

Studying more and less endangered heritage languages



[HTTP://PROJECTS.CHASS.UTORONTO.CA/NGN/HLVC](http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/ngn/hlvc)

Naomi.Nagy@utoronto.ca



Social Sciences and Humanities
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sciences humaines du Canada



Motivation for session/talk

- (Childs et al. 2014:1) recommend “a greater emphasis on conversational data and the documentation of naturally occurring conversation ... collecting sociolinguistic data which can inform language planning and policy; and creating opportunities for training in sociolinguistic documentation.
→ This is variationist sociolinguistics.
- Consideration of sociolinguistic language documentation [...] questions the ways in which Western language ideologies [...] may be unduly influencing documentary practice in other parts of the world.”
→ What are the differences that matter? (cf. Labov 2015)

Labovian Sociolinguistics 101

- Expectations of **social patterns** (of factors like age, sex, status, ethnicity, network) as indicative of:
 - Social structure
 - stable variation vs. changes in progress
 - changes from below vs. changes from above
 - Status of different forms (variants)
- **Linguistic factors** (G. Guy 2015 Köln workshop)
 - Phonological variation influenced by:
 - Markedness
 - Saliency
 - syllable structure (preference for CV)
 - OCP, etc.
 - Syntactic and discourse variation influenced by:
 - information structure
 - ambiguity/disambiguation
 - focus

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So what's the big deal
when you want to work with endangered languages?
(or can we just accept this as we move out into other varieties?)

- “Classical” sociolinguistic training:
 - Large, well-documented languages
 - Grammar well-described, including variable under study
 - Investigator/fieldworker as native speaker
 - Plenty of speakers to work with (or not)
 - Well-understood social structures
 - Speakers treated as monolingual
- Working with endangered languages:
 - Usually not any of these things
 - + Not all ages/categories of speakers are available
 - + Different degrees of fluency

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Differences with *minority* languages

- Herder's equation (*language = culture = nation-state*) may not hold up (Foley 2005:157-8) – How does this influence attitudinal factors?
- Bilingual speakers have their very *choice of language as a resource* for constructing identity – they needn't rely solely on language-internal variation for this work (Kang & Nagy *submitted*).
- Stanford & Preston (2009:8): *social factors may behave differently* in minority languages.
- e.g., counterexamples to women leading change
- Blainey (2013): *social variables* “like sex, socio-economic class, literacy, ethnic identity, speech register, and home town” *lose influence in contracting languages*.
- Blainey (2013): *education (not necessarily in language being studied)* mediates role of other social factors.
- *Age* may operate differently
 - E.g. the “age 17” effect in TO English might relate to moving out of the home and mixing with people from other places at university
 - At age ~12, everyone starts talking Faetar in Faeto – the mixing with others for school happens at that age

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...And more differences when they are *endangered*

- Heritage/diaspora varieties may not mimic homeland varieties because of “quantitatively deficient input” to learners
 - expect diminishing effect sizes & different conditioning effects, as proposed in Labov (2007) for the diffusion of variables when multiple dialects are in contact.
- Frequent claims of conservatism in small and/or heritage and/or endangered languages (since Dorian, at least, cf. K. Thepboriruk's NWAV44 panel)
- Increased importance of multiple speakers (and transcribers, translators, coders) (Rice 2014, Julien Carrier, p.c., Dec. 21, 2015)
- Greater likelihood of negative attitudes toward own variety

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A typical published description of emigré Italian – representing many speakers' view

È evidente **la semplificazione** non solo del sistema verbale, ma più in generale la semplificazione delle strutture linguistiche, ... **la perdita** di alcuni tratti (soprattutto a livello morfologico) (Palumbo 2014:31).

*Simplification is evident in the verbal system and more generally in linguistic structure, **losing** certain features, especially morphological.*

L'italiano di emigrazione si presenta come ... una varietà molto simile all'italiano popolare, ...soggetta all'influenza della lingua di adstrato (*ibid*:23).

*The Italian of immigration is very similar to Italiano Popolare, subject to **adstrate influence**.*

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What is the HLVC Project?

