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Change in the Discursive Practices of Bilingual Speakers after Moving to a Monolingual Environment

The article analyses the speech behaviour of two speakers who were born into bilingual families, grew up in a bilingual environment in Italy, and decided as adults to move to a monolingual Slovene environment. We are interested in how the change in environment affects their discursive practises. To acquire the data, the guided conversation method and transcription of audio-recorded discourse were used, while the interactional sociolinguistic analysis method was used to analyse the discourse. The study showed that in the monolingual Slovene environment, both speakers found it difficult to adapt their speech to Slovene technical language. They also lacked the specific Slovene expressions used in everyday life. On the other hand, although their Slovene was interspersed with Italian interference, they knew variations in Slovene and were sensitive to the use of slang in standard Slovene.

Keywords: contact linguistics, bilingual speaker, discursive practices, choice of language, Slovene, Italian.

Sprememba diskurzivnih praks dvojezičnih govorcev po preselitvi v enojezično okolje

Prispevek analizira govorno vedenje govorcev, ki sta se rodila v dvojezični družini, odraščala v dvojezičnem okolju v Italiji in se kot odrasla odločila za selitev v enojezično slovensko okolje. Zanima nas, kako spremenjeno okolje vpliva na njune diskurzivne prakse. Pri pridobivanju podatkov je bila uporabljena metoda vodenega pogovora ter transkripcija zvočnega posnetka diskurza, pri analizi diskurza pa metoda interakcijske sociolingvistične analize. Raziskava je pokazala, da se je bilo govorcema najtežje jezikovno prilagoditi v strokovni oziroma žargonski terminologiji. Manjkalo jima je tudi poznavanje specifičnih slovenskih izrazov iz vsakdanjega življenja. Čeprav je njuna slovenščina prepletena z interferencami iz italijanščine, pa na drugi strani kažeta poznavanje zvrstnosti v slovenščini in sta občutljiva za rabo slengovskih besed v slovenskem knjižnem jeziku.

Ključne besede: *kontaktno jezikoslovje, dvojezični govorec, diskurzivne prakse, izbira jezika, slovenščina, italijanščina.*

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1. Introduction

This article presents a brief study of two bilingual speakers born into bilingual Slovene-Italian and Slovene-Friulian families in Gorizia and Trieste, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy, who decided to move to Slovenia near the town of Nova Gorica (in western Slovenia, on the Slovene-Italian-Friulian language border). The aim of the study was to discover how the discursive practices of the speakers in question changed after moving to a monolingual environment. This is a relatively new phenomenon, as in the past the majority of such families settled permanently in Italy (Zuljan Kumar 2009, 65–66).

In the first part of the article, the area where the interviewees live is briefly introduced from a historical and sociolinguistic point of view, the relevant theoretical background is explained, the speakers are introduced, and the methodology of data collection and analysis is described. In the second part, the factors influencing language choice and code-switching among bilingual speakers, as well as the way the interviewees themselves adapted their linguistic behaviour to the new environment, are analysed on the basis of their own statements. In the last part, syntactic interference in the speakers included in the study is discussed.

2. The Linguistic Situation of the Slovenes in the Western Slovene Ethnic Area. A Brief History

Today, the Slovenes living in the western Slovene ethnic area are divided between two countries, Slovenia and Italy. They inhabit the entire border area between the Canale Valley in the north and Istria in the south. Slovenes living in the Republic of Slovenia inhabit the Littoral region with the two urban centres of Koper and Nova Gorica, while Slovenes living in the Republic of Italy inhabit the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia and Udine in the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. They are classified as an autochthonous historical linguistic minority, a status granted to the Slovenes living in the provinces of Trieste and Gorizia since 1954, while the Slovenes in the province of Udine had to wait for official recognition until 2001, when a new law (Law no. 38) entitled *Norme a tutela della minoranza linguistica slovena della regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia* (Regulations for the Protection of the Slovene Linguistic Minority in Friuli-Venezia Giulia) was passed in the Italian Parliament. The difference between the territories results from the different historical and political background of the Slovenes in the province of Udine, since for long centuries they lived under the rule of the Patriarch of Aquileum and the Republic of Venice. After living for a while in the same political framework, the territory of the Slavia Veneta was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1866, while the Slovenes in the provinces of Trieste and Gorizia remained under the jurisdiction of the Austrian state. At the end of World War I, and after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary in 1918, the en-

