

L2 Italian in the Making: Hybrid Forms and Basic Varieties in Spanish–Italian Interaction in the StraParla-TO corpus

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Abstract

This paper describes the initial varieties of Italian used by Spanish-speaking immigrants, based on naturally occurring interactions extracted from the corpus Stra-ParlaTO and involving newly arrived immigrants and native Italian speakers. The high degree of mutual intelligibility between Italian and Spanish (Gooskens et al., 2018) facilitates the use of intercomprehension strategies; as a result, these interactions frequently feature code-switching and code-mixing, as well as the widespread use of hybrid word-level formations that combine Spanish and Italian morphemes— a phenomenon already observed by (Schmid, 1994; Vietti, 2005). From an acquisitional perspective, these data suggest that in the case of a proximal source–target language (SL–TL) pair, L2 development manifests as a gradual phonological and/or morphological restructuring of L1 forms. This contrasts with what is most commonly observed in migratory contexts, namely the development of a "reconstruction continuum" through L2 varieties of increasing complexity and proximity to the TL (Perdue, 1993). Nonetheless, in the same interactions, distinctive features of a "basic" variety of Italian (Klein, 2001; Klein & Perdue, 1997), untraceable to corresponding L1 forms, emerge in communicative contexts where intercomprehension strategies appear to break down. Overall, the study highlights the potential that corpora of naturally occurring multilingual interactions offer for research in L2 acquisition.

References

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