- Large-scale project investigating variation and change in Toronto's heritage languages.
- Goals:
 - **Document and describe heritage languages**
 - To compare to a Homeland "baseline" & local English (also variable)
 - to understand changes in progress
 - **Create a corpus** available for research on a variety of topics
 - **Push variationist research beyond its monolingually-oriented core (and its majority language focus)** (Nagy & Meyerhoff 2008)
 - See **connections** between variation in different parts of the languages.
 - Provide **resources** to speakers and communities

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How do students fit into the HLVC picture?

- Approaches, tools, and courses have benefitted from the involvement of students who are members of each heritage language community, allowing a more ethnographically-informed approach – I wouldn't have been able to “get into” so many communities appropriately.
- Student community members:
 - recruit and record speakers
 - Transcribe and proofread recordings
 - Do meta-data mark-up
 - Code linguistic patterns in files used by a succession of student researchers involved in different phases of the project
 - propose variables observed in their communities
 - create heritage language resource webpages/wiki entries
- We develop, with student input, assignments and class activities related to heritage language study (see website for TBB 199, LIN 251, LIN 456, LIN 1256) using a student-oriented data server:
 - <http://individual.utoronto.ca/ngn/teaching.htm>
 - <http://corpora.chass.utoronto.ca/>

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How do students fit into the HLVC picture?

- Except Faetar: there is no overlap between “students” and “community members” so we work with non-students or non-speakers – trying to keep “calibrated” with the other languages in the project

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Contrasting demographics Toronto, 2011 Census

<u>Language</u>	<u>MT speakers</u>	<u>Ethnic Origin</u>	<u>Est. in TO</u>	<u>Speakers from</u>
Faetar	30-300	300-1000?	1950	Faeto & Celle (Puglia)
Italian	166,000	475,090	1908	Calabria

In Italy

Faetar	700	~700	(~100% also use Italian)
Calabria	~2 million	~2 million	(35% also use Calabrese)

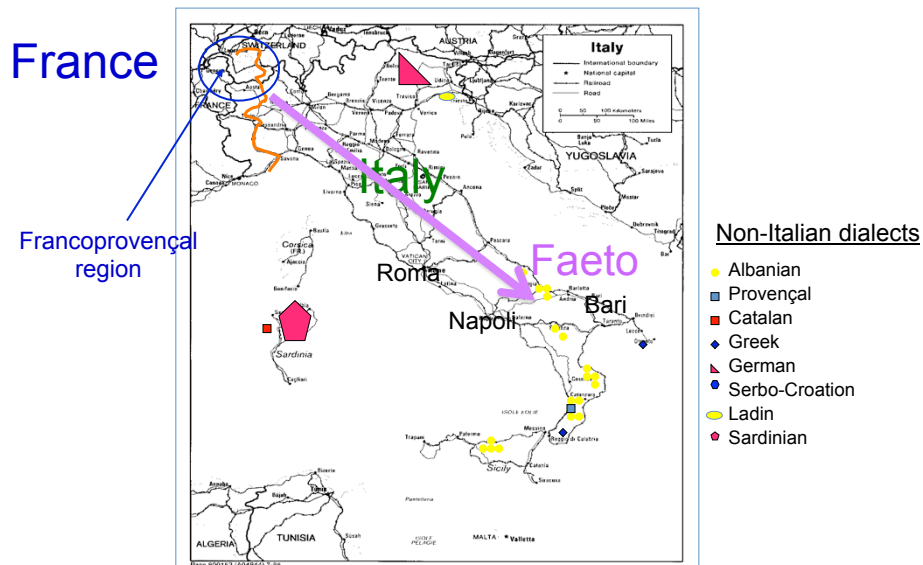
(ISTAT 2006)