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tire territory of the provinces of Trieste, Udine and Gorizia, together with the present-day Slovene Littoral, was occupied by the Italian army and annexed to Italy in 1920 in accordance with the border treaty of Rapallo. Soon after the end of the war, the Italian authorities began a denationalisation policy against the Slovene population, which became systematic and cruel after the establishment of the fascist regime in 1922. After World War II, Gorizia and Trieste became part of Italy, while their outskirts became part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After World War II, according to the Paris Peace Treaties of 1947, most of the Littoral region with the upper Isonzo Valley was assigned to Yugoslavia, while Italy kept the urban centre of Gorizia. In 1954, Italy also regained the main port of Trieste. The Slovene population in the outskirts of Gorizia lost its economic centre, so in 1947, the Yugoslav authorities started building a new town on the border, Nova Gorica (Marušič 1989, 284–285; Jagodic et al. 2020, 72–74; Bajc 2020, 22–30). Located at the confluence of the Isonzo and Vipava rivers in the immediate vicinity of the state border, this town is organically linked to Gorizia economically, socially, and culturally, as well as through kinship ties. However, although the population on both sides of the border is very connected, the sociolinguistic situation of the Slovene community in Italy differs considerably from that in Slovenia. Slovenes living in Italy are predominantly bilingual and use a variety of different idioms in their everyday life; from their Littoral Slovene dialect, the spoken regional variant of the standard Slovene language, the spoken Slovene literary language, the spoken variant of the Venetian dialect of Italian, the Italian literary language, and the Italo-Slovene hybridised variant of Slovene called *itavenščina* (Grgič 2016, 62–63; Jagodic et al. 2020, 77). Slovenes on the Slovene side of the state border are predominantly monolingual and have functional knowledge of Italian. The varieties of Slovene spoken in Italy differ from those spoken in Slovenia mainly in the number of interferences with Italian at all linguistic levels (cf. Jagodic et. al 2020, 70, 78–82; Grgič 2016, 61–62), as the members of the Slovene minority in Italy have daily contact with the Italian language, while this is not the case for the Slovenes living on the Slovene side of the border.

3. Theoretical Framework

From a sociolinguistic point of view, bilingualism can be defined as the result of intensive language contact (i.e., contact between people who speak different languages) either at the individual level (individual or family bilingualism) or at the group level (societal bilingualism). In psychology, the term refers to the coexistence of two language systems within an individual, as opposed to monolingualism. A bilingual is anyone who is actively proficient in two languages to some degree. However, bilinguals are rarely equally proficient or balanced in their use of the two languages, making one the more dominant (Hakuta 2009,

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173; Wierzbicka 2010, 94–95; Grgič 2019a, 40). When discussing bilingualism, three types of bilingual speakers are distinguished, namely compound, coordinate, and sub-coordinate. A compound bilingual is a person who learns two languages in the same environment so that they acquire a concept with two verbal expressions. A coordinate bilingual acquires the two languages in different contexts (e.g., at home and at school), so that the words of the two languages belong to separate and independent systems. In a sub-coordinate bilingual, one language dominates (Diller 1970, 254–256). The article discusses the example of two compound bilinguals who learned Slovene in their primary and secondary education and in whose primary family two languages were spoken, Slovene and Italian.

There are many studies dealing with different aspects of the language use of Slovene bilingual speakers in Italy who come from either Slovene or linguistically mixed families and whose discursive practices include both Slovene and Italian language versions. I mention only a few here. Mezgec (2012), Pertot (2014) Grgič (2016; 2017; 2019a; 2019b) and Bogatec et al. (2020) focus on the communicative competence of Slovenes in Italy, Jagodic (2011) presents language use patterns in different age generations of Slovenes in Italy, Mezgec (2013) discusses the functional literacy of young speakers of the Slovene language, and Vidau (2015) and Brezigar & Vidau (2021) focus on the intercultural position of young Slovenes in Italy. However, the aim of the present study is to shed light on the problems in the language use of two bilingual speakers who grew up in a bilingual environment and decided to move to a monolingual Slovene environment as adults. We are interested in how the change in environment affected their discursive practices.

4. Presentation of the Speakers and the Methodology of Data Collection and Analysis

The study focuses on the following questions: 1. What were the discursive practices like in the interviewees' childhood families and what are they like in their current families? 2. How do the speakers adapt their choice of language to different speech situations? 3. How has their speech behaviour changed since moving to a monolingual Slovene environment?

For data collection, I used the guided conversation method by making an audio recording and a subsequent transcription. To analyse the discourse, I used the method of interactional sociolinguistic analysis, in the sense that I directed the questions to a sociolinguistic (self-)observation of each bilingual speaker and their use of the discursive practises they had developed in the new living environment (change in linguistic behaviour depending on the speech situation, interlocutor(s), discourse topic, etc.).

