-annotator agreement test – the Cohen's Kappa coefficient test – was performed on the word-level coding. Hence, we asked an Italian dialectologist to assign the words contained in 200 utterances in our corpus. The rate of agreement between the two annotators is good (Cohen's Kappa = 0.8). Points of disagreement, although minor, were discussed and modifications were made accordingly.

Secondly, depending on the language assignment of the words contained in an utterance, we coded the latter into three categories<sup>7</sup>: (1) Italian (utterances containing only Italian words or Italian and cognates); (2) dialect (utterances containing only dialect words or dialect and cognates); and (3) mixed (utterances containing Italian and dialect words).

## Analyses

The data are part of a larger study and have been analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, lending to a two-fold analysis. Through a quantitative approach, we gained a panoramic view of the language choices effectuated and, through a qualitative approach, we contextualized the language choice trends within interaction.

In this paper, we focus on the qualitative approach to the data concerning the adults' expressions of language attitudes and the group of speakers' language choices (including the infant's).

The analyses are organized in the following manner. We first examine the adults' expressions of language attitudes in the attitudinal interviews conducted. Secondly, we summarize the main results obtained in the quantitative analyses conducted in previous analyses. Thirdly, we examine the interactional data collected. Through the analyses of the extracts we will attempt to comprehend whether the relation between the expressions of language attitudes and usage is a one-way relation (attitudes influence usage) or if the two reveal a dynamic relation, which is defined and reconfigured through interaction. In addition, we seek to have a better grasp of the repercussions of the expressions of language attitudes on language usage and how these influence a speaker's experience of his/her multilingualism.

### *Language aesthetics and speakers' expressions of language attitudes on minority language transmission*

We conducted attitudinal interviews with each family member that participated in the interactions, by using an adapted version of the language questionnaires exploited in elaboration of the Italian Linguistic Atlas (ALI). The questionnaire *guided* the interviews but did not inhibit the interviewees, who were free to express themselves. In fact, the interviews were spontaneous conversations taking place in the homes of the interviewees, thus in an informal setting and in a place where they felt most at ease. It was important for us to create a conversational space in which the interviewees felt at ease. Hence, the author interviewed the maternal side of the child's family (maternal grandparents and parents), whereas the child's father interviewed the paternal grandparents. The relation of proximity between the interviewer and interviewee helped guarantee the naturalness and spontaneity of the interactions. Consequently, Veneto dialect was chosen spontaneously as the language used in the conversations. The questions concerned language acquisition (which language was learnt/ used first) and the languages used in particular interactional contexts (formal/informal; family/friends/strangers).

All adults are Italian and dialect bilinguals. Table 2 provides an overview of the expressions of language attitudes captured during the interviews.

**Table 2.** A synoptic view of the interviewees' declarations on language characteristics and transmission.

Family member	Perception of language characteristics		Importance to language transmission	
	Dialect	Italian	Dialect	Italian
Mother	Familiarity Ease No musicality Orality	Usefulness Expressivity Important Elegant	Not a priority, but favourable for late acquisition	Fundamental
Father	Familiarity Orality	Important	Indifferent	Fundamental
Maternal aunt	Familiarity Oral tradition Expressivity	Usefulness Wider network	Cultural importance	Important
Maternal grandmother	Familiarity Expressivity Oral/regional tradition	Usefulness Frequent usage	Cultural importance Not fundamental	Important
Maternal grandfather	Familiarity Expressivity Oral/regional tradition Cultural heritage and identity	Usefulness Frequent usage	Important for the transmission of oral tradition linked to cultural heritage	Important
Paternal grandmother	Ugly Not melodious	Melodious Musical	Useless	Important
Paternal grandfather	Familiarity Oral tradition Cultural heritage	Usefulness Important	Important	Important