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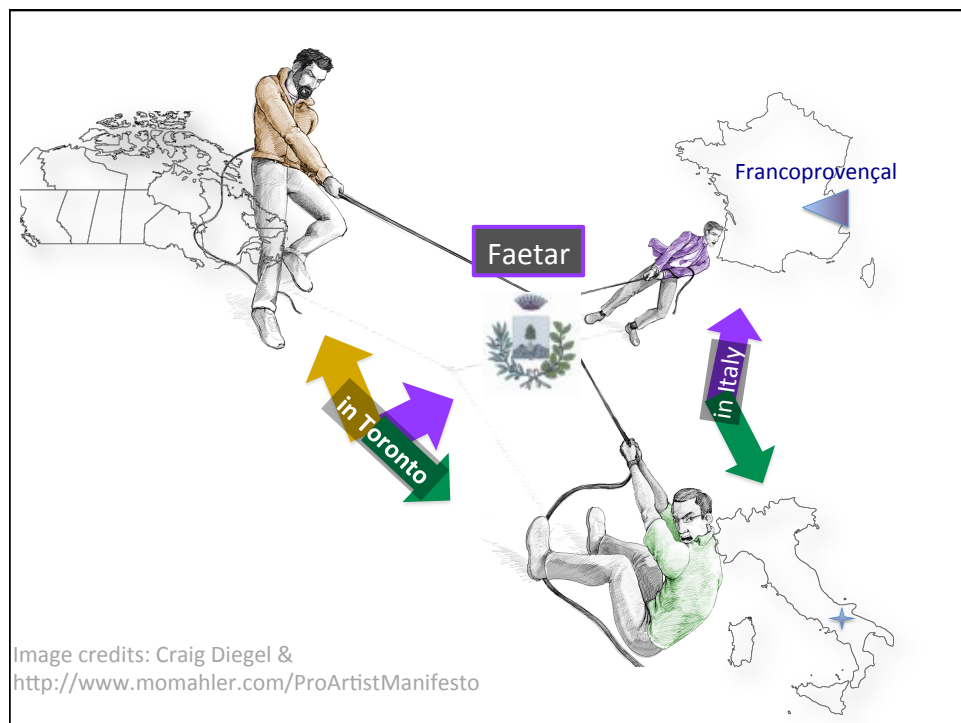
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Faetar



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Participant criteria

(Self-defined) fluent speaker of...

Italian

Faetar



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3 generations of HL speakers

Speaker of...	Generation
Italian/ Faetar	1st: born in Calabria or Faeto ; moved to Toronto after age 18; in Toronto 20+ years
	2nd: born in Toronto (or came from homeland before age 6); parents qualify as 1st generation
	3rd: born in Toronto; parents qualify as 2nd generation For Italian , but not for Faetar

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4 age groups x generation

Languages	Generation	Age
Italian/ Faetar	1st : born in homeland; moved to Toronto after age 18; in Toronto 20+ years	60+
		39-59
	2nd : born in Toronto (or came from homeland < age 6); parents qualify as 1st generation	60+
		40-59
		21-39
		<21
	3rd : born in Toronto; parents qualify as 2nd generation	60+
		40-59
		21-39
		<21

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Sex

Languages	Generation	Age	Sex
Italian/ Faetar	1st : born in homeland; moved to Toronto after age 18	60+	2 females
			2 males
		39-59	2 females
			2 males

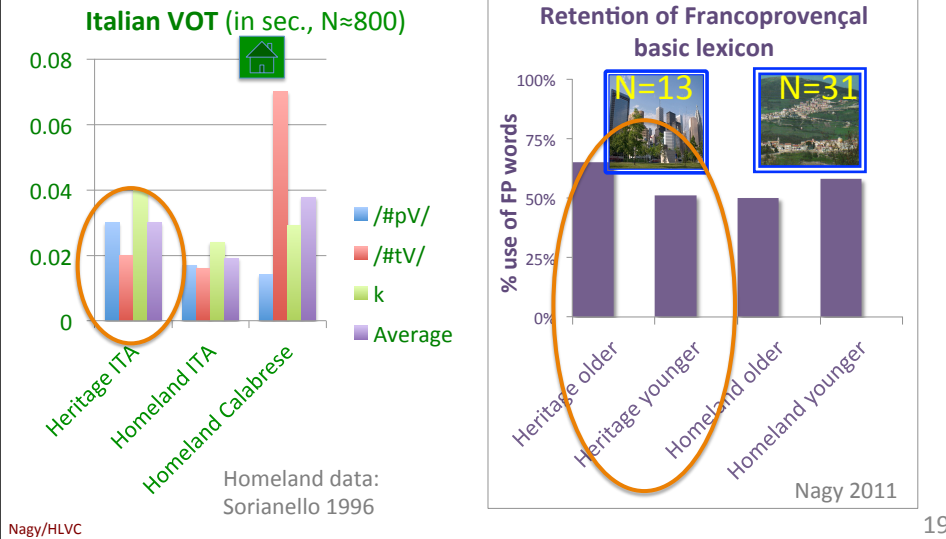
= 40 speakers per language;
320 Heritage Speakers