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The first speaker (hereafter S1) is from the vicinity of Gorizia, Italy. He completed all his education from kindergarten to high school in Slovene in Gorizia. He is employed as an accountant at a Slovene institution in Gorizia, Italy. His father is Slovene by birth and comes from Slavia Friulana, Italy; his mother is Friulian. They spoke Italian within the family, and S1 and his father spoke Slovene in the company of other Slovenes. S1's wife is Slovene and comes from Nova Gorica; they have two daughters and live near Nova Gorica. His wife is a teacher, and although she speaks Italian, they speak Slovene at home among themselves and with their daughters. The daughters attend elementary school in Slovenia and speak Slovene to all of their paternal relatives except their grandmother, with whom they speak Italian.

The following excerpt shows how communication took place in S1's family when he was a child and what determines his choice of language when he speaks to his father.[1]

[1]
I: […] do you speak Italian or Friulian with your mother?[2]
S1: Italian.
I: And Slovene with your father?
S1: Italian with my father, too. Italian if we're alone, Slovene if we're in a Slovene group.
I: Which factors influence whether you speak Slovene with your father?
S1: We always spoke Italian with my mother at home. Italian with my father, too. We spoke only Italian at the dinner table because if I had said, *mama, daj mi en kos kruha* ('Mother, give me a piece of bread'), I wouldn't have got anything (laughs), *allora* we had to speak Italian.
I: And with your father?
S1: With my father, too, […] we spoke Italian, you get used to it, I guess, and then it's hard to switch. *Però*, if my father was here (in the company of Slovene speakers), we would be speaking Slovene.

The second speaker (hereafter S2) was born in Trieste, where he completed his entire education from kindergarten to high school in Slovene, except for an Italian-language music conservatoire in Trieste. He is employed as a music teacher in Nova Gorica. Both his parents are Slovene and live in Trieste. At home, he spoke Italian with his mother and Slovene with his father. His wife is Italian and comes from Gorizia; she did not speak Slovene before their marriage but has learned it well since. Like her husband, she works as a music teacher in Slovenia. They live in Slovenia, 15 km from Nova Gorica, and they communicate with each other in Slovene, while they each speak their mother tongue with their four children. All the children attended kindergarten and the first six grades of primary school in Slovenia, then secondary school with Slovene as the language of instruction (corresponding to the second triad of primary school in Slovenia) in Gorizia (Italy); the eldest two now attend high school with Slovene as the language of instruction in Italy.

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In the following text excerpt, S2 discusses how communication took place in his childhood family and why he and his wife started speaking Slovene at home despite the fact that even he finds it easier to express himself in Italian [2].

> [2]
> *S2:* I speak Italian with my mother and Slovene with my father because that's what they decided, because they lived in Trieste, my mother would speak Italian and my father Slovene.
> *I:* How do they talk to each other?
> *S2:* With each other, they only speak the dialect. My parents speak only Italian with each other, or rather the dialect, [*trieštin*], of Trieste …
> *I:* How did you start speaking Slovene with your wife?
> *S2:* I said, [*bašta*], enough, I'm tired of always speaking Italian, […] because I realised that, since I'm an Italian Slovene, it all depends on the environment I'm in. If I'm in an Italian environment, I'm more fluent in Italian, and my Slovene is already a little behind. And vice versa, if you're in a Slovene environment, you're more fluent in Slovene. I personally find Italian much easier, for example.

Thus, S1's childhood family used mostly Italian for everyday communication, and his current family uses mostly Slovene. In S2's case, both languages had equal shares in his childhood family, and the same goes for his own family. Unlike his childhood family, where his parents spoke the Italian dialect with each other, S2 and his wife mostly speak Slovene, which was a mutual decision, even though communicating in Italian would be easier for both. At this point, we can observe that both speakers, who lived in Italy and now live in Slovenia in completely comparable environments (Slovene-Italian (Friulian) family), actually use different discursive practices, thus, I am further interested in what affects the choice of a particular language in individual speech situations.

5. Factors in Language Choice with Bilingual Speakers

With bilingual speakers, the choice of one language or the other in a given speech situation depends on several factors (Weinreich 1979, 4; Thomason 2008, 47; Matras 2009, 234–247), namely:

1. on the individual's ability to express themselves orally and in writing (linguistic competence);
2. the relative familiarity with the two contact languages, i.e., the ability of phonetic distinction, of accepting a different accent, of adapting to the orthography of the other language, etc.;
3. the attachment of a language to a person or speech situation;
4. the speaker's familiarity with the variations of each language;
5. their attitude toward each language in contact.

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In the following section, text excerpts from the conversation are used to illustrate how individual factors influence S2's and S1's choice of language.

