

## **(r) among Toronto's Heritage Italians: maintaining language internal Homeland patterns**

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The grammars of Heritage languages are often considered simplified due to attrition, incomplete acquisition, or transfer from the majority language (Benmamoun et al. 2013; Polinsky 2018). Comparative Variationist research, instead, finds for Heritage speakers many cases of maintenance of the Homeland grammar (Nagy 2015).

Here we report an additional case illustrating lack of transfer from the majority language, analyzing patterns of rhotic production in spontaneous speech among the Heritage Calabrese Italian community of Toronto, Canada, and its Homeland counterpart in Calabria, Italy. Although trills are the canonical Italian rhotic, tap, approximant, and fricative variants are also part of the Homeland grammar (Vietti et al. 2010; Celata et al. 2016). The majority language surrounding the Heritage speakers - Canadian English - mostly employs the approximant variant (Westbury et al. 1998). A parallel comparison between Homeland and Heritage speakers allows us to assess whether the two varieties are staying stable or changing in tandem (suggesting language-internal processes), or differ in the way they change (suggesting grammar simplification, or transfer from English, the majority language).

1555 occurrences of word-internal, singleton /r/ were analyzed using the HerLD corpus (Nagy 2011). Tokens were selected from 14 speakers of the Homeland variety, and 15 first- and second-generation Heritage speakers. They were then coded and analyzed via Mixed Effect models to determine the effect of social and linguistic predictors (e.g., age, generation, previous and following phone, stress of the syllable).

Approximants and fricatives represent lenited variants of taps and trills for both Homeland and Heritage speakers: they are consistently favored by coda contexts, which are particularly prone to lenition (Kirchner 1998). These variants appear in every group, with similar proportions, and constrained by this syllable-stress factor. This supports the hypothesis that they emerge due to reduction of articulatory effort (Gillian and Jaworski 2014), rather than in response to pressure from the majority language's phonological system. Furthermore, Heritage speakers seem to be further developing this language internal development: they increase the relative strength of the phonological predictor compared to Homeland speakers, suggesting grammar boosting (Flores and Rinke 2020). The Homeland social constraint is also maintained by Heritage speakers: a sex-related pattern of variation occurs across all speakers, with males favoring lenited variants compared to females. The Heritage community shows no signs of transfer from English: speakers do not simplify their grammars by diminishing their set of constraints, nor do they acquire new ones reflecting English distributional patterns. No generational or community-based effects are statistically significant in the analysis.

By taking a comparative variationist approach, using a tested methodology, and ecologically valid data, we find empirical evidence against the notion that minority languages have to receive transfer from the majority language, or tend towards simplification. Patterns of variation found in Heritage languages are not necessarily caused by contact: they can be the result of natural language-internal processes, as also attested in other Heritage communities (Nagy and Umbal 2021).

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