The majority of the speakers associate dialect with a strong oral and regional tradition. Yet, their opinions diverge considerably on the importance attributed to dialect transmission. With this regard, the men and women in the grandparents' generation seem quite different. Both grandfathers consider dialect transmission to be important, whereas the grandmothers do not feel as strongly as their respective partners. For example, the maternal grandmother considers dialect transmission to be important from a cultural point of view, yet its transmission is not fundamental, whereas for her husband transmitting dialect to the younger generations means passing on an important cultural heritage. All speakers, except the paternal grandmother, consider dialect as the language that depicts familiarity, suggesting that its use is associated with interactions between close friends and family. The paternal grandmother considers dialect in a negative light, being an "ugly" language that is "not melodious". These characteristics are in direct opposition to those she relates to Italian, it being a "melodious" and "musical" language. For her, dialect acquisition is useless. Interestingly, in the interview, when asked which languages she spoke, the paternal grandmother declared that dialect is her first language and then added – hesitantly – "little Italian", and further clarified this by stating she speaks her "own sort of Italian". The paternal grandmother expresses the wish to refine her Italian skills, especially because her nephews and nieces speak to her in Italian and regrets that, at times, her limited competence in Italian is an impediment to comprehension between her and the younger members of her family circle. Hence, her negative views of dialect make her feel uncomfortable about her Italian skills rather than proud of her dialect skills and of the potential she has to transmit it to the younger generations. With this regard, her husband's declarations bring an interesting perspective. Contrary to the paternal grandmother, the paternal grandfather states that he would like to speak to his grandchildren in dialect rather than Italian, but his son – the child's father – does not allow him to. The father's educational choice of speaking Italian with the child implicitly influences the grandfather's choices. Using Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai's (2001) terms, the grandfather's choice of Italian in interactions with his grandson is in line with a set of "rights and obligations" established implicitly in the child's family. Thus, the grandfather uses Italian not because it is his own choice but he does so to please his son by complying with a tacitly imposed rule.

Focusing more precisely on the child's parents' declarations, the father learned dialect first and then Italian. Despite the order of acquisition, he feels he is more competent in Italian. Elaborating this point further, the father states that having received formal education in Italian has made this language the most reliable in his repertoire and consequently he feels more confident in using this language in both an oral and a written form. The father claims that the availability of written material on the grammatical functioning of Italian makes it easier for speakers to check any points of doubt. To him, this availability of written resources strengthens one's competence and confidence in any language. Moreover, he believes that schooling has a strong impact on an individual's language skills and shapes people's perceptions of the languages spoken in their environment. Considering the social benefits that Italian guarantees, the father prefers using Italian when speaking to Francesco. Thus, transmitting dialect to his son is not a priority. In fact, he would prefer it if his son learnt English as a second language rather than dialect. Despite the negative outlook on dialect's transmission, his declarations on language mixing reveal a different regard of dialect, since he states that the use of dialect in mixed utterances adds expressivity to his utterances.

The mother seems to be more favourable to the transmission of dialect to the younger generations, although learning Italian remains a priority for her. She is favourable to a tardy acquisition of dialect. Besides the fact that the mother considers Italian more elegant than dialect, she believes Italian is more difficult to learn, explaining why she feels it is important for her son to learn Italian first. Moreover, she declares that Italian comes spontaneously to her when speaking to children because it is the language that she naturally associates with children. Dialect is the language she declares to use when speaking to adults and associates this language with informal conversations with close friends (peers)

and with the family adult members. The mother's language choice contrasts the one her parents (Francesco's grandparents) adopted when she was a child. In fact, like her husband, she learnt Veneto dialect before learning Italian. As it has been noticed for the father, the mother's choice of using only Italian with her child presents a rupture from the precedent generations' linguistic behaviours.

In general, dialect is the language associated with informal contexts of communication among adults and, when used with Italian, adds expressivity to the utterance. Despite the expressivity, the cultural importance and the affect associated with dialect, its social value renders its transmission less important. In fact, for all speakers the importance of speaking and mastering Italian outweighs the importance of transmitting dialect to the younger generations.

### *A panoramic view of the language choices in Francesco's production and in his environment: Preference for Italian in child interactions*

In this section, we report the main results that the quantitative analyses have yielded. We will only refer to the results that are statistically significant. Globally, the results show the extensive usage of Italian in the child-directed speech and in the child's output. Dialect is rarely used in these two contexts. For instance, in the 20 hours of multiparty interactions we recorded with the child, his parents and the maternal grandparents, the child received only 3% of dialect utterances, 88.7% of Italian utterances and 7.8% of mixed utterances ( $\chi^2 = 3242, 5; p < 0.0001; DF = 10$ ).

Yet, in the inter-adult interactions, dialect production ranges from 59.5% to 70%, mixed utterances range from 23.4% to 30% and Italian utterances are kept to a minimum, ranging from 6.5% to 10.5% ( $\chi^2 = 3242, 5; p < 0.0001; DF = 10$ ).