5.1 The Individual's Linguistic Competence

Both interviewees believe that the choice of one language or the other does not depend so much on the speaker's general linguistic competence, but rather on his or her communicative competence,[3] i.e., in which area of life it is easier for the speaker to think in one language or the other. Therefore, I first directed my questions to an area in which an adult's thinking and utterances are rather mechanical and automated and do not require much mental effort, namely arithmetic (example [3]). Following that, I was interested in which language the speakers use to respond in an emotional and uncontrolled way (example [4]).

[3]
I: How do you do multiplication?
S1: In your mind, how do you calculate when you're alone?
S2: Since I've been told you usually count in your mother tongue; I try to do it in both languages.
I: Let's say you don't think about it.
S2: Let's say if the calculation is five times six, in Slovene, because that's how I learned multiplication. Otherwise, in depends on the context. If the work context is Slovene, I calculate in Slovene. If it's an Italian context, in Italian.
I: So, it also depends on the person you're with, or the environment?
S2: I think it's both.

Example [3] shows that for S2 arithmetic depends on the language of the environment he is in, although he always performs multiplication in Slovene because he learned it in that language. It is also noteworthy that since he was told that arithmetic is usually done in a person's native language, he tries to perform it in Italian as well, which means that he continues to strive for a balance between the two languages in his new environment (i.e., he does not want his Slovene to predominate). S1, on the other hand, calculates only in Italian in all speech situations and indicates that his Slovene colleagues from Italy do the same because, as he says, "I am done calculating before I can turn the numbers around in Slovene".[4]

Studies show that the use of internal speech, that is, speech in which mental calculation takes place (as well as prayers, dreams, and memories) in a bilingual speaker depends on their fluency in the other language (Pertot 2014, 17, 18). As the example shows, the inner speech of the two speakers in question takes place in different languages, in S1 exclusively in Italian, and in S2 it depends on the speech situation, which could mean that in S1's case perhaps the dominance of Italian in the family environment had a decisive influence on the dominance of Italian in his inner speech.

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Example [4], on the other hand, shows that both speakers unconsciously use Italian swear words, partly because Slovene is not, in their opinion, as expressive as Italian in this area. But another reason is certainly that they both used Italian as their first language before moving to Slovenia, which is also shown in uncontrolled, unpredictable, emotional reactions when, to use S1's words, he always instinctively expresses himself in Italian. In a way, their reactions confirm a finding from several studies (see Pertot 2014), namely that speakers can express intense emotions much more easily in their first or most frequently used language (Pertot 2014, 16).

[4]
I: [...] how do you swear?
W2: What does that mean?
S1: Bestemia.
S2: Haha, *dio can* '*god dog', *cavoli*[5], *porka vacca* '*damn cow' [...]. Well, Slovenes don't have a diverse repertoire of these ...
S1: Vaffanculo 'fuck off'. If I get really angry, it comes out in Italian, I mean, the [*inštintivo*][6] that comes out directly.

5.2 The Individual's Relative Familiarity with Both Languages in Contact, Which Includes the Ability of Phonetic Distinction [5], of Accepting a Different Accent [6], of Adapting to the Orthography of the Other Language etc.

The following excerpts from the interview with the informants illustrate well how both had problems with the transition from a bilingual environment in Italy to a predominantly monolingual environment in Slovenia, in terms of phonetic distinction in the pronunciation of Slovene and Italian words and the distinction between word accents in Slovene and Italian. In a bilingual environment, numerous borrowings of words and mixing between languages are normal; in a monolingual environment, this is immediately noticeable (despite the many borrowings) and triggers a reaction from monolingual speakers (e.g., laughter), as can be seen in example [5], where S1 describes how, for example, Slovenes in Italy often elide the *h* sound, which is interference from Italian (as in the word *herpes* 'herpes'); in a monolingual environment, this caused his Slovene friends to burst out laughing.

[5]
S1: [...] *allora* Italians don't use h, right. *Allora*, if I say you have *erpes*, like in Italian, right, ho ho ho, [...] but then you learn, now I say *herpes* too.

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S2 once made his Slovene friends laugh when he stressed the word *piknik* 'picnic' like in Italian (on the final syllable), without even knowing what provoked the laughter.

[6]
S2: I remember how I conducted the school orchestra and I said, boys, next week we're organising *a picníc* for the end of the school year, and they all burst out laughing […].