+ ~50 assorted Homeland recordings 

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What we see so far: Heritage = Homeland



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Variable Null Subject Presence (Pro-drop)

Italian - Canonical prodrop language

Ø Avevo 14 anni e mia moglie ce ne aveva 13.
 Ø (I) was 14 and my wife was only 13... [I1M75A]

Io ho detto "Ok, ce la faccio, io."
 I said, "OK, I'll do it." [I1M75A]



Nagy, Aghdasi, Denis, & Motut 2011

http://aromacucina.typepad.com/aroma_cucina/2007/07/

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Variable Null Subject Presence (Pro-drop)

Forms of Subject Pronoun/Clitic (Dependent variable)

none (\emptyset)

Strong pronoun

Weak pronoun or clitic

Strong + Weak pronoun

[o] / [u] Expletive pronoun

[ki] / [k i] in main clause

[mə] as subject or reflexive pronoun

Weak Forms

	Sing.	Plural
1 st	dʒə	nə
2 nd	tə	və
3 rd	i	i

Strong Forms

	Sing.	Plural
1 st	dʒi	nu(s)
2 nd	ti	vu(s)
3 rd	iʌ (ə)	is

Null Form

	Sing.	Plural
1 st	\emptyset	\emptyset
2 nd	\emptyset	\emptyset
3 rd	\emptyset	\emptyset

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Comparative Variationist Analysis

(cf. Labov 1972, Tagliamonte 2006, Walker 2010)

1. Compare rates of variant use across groups
 2. Compare constraint effects across contexts
- Linguistic, social & stylistic

Analysis by undergraduate and graduate students and colleagues:

- Yoonjung Kang
- Alexei Kochetov
- James Walker



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Establish change, and its cause

Once contact has occurred, it may not be easy to access the pre-contact variety, yet contrasting these is crucial.

(Thomason & Kaufman 1998:111)

•The **variationist approach**

- with its accumulated knowledge of synchronic patterns that often indicate change,
- augmented by contrasting speakers with greater and lesser contact with English,
 - provides a **fast-track view of language change**.

•Rather than contrasting elusive “pure” contact and non-contact varieties, we seek **gradually increasing effects on HLs correlating to gradually increasing contact with English**, to address these questions:

1. Is there variation?
2. How does it vary by community?
3. **Is there change (from Homeland)?** (Thomason 2001, Nichols 2008)
4. Is it contact-induced change? (CHECK EMPIRICALLY: Poplack & Levey 2010)

