

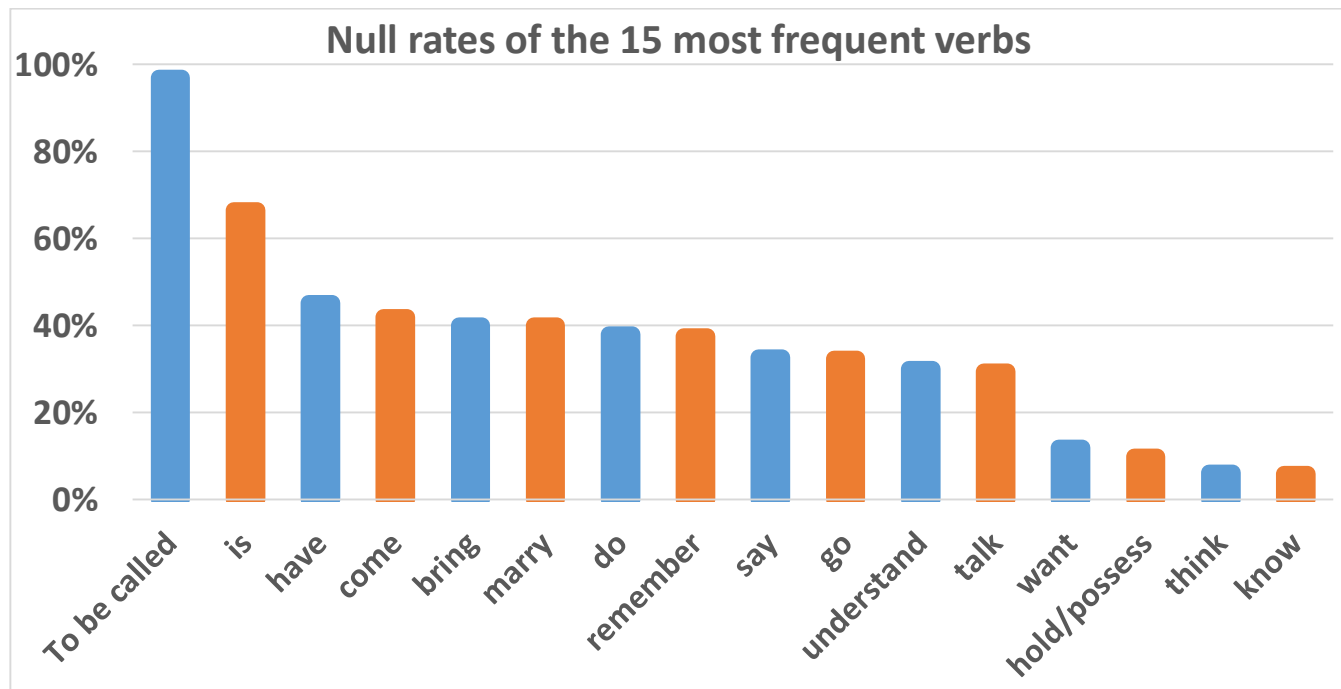
Pro-drop in a Heritage language in Toronto : A study of Heritage Faetar

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This is a study of Faetar, a transplanted minority language. The community of Faetar speakers in Toronto emigrated from Italy in the 1950-1970s. Like Italian, Faetar is an optionally pro-drop language. This paper shows the results of multivariate analyses on the variability of the presence of subject pronouns (pro-drop) among Heritage Faetar speakers in Toronto. Recordings were analyzed from first and second-generation speakers ranging from age 30 to 90 to study their use of pronouns in casual speech.

Following from results presented at NWAV 43 (Nagy & Iannozzi, 2014), which compared homeland (Italy) and heritage (Toronto) Italian and Faetar using parallel linguistic factors, this paper examines Heritage Faetar more closely using interviews conducted in 2009-2010 as part of the HLVC project (Nagy, 2009). Almost 1,000 tokens of finite clauses were extracted from 12 speakers in the corpus, and were coded for linguistic and social factors, which included coding the verb lemma, the verb's position in the phrase, and a changed subject from the subject of the previous phrase ("switch reference").

In Toronto, Faetar shows only small signs of accommodating to non-prodrop English. Toronto's Faetar community has a null-subject rate of 39%. This is in comparison to the Homeland null-subject rate of 52% (in recordings from the early 1990's). More relevant to this paper, there are also differences in the kinds of pronouns used in Toronto vs. Italy. Faetar has both "strong" and "weak" forms of pronouns, and in Toronto the strong form is used 10% more than in Italy. Interestingly, switch reference was *not* found to be significant in the Heritage data, despite being a significant factor in the Homeland data, and many pro-drop languages (Silva-Corvalán, 2001). Another factor that was found to be significant is the specific verb produced. For example, *to be* favours pro-drop (67%), whereas *to do* disfavors pro-drop (37%) as shown in the figure below. In fact, all of the verbs that occurred more than 15 times had factor weights above 0.75. The ranking of rates of these constraining verbs, in particular *think* and *know*, is contrary to previous findings (cf. Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Travis, 2007). I will explain the factors that affect pro-drop in Heritage Faetar, and in particular the significant effects of the verbs.



References

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