5.3 Language Bound to a Person or Speech Situation

Tying language to a person is one of the most important factors that influences the choice of language in a bilingual person's communication, mainly because it is linked to the emotional dimension (Padilla & Borsato 2010, 12–13), as shown in example [7], where S2 explains that he once tried to speak Slovene with his mother, with whom he exclusively speaks Italian.[7] This proved hard or even impossible. Moreover, S2 emphasises that when speaking about important life events, which concern your emotions, you always speak in the language closest to you. This assertion again confirms the above finding that a bilingual speaker can express themselves semantically most accurately and with the most appropriate choice of words in emotional moments only in the language of their emotional closeness and intimacy.[8]

[7]
S2: I did an experiment, I managed to speak Slovene with my mother two years ago, but it's difficult, you know, you feel like you're going against nature […]. You have to force yourself. I had to think: I'm Slovene, my mother is Slovene, right, and we have to speak Slovene.
I: How did you tell your mother your wife was pregnant?
S2: Always in Italian. When it's intimate, about matters of the heart, you always switch to the language closest to you.

5.4 The Speaker's Familiarity with the Variations of the Individual Languages

In the following excerpt, S1 describes how he is bothered by the fact that in the monolingual Slovene environment the use of borrowed slang words has expanded to formal speech situations (such as work) (e.g., *fotka* vs. *slika* 'photo'), while certain Slovene words that he and the bilingual environment he grew up in use are marked as archaic (e.g., *gumica* for std. Sln. *radirka* 'eraser') or are not known at all in the Slovene environment (e.g., *lesenka* for std. Sln. *barvica* 'crayon'). In this way, S1 has actually demonstrated greater language sensitivity and loyalty

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to the language than monolingual Slovene speakers who uncontrollably adopt foreign slang words into formal discourse. However, in order not to be laughed at by his interlocutors, S1 adapted and started using such words himself.

> [8]
> *I:* [S1], the other day you told me that since you've come to Slovenia, you no longer say *stisnit*, but *sprintat*.
> *S1:* Yes, yes, I was used to it before, it was *stampare, stisnit*. [...] *però*, when we were in school, it was *stisnit*, right. She (S1's wife) has laughed many times at some of our words, saying they're from the stone age, *però*, we use them. [...] But they're Slovene words, right, because afterwards I go check that JKSKZ (laughs), what's the dictionary called ...
> *S2:* SSKJ.[9] *(laughs)*
> *S1:* And it's in there, right, it's a normal Slovene word, not archaic, you people just don't use it.

Although the speaker is mistaken and the word *stisniti* is not appropriate for the meaning 'to be printed' in the standard Slovene language, the word *natisniti* is semantically appropriate, he nevertheless clearly shows a sensitivity to language use and is aware of the interference in language variation (slang words in the standard language), which bothers him. At the same time, he keeps switching from Slovene to Italian and vice versa, even within utterances, which he is not aware of. The following section therefore provides an overview of how the mechanisms of language switching work and what triggers the switch in the speakers included in the study. In addition, conversational excerpts are used to illustrate the final factor in the choice of one language or another in a given speech situation, namely, the speaker's attitude toward each language.

6. Language Switching

This term refers to the alternating use of two or more languages within the same discourse or the parallel placement of utterances belonging to two different grammatical systems within the same discourse (Gumperz 1992, 81; Treffers-Daller 2009, 58). It is particularly common in spontaneous conversations between two or more bilingual or multilingual speakers in multilingual communities or individual families. The switching can take different forms; the speaker may make the switch with a single word or phrase, with an utterance, or with a whole sequence of utterances. There are several reasons that lead to language-switching; the following list is based on Heine & Kuteva (2008, 59), Crystal (2006, 414), and Gumperz (1992, 63):

1. to express solidarity or respect with a particular social group;
2. to exclude others from the conversation;

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3. to produce a specific effect;
4. to compensate for the speaker's lower linguistic competence in the other language.

6.1 The Expression of Solidarity or Respect

An example of the speaker's language switch in the function of expressing solidarity with or respect for a particular social, ethnic, linguistic, or other community would be the Pope's annual Easter greetings in over 150 different languages of the world.

6.2 The Exclusion of Others from the Conversation

Bilingual or multilingual speakers switch to another language when they wish to exclude others from the conversation or do not want to be understood. An example of this are the children of S2 who switch to Italian when they do not want to be understood by their monolingual Slovene classmates.

6.3 The Production of a Specific Effect

For a bilingual speaker, there are meanings that cannot be expressed equally well in both codes (Wierzbicka 2010, 102). In this sense, the switch to language B may, according to the speaker, have the function of conveying semantically more relevant information than would be the case in language A, e.g., in order to achieve a certain effect, as S2 says in the following text excerpt.

> [9]
> *S2:* I don't know. […] it can happen that in the given moment it's easier to express yourself in one language than in the other, it does happen, and among Slovenes living in Italy you can talk 70 percent in Slovene and then you want to say one sentence in a particular way, and you say it in Italian.
> *I:* Do you think that sentence that you want to say in Italian conveys more?
> *S2:* You create a different atmosphere because it's probably linked to specific experiences and events, or it's linked […] to a specific writer, to a film or something that you experience in a different way, *allora* you prefer to connect with those words in that language.

