

Abstract

This is a quantitative study of the effects of inter-generational contact between a majority language (Spanish) and a heritage language (Veneto). Specifically, we are studying the effects of the Spanish verbal syntax, referred to as a *syntactic frame*, on the *syntactic frame* of Veneto verbs. Data was gathered from a total of 69 participants, 35 older speakers and 34 younger speakers, through translation activities. The results were then codified and analyzed in two separate analyses studying variation across speakers and the degree of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) according to age groups. Variation among speakers is ubiquitous and at the same time demonstrates subtle patterns of language maintenance, shift, and loss at the lexical level. T-tests demonstrate that the differences in the degree of CLI of both groups is statistically different and that older speakers maintain a more classical version of Veneto lexicon whereas the younger speakers produce a variety of Veneto with higher rates of lexical and frame borrowing from Spanish. The implications of this study include providing evidence that the cognitive processes of progressive language attrition are parallel to cognitive processes present among second language learners (parasitism in L2 learning), but in opposite directions.