When comparing Francesco's production with those of his interlocutors, we found a strong correlation between the child's language choices and those in the child-directed discourse ( $Rho = 0.9; p = 0.006$ ) and, as expected, there was no correlation between the child's production and inter-adult production ( $Rho = 0.1; p \geq 0.3$ ). Moreover, in dyadic interactions involving the child – in particular when he interacted with his mother – the production of Italian was encouraged throughout the recording period (a 13-month stretch of time) as she provided him with a steady amount of Italian, ranging between 59% and 68%. Dialect production was minimal, ranging from 1% to 2.5% in the utterances the parents addressed to Francesco and from 2% to 4% in the utterances the child produced when speaking to his parents.

In multiparty interactions, we noticed a different trend though. Despite the child's limited dialect production, he was able to increase it when addressing the group of speakers who used more dialect.<sup>8</sup> This suggests that the child may know more dialect than what his production actually reveals, simply because his home environment does not encourage him to use the dialect he knows.

The quantitative results obtained allow us to gain a panoramic view of the data. Yet, quantitative results are somewhat decontextualized from the interactional setting in which the various speakers effectuated their language choices. Hence, more fine-grained and qualitative analyses were carried out in order to have a grasp of the pragmatic values associated with dialect and Italian. In addition, we aimed to observe how their language choices reflect different facets of the expressions of language attitudes of which we caught a glimpse in the *Language aesthetics and speakers' expressions of language attitudes on minority language transmission* section.

### *From expressions of language attitudes to effective usage*

Our next step was to investigate how different contexts encourage particular language choices. In what ways do the dyadic interactions favour the production of Italian and why do multiparty interactions legitimize the usage of dialect in child-directed and child production? The role of context

for the promotion or inhibition of dialect will be illustrated through the analysis of a selection of interactions involving Francesco and other interlocutors in both dyadic and multiparty situations. Through these analyses, we will question the link between the expressions of language attitudes and language choices, in an attempt to gain more understanding of the different types of information the child obtains through his language environment.

In the extracts presented, we have coded the Italian words in bold font and the dialect words in unmarked font. Cognates appear in italics. To have an idea of the Italian–dialect variation, we show an utterance that the mother produces in Italian (cf. Extract 1) followed by its dialect translation equivalent.

% MOT (ita): **Cosa c'è ? cosa c'è li' ? Ma non puoi prenderla tu, cos'è cos'è?**  
 %pho: 'kɔza 'tʃe 'kɔza 'tʃe 'li 'ma 'non 'pwoi 'prenderla 'tu 'kɔza 'tʃe  
 %tra “What is it? What is there? But you cannot take it, what is it? What is it?”

Had the mother produced this utterance in dialect, it would have been as follows:

% MOT (dial): **Cossa ghe ze? Cossa ghe ze là? Ma no te poi torla ti, cossa ghe ze cossa ghe ze ?**  
 %pho: 'kɔs:a 'ge 'ze 'kɔs:a 'ge 'ze 'la 'ma 'no te 'poi 'torla 'ti 'kɔs:a 'ge 'ze 'kɔs:a 'ge 'ze  
 %tra “What is it? What is there? But you cannot take it, what is it? What is it?”

As can be noticed, variation touches every linguistic level: phonetic/phonological interface (ita. ['kɔza] *versus* dial. ['kɔs:a]); lexical (ita. ['prenderla] *versus* dial. ['torla]); morphosyntactic (ita. Null subject “ma non puoi prenderla” [‘non 'ɔpwoi 'prenderla] *versus* dial. “no te poi torla” [‘note'poi'torla], Eng.: “You cannot take it”).

We will first analyse a dyadic interaction between Francesco and his mother. At the time of the recording Francesco was 17 months old. This interaction took place in his home. In her first turn, Francesco’s mother asks him what he is looking at and realizes, soon afterwards, that the child is looking at the chocolate that is close by.

Extract 1: Mother’s recast in mother – child dyad over a piece of chocolate

Mother to Francesco	<b>Cosa c'è ? cosa c'è li' ? Ma non puoi prenderla tu, cos'è cos'è?</b> “What is it? What is there? But you cannot take it, what is it? What is it?”
Francesco to Mother	<i>Ta</i> Ta [designating chocolate]
Mother to Francesco	<b>Ciocolata, ma tu non ne puoi prendere pulce</b> “Chocolate, but you cannot take some darling”

In Extract 1, the mother’s language choice is exclusively Italian. She starts the interaction by questioning Francesco. She waits for his answer and, maintaining her language choice – Italian – she reformulates Francesco’s *ta* and produces *ciocolata* “chocolate”. In this interaction, the child receives two important pieces of information. The first is that he cannot have any chocolate and the second – focusing on the language choice level – is that the most appropriate target lexeme chosen by Francesco’s mother for *ta* is ita. *ciocolata* and not *cioco*<sup>11</sup>*ata* (dial.).