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Data collection methods

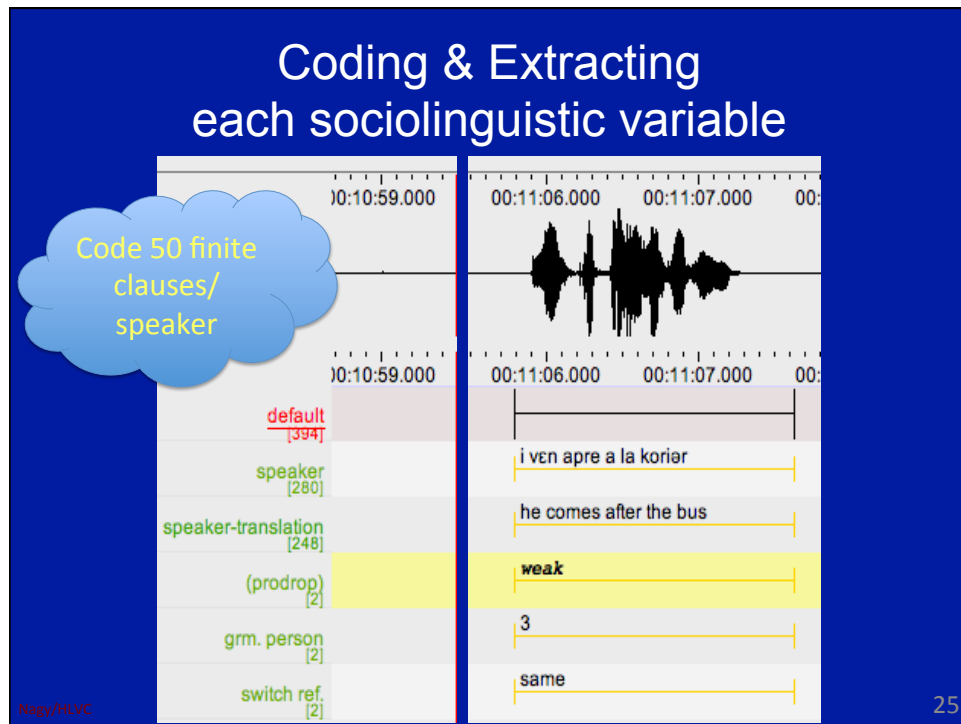
1. Sociolinguistic interview/conversation (~1 hour)
2. Picture Description Task
3. **Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire (EOQ)**




All conversations guided and recorded by native speakers in the heritage language.

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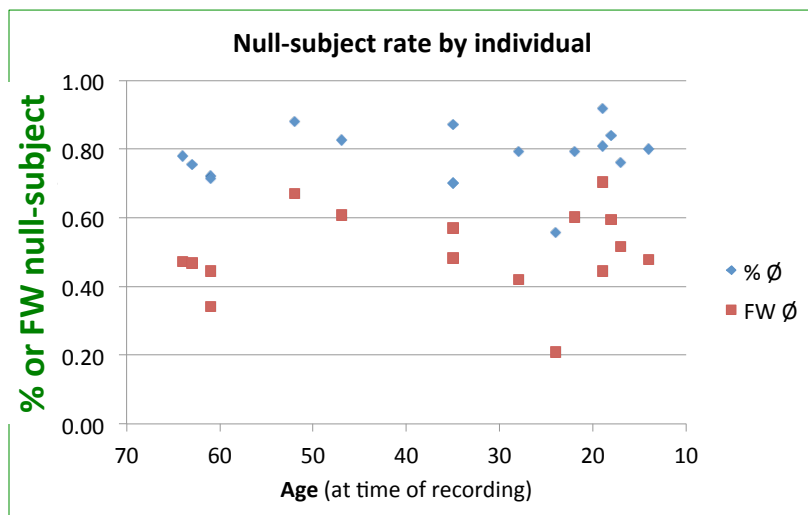


Italian Pro-drop		Heritage Italian		What about the Homeland? 	
Factor (Application = \emptyset)		Prob. \emptyset	n	Prob. \emptyset	n
Subject continuity	Same	.63	519	0.61	402
	Switch	.37	528	0.39	346
Subject Number	Plural	.63	351	0.65	265
	Singular	.37	696	0.35	483
Preceding Dir. Object	D.O.	.65	43	<i>n.s.</i>	180
	None	.35	1004		568
Tense	Past perfect	.60	261	<i>n.s.</i>	193
	Present	.46	547		432
	Past imperfect	.43	239		123
(Heritage data from Nagy & Denis, NWAV 2013)		Input = .895 N = 1,047		Input = .833 N = 748	

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Homeland Italian (N = 748)