6.4 Compensation for the Speaker's Lower Linguistic Competence in the Other Language

The speaker is unable to express themselves in language A, so they switch to language B. In this case, the language switch is a strategy that the speaker uses to compensate for their lower linguistic competence in language A, as example

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[10] shows. Another example comes from the Slovene Littoral. Sociolinguistic research conducted by Todorović (2021, 118) among Italian-speaking Istrians, wherein it was shown that some speakers in contact with Slovene monolingual speakers prepare for conversations in advance. One of the interviewees explained that her personal doctor does not speak Italian, so she gets acquainted with the appropriate terms for the symptoms before the examination.

The interlocutors were left alone for a moment and their conversation turned to the technical language of mobile telephony. S1 had heard Vodafone had a special offer worth considering. Since they are better acquainted with the technical terminology of the field in question in Italian, and also because the absence of other conversation participants (a change in the speech situation) meant they were able to open the door to interference from Italian (they had controlled their speech when the interviewer had been present), a significant change in their speech behaviour can be observed. They began language mixing.[10] Slovene was still the predominant language of communication but it was interspersed with:

1. switches to Italian, such as, you pay *ventinove euro fisso* a month and you get eight hundred minutes of calls, four hundred *messaggi* and ten [*džiga*] in *traffico* internet, [špeciale] I think,
2. Italian lexical and syntactic interference, such as, one [*opcion*], I'll need two [*telefonini*]; *pustmo stat messaggi* 'let's put aside messaggi.'[11]

[10]
S1: Allora, I'll switch to *Tre, cioè*, I'd like to switch to *tre, practicamente*, right, because now there's an [*opcion*] 'option', special, *cioè*, eight hundred minutes of calls […].
S2: How much?
S1: Ventinove euro, you pay *ventinove euro fisso* a month and you get eight hundred minutes of calls, four hundred *messaggi* and ten [*džiga*][12] in *traffico* internet, [špeciale][13] I think, does Vodafone have something like that? You keep track of such things.
S2: I remember, I was checking out *Tre, cioè*, if they have any *offerta*.
S1: Now they have only *tre* power, […] otherwise, the same thing costs *quarantanove* euro […] For me it's [*figada*], *cioè, cioè* … I made a *calcolo*, let's put aside internet, let's put aside *messaggi*, which I don't write, *però*, if you make a calculation, right, you make, e, *ottocento minuti* o *per venti nove euro diviso ottocento minuti*, I get that it costs me seven cents a minute […].

According to our interlocutors, however, the reason for switching is not always lower linguistic competence, but that something can be expressed better in the other language. Thus, the reason why a bilingual speaker switches from one language to another is often because the meaning they want to express "belongs" in the other language (Wierzbicka 2010, 102). For S1, Italian metaphorical language is closer to him than its Slovene counterpart. He illustrates this with the example of sports, where, he says, the Italian commentator uses very expressive phrases that he thinks Slovene lacks.

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[11]
S1: […] for example, Moto [*dži pi*], right, […] I mean, Guido Meda, […] has a flair for words, […] Franco Bulatto *dietro* [*a žverničato*][14], he uses expressions that are not even comprehensible in Slovene, [žverničare] means strip off paint, right. *Allora* […] that means that he passed by so close that he stripped his paint off, see? *Però*, how are you going to say something like that in Slovene? When you're done with the sentence, the race is already over, right. (laughs) No, I think Italian has a lot of expressions where one word can convey a concept when Slovene requires a whole essay, right.

In this case, S1 feels that the Slovene word for driving very close to another motorist is not the exact semantic and metaphorical equivalent of the Italian word, so he feels that the Italian word is irreplaceable here. In other words, he feels that the Slovene word does not fit his perception of the situation. For him, the Italian expression [žverničare] has greater emotional power because of its meaning, and the Slovene equivalent would fall short in its emotional intensity. S2 agrees, but then also cites example [12], that illustrates a lack of Italian lexical equivalents to the Slovene words. In his opinion, there are indeed differences between the two languages in their expressiveness, but in one area, Italian is more expressive or semantically precise, and in another Slovene.

[12]
S2: Sometimes Slovene has more words for something. For example, you have five, six words for different kinds of ice, right, while in Italian you only have *ghiaccio*. It's *ghiaccio compresso*, *ghiaccio cosi*, but it's always *ghiaccio*, you don't have any other word, you see?

The two examples show that not only do both speakers speak two languages, but they also live their lives in both languages, unconsciously observing and comparing the lexical and grammatical repertoire of both of them and, when they deem it necessary, using the most appropriate expression from one or the other language in a bilingual speech situation to express the most appropriate semantic meaning they want to convey.