Many studies have described parents’ reformulations of their child’s erroneous or incomplete productions (Martinot, 2000a, 2000b; Orvig Salazar, 2000). When there are two languages involved in the environment, especially if one of the two is a minority/regional language, then reformulation in one or the other language may expose a parent’s language preferences and/or educational choices.



In the following interactions, we present a selection of interactions that illustrate the ways Francesco's parents recast his dialect production. The extract below is taken from a multiparty interaction between Francesco, his mother and his maternal grandmother. At the time in which this interaction was recorded, the child was 21 months old.

Extract 2: Multiparty interaction focusing on Francesco's code choice and activity

Francesco to mother	<i>Cecio</i> <sup>9</sup> magna geato "Cecio eats ice-cream"
Mother to Francesco	Varra che Francesco <b>mangia il gelato</b> "Look, Francesco <b>eats ice-cream</b> "
Grandmother to Francesco	<b>Mangia tutto il gelato! Come lo mangi? Col cucchiaino? Col cucchiaino?</b> <b>"He eats all the ice-cream! What do you eat it with? With a teaspoon?"</b> <b>With a teaspoon?"</b>
Grandmother to group	El ga imparà a dire <b>mia mia mia</b> "He has learnt to say <b>mine mine mine</b> "
Francesco to mother	<b>Magia pana</b> <b>Eats cream</b>
Mother to Francesco	<b>Mangia la panna?</b> <b>He eats cream?</b>

Francesco starts the exchange by saying, in dialect, that he is eating ice cream (Dial. [ˈmaɲa dʒeˈlato] *versus* Ita. [ˈmandʒa dʒeˈlato]). Replying to Francesco, the mother starts her utterance with the phatic use of the dialect verb *varra* [ˈvar:a] "look" (as opposed to Ita. *guarda* [ˈgwarda]) preceding her Italian recast of the child's dialect utterance produced in the first speech turn. The mother's mixed utterance captures the speakers' attention in two ways. Firstly, by starting in a dialect mode, the mother implicitly gets the group of adults to be directly involved in the interaction. Dialect being the language expected to be used in inter-adult interactions, the mother directs the adults' attention on what Francesco said and on what he is doing. Secondly, Francesco's attention is directed towards the Italian translation of his precedent utterance in dialect (dial. *magna geato* [ˈmaɲa dʒeˈlato] as opposed to ita. *mangia gelato* [ˈmandʒa dʒeˈlato]), rendered more salient by the mother's code-switching. The grandmother then builds on the mother's utterance and, addressing Francesco in Italian, she asks him with what he eats his ice cream. Francesco's reticence gets her to answer her own question by saying *col cucchiaino* "with a teaspoon". She then turns to the other adults and, addressing them in dialect, comments on Francesco's new Italian lexical acquisition (*mia* "mine"). The code switch from Italian to dialect coincides with a focal change: the grandmother was initially engaging in Italian with Francesco and then she addresses the other adults in dialect and talks to them *about* Francesco. Then, speaking to the other adults, Francesco states what he is eating. Syntactically, this utterance is identical to the one he produced in turn 1 but this time he opts for the Italian version his mother suggested to him in speech turn 2. In the last speech turn, the mother reformulates Francesco's utterance morphosyntactically by inserting the Italian article *la* [la] (as opposed to the dialect definite article *a* [a]).

Having looked at the mother's reformulations, we now show an example of the father's language choices when he interacts with the child. In this exchange, Francesco, aged 25 months at the time, is playing with his father in the living room. They are listening to music and jumping up and down.



## Extract 3: Father's recast in father – child dyad

Francesco to father	Anca <i>papà</i> salta "Also daddy jumps"
Father to Francesco	<b>Anche <i>papà</i>, Francesco balla così, balla Francesco balla</b> "Also daddy, Francesco dance like this, Francesco dance"

In this exchange, the father shows that he would prefer it if Francesco produced Italian in his utterances. Francesco starts the exchange with the use of *anca* [ˈanka], a dialect adverb. In the following turn, the father recasts the child's adverb by producing its Italian equivalent. He then expands his utterance by inciting Francesco to dance *così* [koˈzi] "like this". As was seen in the quantitative analyses, Italian is most frequently selected in the child-addressed speech, particularly in dyadic interactions with either one of the parents and the child.