No change in Null-subject rate

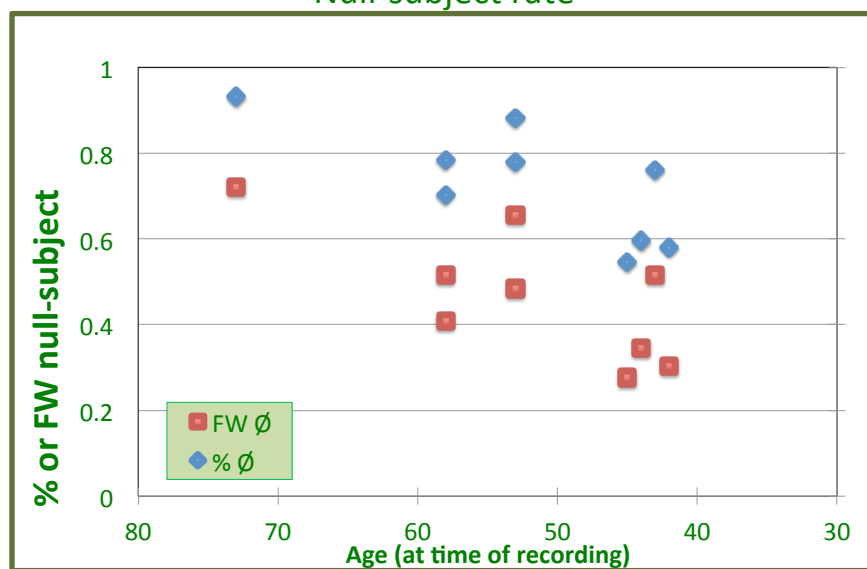


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Heritage Italian (N = 1,047)

Null-subject rate



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FAETO

Michael Iannozzi,
University of Toronto
TULCON 2015

(& Nagy & Iannozzi
2014, NWAV Chicago)



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<http://portal-lem.com/fr/langues/francoprovençal-faeto.html>
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Homeland Faetar

1,578 tokens; Input = .118
 Non-significant factors: sex, tense

Factors		Probability of Ø-subject	# tokens
Person/ <u>Number</u>	3 rd	.91	1457
	2 nd	.42	12
	1 st	.12	109
Preceding direct object	D.O.	.74	212
	None	.26	1366
Subject referent continuity	Switch	.80	935
	Same	.40	361
Age (by decade)	60+	.65	494
	41-60	.56	594
	21-40	.46	440
	11-20	.33	50

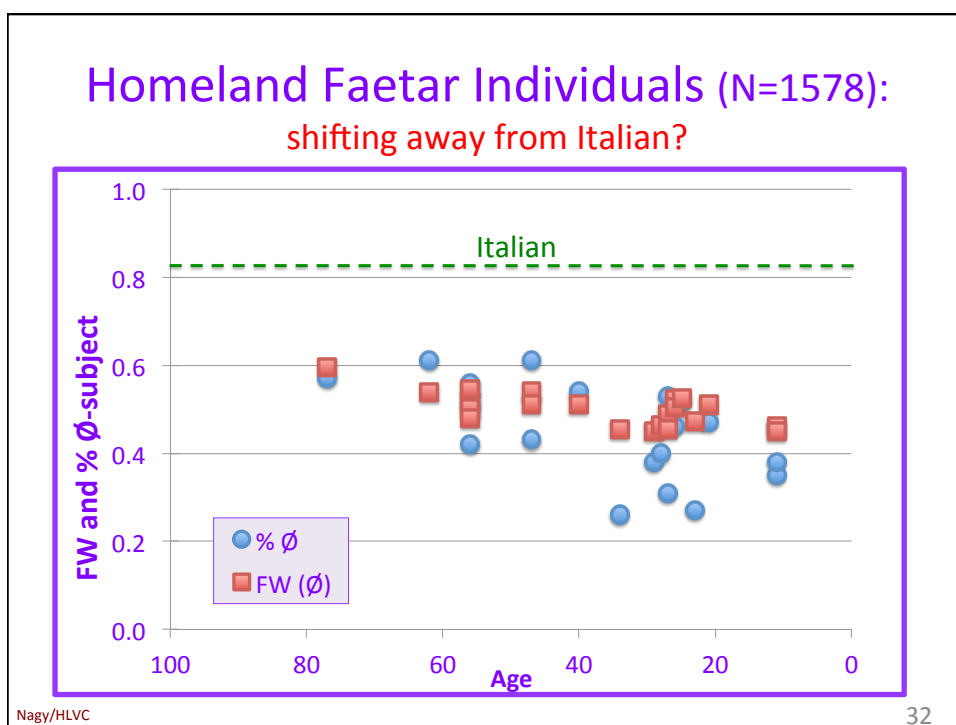
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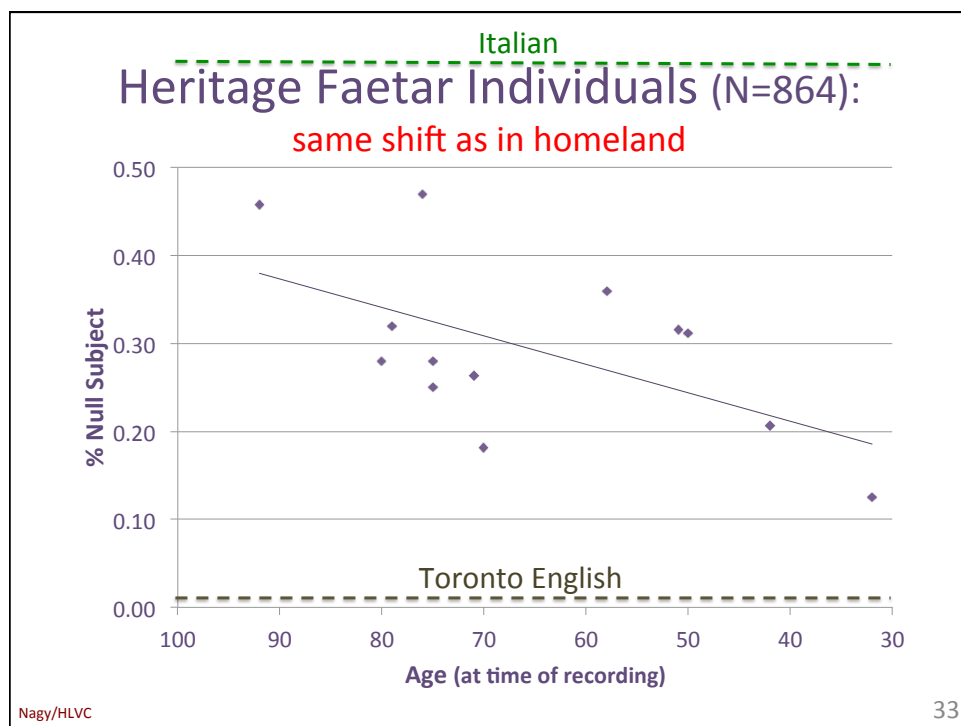
Heritage Faetar

