

# Prosody and language contact: the case of South Tyrol Italian

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In studies on bilingualism, the speaker's L1 is often found to influence the L2 prosody in the realisational and frequency dimensions (Mennen, 2015). This effect is typically ascribed to the stronger stability or dominance of the L1 over the L2 system during L2 acquisition (Flege, 1995). However, hybrid exemplar approaches claim that phonological categories are continually updated over the lifespan (Pierrehumbert, 2006), and that the default activation level of stored exemplars is influenced by language use (Portes & German, 2019). Indeed, a change in language dominance over lifetime has been linked to a neutralized or reversed pattern of influences between the two phonological systems (Flege, 2007). Also, a low rate of code-mixing in daily life is expected to reduce the default inhibition costs of the competing language, as well as the likelihood of phonetic/phonological transfers between the systems (Green & Abutalebi, 2013).

In the present work, we focus on the prosody of South Tyrol (ST) Italian. South Tyroleans are predominantly German-Italian bilinguals with varying L1s, degrees of language dominance and rates of code-mixing in their daily life (Vietti, 2017). In previous studies, a L+H\* pitch accent has been identified in both ST Italian and German. In ST Italian, this accent is produced with a medial alignment of the F0 peak in the tonic vowel (Gianninò et al., submitted), while it shows a later alignment in German (Grice et al., 2005), particularly in Southern varieties (Barker, 2005; Mücke et al., 2009). Additionally, Narrow Focus (NF) statements in ST and Standard German are typically associated with rising nuclear pitch accents (Barker, 2005; Grice et al., 2017), whereas in ST Italian a falling nuclear pitch accent is usually found in the same pragmatic context (Gianninò et al., submitted). For this study, 2240 statements were elicited from 28 ST German-Italian bilinguals in a laboratory setting and across different focus conditions. The speakers' L1, language dominance and code-mixing rate were assessed through an expanded version of the Bilingual Language Profile (Gertken et al., 2014). The analysis of the elicited material reveals that language dominance and the rate of code-mixing in daily life significantly influence the mentioned dimensions (i.e., the F0 peak alignment in L+H\* pitch accents and the frequency of rising pitch accents in the NF condition), modulating the effect of the speaker's L1 on ST Italian prosody. Our findings support a hybrid exemplar theory of prosodic representations, where both the substance-to-form and the form-to-meaning mappings are updated over the lifespan and influenced by sociolinguistic factors (Portes & German, 2019).

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