The interactions analysed so far are representative of the numerous occasions in which Francesco is exposed to a recast of his dialect productions into Italian, in particular when he engages with his parents in dyadic interactions. Yet, the quantitative results show that the parents produce some dialect when speaking to the child, albeit little. This result prompted us to investigate the parents' production more closely.

In the extract below, the mother addresses Francesco in dialect. The child was 19 months old at the time of the recording.

## Extract 4: Francesco's production of Italian, responding to the mother's dialect utterance

Mother to Francesco	Va ben va ben, basta che no te pian[z]i eh? No sta mia pian[z]ar seto <sup>10</sup> Ok ok, as long as you don't cry hey? Don't even think about crying, you know
Francesco to Mother	<b>Mamma?</b> <b>Momma?</b>
Mother to Francesco	<i>Eh?</i> <i>Hey?</i>
Francesco to Mother	<b>Nonna</b> <b>Grandmother</b>
Mother Francesco	<b>E' la nonna che dice così, eh? E' la nonna che parla in dialetto</b> <b>It is granny who says this, hey? It is granny who speaks in dialect</b>

Contrary to what one would expect, the mother reprimands Francesco in dialect, telling him to stop crying. The unaccustomed use of dialect in a dyadic interaction involving the mother and the child could be due to the fact that she wants to minimize the intensity of the reprimand or, on the contrary, she could have unconsciously chosen dialect out of distress at the uncontrollability of her child's intransigent crying. Whatever the reason may be, what is interesting in this exchange is that this time, it is Francesco – and not one of his parents – that chooses to use Italian in reply to the mother's dialect and shifts her initial code choice from dialect to Italian. Francesco's choice of Italian after his mother's dialect utterance could show that he associates Italian with the language spoken when engaging with him and thus would expect his mother to use Italian. He does so by realizing the gemination in his two speech turns: in *mamma* "momma" and in *nonna* "grandmother", situating his utterances in an Italian mode. Gemination is a phonetic trait realized in Italian but not in dialect (cf. Mioni, 2001). Besides realizing the geminate, the child's utterance is produced with an ascending intonation, suggesting that within the one word utterance [mam:a] he implicitly directs the mother's attention on what he is going to say next. The mother gives sign of her attentiveness with the phatic element *eh*. Francesco then

replies in Italian saying *nonna* [non:a] “grandmother”. The mother interprets Francesco’s utterance as if her son were telling her that the speaker who uses dialect is the grandmother. The mother’s interpretation of Francesco’s seemingly metapragmatic comment seems to reflect her own categorization of the legitimate dialect speakers.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the mother’s utterance could also be considered as a metapragmatic comment on the contexts (speakers and interactional setting) of dialect usage. In fact, it would appear that speakers have rather defined perceptions of the idiolects. In this case, dialect is the code choice the mother associates with the paternal grandmother. The possible consequences of these perceptions are the expectations of a given speaker regarding his/her interlocutors’ code choices. In this exchange, these expectations seem to be manifest in both the mother and the child’s production.

Concerning unaccustomed dialect usage in child-directed speech, in the following extract the father incites Francesco to use dialect. At the time of the recording, the child was 21 months and he was recorded whilst participating in a multiparty interaction involving his aunt, his maternal grandmother and his parents.

Extract 5: Multiparty interactions and dialect’s pragmatic usage

Francesco to aunt	<b>To [dz]ia A. to! To [dz]ia A. to! Here you go aunt A.! Here you go aunt A.!</b>
Father to aunt	Magna! Eat!
Grandmother to Francesco	<b>Cos'ha detto?</b>
Francesco to grandmother	Magna! Eat!
Mother to Francesco	To [z]ia A. to! Here you go aunt A., here you go!
Father to Francesco	Magna! Eat!
Francesco to aunt	To [z]ia A. to! Here you go aunt A., here you go!
Father to Francesco	Magna, magna [z]ia A., magna Eat, eat, aunt A., eat