As mentioned at the beginning, both speakers have chosen to live in the Slovene-speaking environment of the suburbs of Nova Gorica. S2 has lived there for twenty years and S1 for sixteen years. Next, I was interested in the areas of life in which they found linguistic adaptation most difficult. Both emphasised that certain expressions from daily life were the most problematic at first, such as the Slovene expression for the remedy to remove limescale. S2 tells how he went to the shop to buy it and only knew the Italian expression *anticalcare*. This response in some way confirms the finding of Grgič, who points out that 80 per cent of students who complete eight years of schooling in Slovene do not know Slovene terms for everyday things such as cotton candy, shower soap, and croissant, "even though they can write an essay about the French Revolution correctly" (Grgič 2019a, 135–135).

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Another area that caused the interviewees problems was jargon terminology belonging to various areas of life, e.g., car parts or tools, which confirms the statement by Jagodic et al. (2020, 81) statement that Slovene speakers in Italy lack knowledge of specific (especially professional) Slovene vocabulary.

[13]
S1: I was more fluent in Italian than in Slovene terminology, because on that side of the border, if you like, technical terminology is Italian, [...] you won't hear any boy say, I've cleaned the *uplinjač*,[15] I've cleaned the [*karburator*],[16] [...] (laughs), I've changed the [*kandele*],[17] I've changed the spark plugs.
S2: You know what the biggest problem is? When I had to go to a Slovene hardware shop, I didn't know what to ask for. Can you give me a *cacciavite*? Can you give me what?
S1: It's a problem because we still use colloquial terms. Do you have a [šraufencinfer] 'screwdriver'?
S2: Yes, I didn't know the word, I didn't know how to translate it, how to say *cacciavite* in Slovene.
S1: There's also [*bulon*].[18]
S2: [*bulon*], too.

Based on the textual examples, we can see that the speakers are affected by lexical interference and constantly switch between the two languages. However, from the point of view of language contact, the interference at the syntactic level, which is not apparent at first sight in the language, is the most interesting, which is why the last part of the article focuses on such interference in the language use of the speakers included in the study and in their families.

7. Syntactic Interference with the Speakers Included in the Study

Syntactic interference (or in this case syntactic calque) is a phenomenon in which a syntactic structure in language B, or more precisely in a subsystem of language B, deviates from the norm of language B (or is absent altogether in language B) but is found in the contact language (language A or one of the systems or subsystems of language A) (Heine & Kuteva 2008, 58; Matras 2009, 234–237; Zuljan Kumar 2022, 149–150, 153–159).

Here are a few examples from the conversation with the bilingual speakers in question:

[14]
S2: [...] all these expressions that you also have [...] here in the Littoral, there's expressions [...] such as *brez druzga* [...].
W2: Senz'altro.

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S2: It's a direct translation of *senz' altro*.
W2: And there's *za + infinitive*. I know it isn't OK, but if everyone says it, I say it too now, I know that it's wrong, *oppure* this, *je brat od Andreja* ('he is the brother of Andrej'). It isn't OK, right, but if everyone says it … (laughs).

In example [14], S2 and his wife point out the calqued structures *brez drugega* '*without other (i.e., surely)', *za* + infinitive 'for + infinitive' and *od* 'of'+ noun phrase, which are the predominant means of expressing manner (*brez drugega*), intention (the preposition *za* + infinitive) and possession (the preposition *od* + noun phrase). These language patterns have prevailed over the Slovene structures *vsekakor (bi), ne da bi* + infinitive and the expression of possession with possessive pronouns in the corresponding meanings. S2's wife, who learned standard Slovene in a language course, is aware of this calquing but uses these structures herself because she identifies with the community that uses them and in order to adapt to the environment in which she lives.

[15]
S1: […] in Slovene it's *se blešči* ('*it's glimmering itself (i.e., it's shining)'), right […]. I've corrected it so many times[19] […] o, *come si brilla questo*, in Italian *come brilla*, right […]'
I: Does this mean the children think in Slovene and translate to Italian?
W2: E, yes…
S2: Ci prepariamoci, said [my son] once, you say *prepariamoci* or *ci prepariamo*.
W2: Oppure, aspetta, aspetta, un'altra, I can't remember […] *Aiuta a la mamma* ('*help to your mother'). In Italian it's *aiuta la mamma*, help your mother […] Or vice-versa, such as *za vidit*, in Italian it's *andiamo a vedere*, in Slovene *gremo za videt* ('*let's go to see'), that's not OK, right?'