Francesco wants to give his aunt something to eat. The realization of the affricate [dz] places Francesco’s utterance in an Italian setting as the dialect word for *aunt* is [ˈzia]. In the second turn, the father does not follow Francesco’s initial code choice (which was Italian) and uses the dialectal form *magna* (dial. “eat”). This is not surprising, as the usual code choice in inter-adult discourse is dialect. The mother replies by partially reproducing Francesco’s first utterance but produces the simplification of the affricate [dz] > [z], which entails a code change from Italian [dz]ia to dialect [z]ia. In this interaction, the usage of dialect is associated with a playful and lighthearted tone, which seems to spur both parents to adopt this language choice, despite the fact that they are engaging with their child. The parents’ attitudes in favour of dialect encourage its usage in particular circumstances (e.g. for playfulness) augmenting its salience, rendering it more enticing to use for both the child and the other adults that interact with him. The speakers’ attention is directed towards dialect as this code choice “stands out”. Consequently, within these interactions, dialect becomes the object of joint attention and becomes the salient code choice.

In the next excerpt, Francesco (21 months) was at his home, interacting with his parents and his maternal and paternal grandparents. During these exchanges, Francesco was amusing himself in repeating what his paternal grandmother was saying.

## Extract 6: Multiparty interaction with Francesco and his two grandmothers

Grandmother (p) <sup>12</sup> to Francesco	<b>Guarda che belo, mama mia, guarda che belo!</b> <b>Look how nice it is, goodness, look how nice it is!</b>
Francesco to Grandmother (p)	<i>Arda!</i> <i>Look!</i>
Grandmother (p) to Francesco	<b>E questo cos'è? La tazza?</b> <b>And what is this? The cup?</b>
Francesco to Grandmother (p)	<b>Azza</b> <b>Cup</b>
Grandmother (p) to Francesco	<b>E questa? La teiera</b> <b>And this? The teapot</b>
Grandmother (p) to Grandmother (m)	Ghin'era a tovaia chi ghin è tass, bicier, eora iu questa, prima dir mi e dopo diss lu There was the tablecloth where there was a cup, glass, and so to him this one [designating an object nearby], I say first and then he says
Grandmother (m) to Grandmother (p)	No el voe ripeter ma ripete tuto anca ben No, he wants to repeat but he repeats everything well
Grandmother (p) to Grandmother (m)	Si', ma anca quando se diss, el sa quae che l zé Yes, but also when we say, he knows what we say
Grandmother (m) to Grandmother (p)	Si e dopo el pronuncia anca ben e paroe Yes and he pronounces words well
Francesco to Grandmother (p)	<i>Arda</i> <i>Look</i>
Grandmother (p) to Francesco	<b>Guarda, varda eo, eo el cavalino?</b> Look, is it the horse?
Francesco to Grandmother (p)	Sé! Yes!
Grandmother (p) to Francesco	O eo l'asinelo? Or is it the donkey?
Francesco to Grandmother (p)	<i>Ino</i> Horse
Grandmother (p) to Francesco	Cavalino l'è! Horse that is!

The paternal grandmother is looking at an object with Francesco. She addresses him in Italian, which is marked with the simplification of the geminates (in *belo* in the first turn for example), regionalizing it with typical dialectal traits (Mioni, 1976, 1990, 2001). The paternal grandmother carries on and names the objects that are close by. Francesco repeats the items the grandmother designates. After these few turns produced in an adult–child exchange, the two grandmothers speak to each other and comment on Francesco's language development by saying he repeats the words after his interlocutor, pronouncing the words well. The speech turns between the two grandmothers are produced in dialect. They are then interrupted by Francesco who produces once again the *arda* "look".

This interaction illustrates how child-directed speech can be embedded in an inter-adult context (and vice versa) and how the languages used in one context can influence the code choices adopted in the other context. This permeability within contrasting usages encourages the adoption of a greater flexibility in the language choices and may reconcile the negative expressions of language attitudes towards dialect with its pragmatic utility (humour, salience, etc.). Another aspect affecting language choice and attitudes is the language contrast produced by the joint usage of Italian and dialect. This could in fact attract the speakers' – including the child's – attention towards a

particular language behaviour, whether it be the promotion or the avoidance of dialect. Consequently, language choices may be in contradiction with the expression of language attitudes because, in the spur of the interactional moment, choosing dialect may be more useful than Italian in directing the various interlocutors' attention on a specific point.

In the next interaction, Francesco (21 months) is engaging with his maternal grandparents and his parents during suppertime. Using Italian, the father asks Francesco whether he is going to eat next to him. The grandfather takes the turn immediately after the father's turn and tells Francesco, in dialect, to acquiesce.

Extract 7: Multiparty interaction with Francesco, his parents and his maternal grandparents

Father to Francesco	<b>Mangi vicino al papà stasera?</b> <b>Are you going to eat close to daddy tonight?</b>
Grandfather (m) to Francesco	dighe eciò dighe eciò Tell him 'sure' tell him 'sure'
Francesco to Grandfather (m)	ciò Sure!
Grandfather (m) to Francesco	eciò Sure!
Francesco to Grandfather (m)	eciò Sure!
Grandfather (m) to Francesco	eciò, <b>andiamo a vedere il mare</b> <b>Sure, we'll go and see the sea</b>
Francesco to Grandmother (m)	ciò! Sure!
Grandfather (m) to Francesco	eciò Sure!
Grandmother (m) to Francesco	<b>e mettiamo i piedi nell'acqua</b> <b>And then we will put our feet in the water</b>
Mother to Francesco	eciò Sure!

As can be seen in the second turn, the grandfather incites Francesco to use dialect in response to the father's request. Francesco does so in dialect, following the grandfather's suggestion. The sign of acquiescence [tʃò] becomes the object of joint attention between Francesco and the other adults. It is important to note that this interaction revolves essentially around the child's dialect usage, which was initially encouraged by the grandfather but then is validated by the entire group, including the child's parents. The parents' expressions of language attitudes regarding dialect usage show more flexibility than their declarations in the attitudinal interviews do. In fact, their declarations of usage seem to be open to negotiation and show that they can be modified through the interaction with other members of the family who, like the maternal grandparents, have a more accommodating attitude towards the child's dialect usage.

## Discussion: attitudes and language usage in interaction

Despite the differences of opinion pertaining to dialect transmission, Francesco's family network provides exposure to both Italian and dialect, although with varying degrees. The increase in dialect production in multiparty interactions shows that the speakers' attitudes are not as stable and rigid as they appear in their respective declarations.

The attitudinal interviews and the interaction analyses have provided detail on Francesco's types of linguistic exposure and on the adults' attitudes with regards to the child's dialect usage and to the importance of dialect transmission. For example, in interactions when the child engages with his parents only, the child's dialect production is not particularly favoured and it is seen as some sort of transgression of the social norms of usage. This view is apparent in the parents' reformulations or recasts of what is perceived to be a dialect word or utterance into its Italian equivalent. It is an issue of legitimacy of a particular type of language choice in a particular language setting, a legitimacy advocated by the social norms set within the community the child belongs to (cf. Myers-Scotton & Bolonyai, 2001). His parents abide by these norms and transmit these to the child. However, in multiparty interactions with members in his extended environment (his grandparents, for example), these norms seem to be more flexible and are negotiated according to the pragmatic intentions of the speakers involved. For instance, dialect may be used for a humorous effect or to capture the interlocutor's attention. Even if the mother and the father use mostly Italian when speaking to Francesco and declare that Italian comes more naturally when engaging with him, multiparty interactions with the family members seem to be communicative spaces that make dialect the pertinent choice even when engaging directly with the child. Hence, multiparty interactions show another facet of the parents' (and to the adults' in general) language habits and to their declarations, explaining why the expressions of language attitudes are not in synchrony with language usage. In fact, they did not seem to recast and reformulate Francesco's dialect utterances. On the contrary, they seemed to encourage the child to use dialect. This may be due to the presence of speakers who, like the maternal grandparents and aunt, value dialect because it conveys a local cultural and regional belonging. The presence of these speakers in interactions to which the child and his parents participated appears to "de-dramatize" the educational concerns regarding the importance of Italian to the disadvantage of dialect transmission, which seem to prevail in dyadic interactions between the child and his parents. Hence, these concerns pass on a secondary level and the pragmatic utility of dialect, as an element of contrast capturing the interlocutors' attention, moves to a primary level.

With regards to the dialect's pragmatic utility, an important aspect emerged from the language choices observed: dialect's salience. Dialect in child-addressed utterances gains salience, as it "stands out" to the speakers. Its rarity in child-directed speech or in child production makes dialect more salient as it becomes the marked code choice (cf. Givón, 2005; Myers-Scotton & Bolonyai, 2001) over an homogenous Italian background. Developing the idea of dialect salience in light of the principle of language legitimacy mentioned earlier, dialect, particularly in multiparty interactions, seems to confront the speaker with a situation where s/he chooses to legitimize or de-legitimize its usage. Whatever the choice is, dialect – rendered more salient because of its low frequency of usage and the language contrast it produces – empowers the speaker with this choice.