In example [15], S2 and his wife report on Slovene linguistic interference in the Italian of their children, who spend most of their time in a Slovene-speaking environment. Language switching is bidirectional in S2's family, suggesting that the two languages he is in contact with are indeed equal, whereas it is much less frequent in the other family because of the exclusive use of Slovene.

8. Conclusion

The study showed that although both speakers had highly developed language competence in both languages, the predominant language in their childhood families was Italian. They were aware of this and decided to change their established discursive practices by moving to a monolingual Slovene environment. When they moved to Slovenia, they encountered language problems in terms of being unfamiliar with Slovene jargon terminology in the new environment and using Slovene words that the monolingual environment rejected as archaic.

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The speakers also had problems at the level of pronunciation (i.e., the phonetic distinction between languages in contact), pronouncing some Slovene words in an Italian way, and at the level of accent, stressing Slovene words in an Italian way, which triggered laughter in the monolingual environment. Although the speakers constantly switch between languages, even within utterances, they are sensitive to the transfer of slang words into standard Slovene, indicating a loyalty to Slovene that they believe is stronger than with monolingual Slovene speakers, a fact that disturbed S1. Both speakers, as well as S2's wife, who is a native Italian, are aware of interference at the syntactic level, but still use such structures because it is normal in the community they moved to, indicating their loyalty to the speech habits of the new environment.

Although both speakers lived in Italy and now live in Slovenia in a similar environment, their families use different discursive practices based on decisions between spouses: While in S1's family, Slovene is consciously predominant, unlike in his childhood family where Italian was predominantly used, S2's family repeats the pattern from his childhood family by using both languages equally. Despite this difference, the linguistic behaviour of the two speakers when speaking to each other maintained their predominant discursive practice, i.e., switching between languages depending on which language they consider most appropriate at a given moment to express the intended message. They have (unconsciously) maintained this linguistic behaviour, although they both consciously use Slovene as the language of everyday communication in their new language environment.

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Notes

[1] The abbreviations used for speech roles are: I – interviewer, S1 – first speaker, S2 – second speaker, W2 – S2's wife.

[2] The examples have been translated into English. To improve readability, language switches to standard Italian (std. It.) are written in italics. Language switches to the Gorizia and Trieste versions of the Venetian dialect (Gor. and Tr. Ven.) are cited in square brackets, e.g., Gor. and Tr. Ven. [šfigada] vs. std. It. *sfiga* 'bad luck'; the same applies to acronyms spelled by speakers in the Italian way, such as moto GP [*dži pi*]. Square brackets are also used to quote loan words in the Slovene version spoken in the Gorizia region of Italy (Gor. Sln.), such as [*inštintivo*].

[3] Communicative competence is a learned skill that a speaker acquires through socialization in a particular language, and it includes forms and ways of communicating, i.e., practices that a speaker uses in particular circumstances and domains (Grgič 2019a, 128).

[4] S1 is referring to the inverted order in the pronunciation of the ones and tens digits in Slovene.

[5] Compare *Non mi importa un cavolo* 'I don't give a *cabbage (damn)'.

[6] A borrowing from Gor. and Tr. Ven that is used in Gor. and Tr. colloquial Sln., but not in the regional colloquial variant of Slovene in Slovenia; it means 'instinctively'.

[7] His mother finds it easier to communicate in Italian than in Slovene because as a child she was torn from her Slovene environment during the war and deported to Germany. As a result, she forgot her mother tongue. She was not able to develop it when she should have, and instead she fostered her knowledge of Italian and German. Now she tries to speak Slovene, but she is unable to do so when it comes to intimate topics.

[8] This is also confirmed by Todorović (2021, 114), who notes that many speakers of the Italian dialect with whom she conducted several interviews had no real need to learn the standard language. One of the interviewees explicitly pointed out that she would feel uncomfortable if she wanted to speak differently than she was used to, which is in her native dialect.

[9] Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika (Dictionary of Standard Slovene Language).

[10] Here I use the term language mixing to mean using two languages as if they were a single language. In contrast to conscious language switching, speakers do this unconsciously when they mix codes.

[11] A calque from *lasciamo stare i messaggi*.

[12] Italian version of the word *gig(abyte)*.

[13] Borrowing in Gor. and Tr. Sln.

[14] Gor. and Tr. Ven. 'strip off paint', std. It. *sverniciare*.

[15] Std. Sln. expression for 'carburettor'.

[16] Borrowing in Gor. and Tr. Sln., std. It. *carburatore*.

[17] Borrowing in Gor. and Tr. Sln.

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[18] Borrowing in Gor. and Tr. Sln., Friulian *bulòn*, std. It. *bullone* 'bolt'.

[19] She has corrected her children when they speak Italian because they use the reflexive form of a verb which is a calque from Slovene.

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