Considering the idea of empowerment together with the juxtaposition of the attitudinal interviews with the actual code choices, the use of dialect in child-addressed speech seems to lead to a contradictory situation. How can dialect empower speakers in this family if its transmission does not seem to be particularly valued? The declarations on the utility of dialect in mixed utterances may help clarify this apparent contradiction. As the father points out, dialect in a mixed utterance is pragmatically useful as it adds expressivity to the message. Even if most adults' attitudes do not overtly encourage dialect transmission, they seem to be much more lenient when it comes to using mixed utterances for specific communicative goals. Pragmatically, dialect is placed under a more favourable light when it is used jointly with Italian, because it gives a touch of expressivity that an Italian-only utterance cannot deliver. This finding corroborates the results found in Cavanaugh (2013), where the affect attached to dialect increases its usefulness. Hence,

the “pragmatic usefulness” of dialect smudges the sharp-edged borders between Italian and dialect traced by the expressions of language attitudes.

In the speakers’ declarations, Francesco’s parents and maternal grandparents view the dialect in mixed utterances as pragmatically useful. They are all Italian–dialect bilingual speakers who feel confident about their language competence. In the paternal grandparents’ case, instead, dialect usage in mixed utterances may not be a matter of choice but a matter of ease in usage. Although dialect is the language they use the most and feel more comfortable in using, the paternal grandmother’s declarations show that she does not value it. To her then, language mixing is not systematically synonymous to pragmatic usefulness: as her declarations on her language competence indicate, she experiences dialect as a sign of linguistic inadequacy. Hence, expressed attitudes towards particular kinds of language usage seem to be also closely linked to a speaker’s perceptions of his/her own bilingual competence and whether s/he feels s/he has a choice of using one language rather than another.

In Francesco’s family, the contact between Italian and dialect in the repertoires provides a wide palette of code and stylistic choices, the pragmatic interest of which overrides the rigidity of a speaker’s attitudes. Hence, not only contact between languages but also contact between repertoires in interaction seems to provide a fertile ground for the negotiation and redefinition of language attitudes. Language mixing could actually be experienced as the common grounds between speakers with different degrees of language fluency. Future research on transmission in contact situations should perhaps focus on how speakers – with varying degrees of bilingualism – perceive and use mixed utterances. These views would help define with more precision the pragmatic interests of the languages spoken and how these are used and experienced differently depending on the interactional settings (dyadic and multiparty) and on the speakers involved.

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## Notes

1. We use the term *dialect* because this language is referred to as a dialect by its interlocutors. As we will show further on, “Veneto” – like Italian – is a Latin-derived language on its own right (Berruto, 2005; Coseriu, 1981).
2. The results of the survey can be found at the following link: [http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070420\\_00/](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070420_00/)
3. Bergamo is in Lombardy, the central northern region adjacent to Veneto.
4. See ISTAT (The Italian National Institute of Statistics) results published in 2006 at the following site: [http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070420\\_00/](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070420_00/)
5. Interestingly, groups that militate for the independence of Veneto show solidarity with other minority groups, such as the Scottish independentists. In 2012, there was a gathering in Scotland on Scottish independence where a Venetan contingent was invited to speak at this meeting, in a gesture of solidarity between the two minority groups.
6. At the time of the recordings, his maternal grandparents moved to South Africa for professional reasons.
7. We did not perform the inter-rater agreement test for the utterances because this coding was automatically generated from the word assignment task. See Ghimenton (2013) for a detailed presentation and discussion of the methodology adopted in this study.
8. Considering the total number of utterances produced by each speaker, those who produced the highest number of dialect utterances were the grandparents and the aunt.
9. Francesco designated himself as *Cecio*
10. Henceforth, the letters in the square brackets refer to phonetic realizations.



11. Bourdieu's (1982) notion of "legitimate speaker" could also be used to illustrate how a speaker's social characteristics determine the appropriateness and the receptiveness of this speaker's linguistic message. In our case, the paternal grandmother is a senior member of the society and comes from a working class background. These two characteristics are associated with the stereotypical dialect speaker (see Cremona & Bates, 1977, for examples of stereotypical dialect speakers).
12. In this excerpt, the letters *p* and *m* in brackets stand for paternal and maternal, respectively.

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