864 tokens, Input = .194
 Non-significant factors: **Subj. continuity**, tense, **sex**, negation, **generation**


Factors		Probability of \emptyset subject	# tokens
Person/Number	3 rd	.85	485
	1 st	.31	258
	2 nd	.29	121
Preceding	D.O.	.72	145
direct object	None	.28	719
Age (by decade)	80+	.63	174
	50-79	.55	573
	30-49	.33	117

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Summary					
Effects that favour null subjects					
Effects	FP Val d'Aosta	Homeland Faetar	Heritage Faetar	Heritage ITA	English
Age	older > younger	older > younger	(older > younger)	n.s. n.s.	x
Generation			NOT generation	NOT generation	
Grammatical Person (1,2,3)	3 > 1 > 2	3 > (2 >) 1	3 > 1 > 2	1 > 3 (3 > 1)	n.s.
Grammatical Person (sg, pl)	pl > sg	n.s.	n.s.	pl > sg	n.s.
Subject continuity	x	switch > same	n.s.	same > switch	same > switch
Preceding object/reflx pronoun	mostly no	object > nothing	object > nothing	object > nothing	x
Tense	x	n.s.	n.s.	perfect > present > imperfect	perfect > imperfect ≈ present
Overall % ∅	24-85%	52%	39%	75% 79%	2%
Nagy/HLV	~3,500	1,578	943	1,047	2,188 ³⁴



Summary: in both ITALY and CANADA the tiny Faetar communities are expected to be under intense contact pressure from **ENG** and/or **ITA**; however, this does not appear to be the case.

- FAE is resisting the pulls in all directions from its FP roots, from the **ITA** in its homeland, and from its current contact with **ENG** in TORONTO (for **CONSTRAINTS**, if not **RATE**).
- Heritage FAE is very similar to Homeland: both have a slight trend toward *more overt* subjects, and similar constraint effects, suggesting a pull away from **ITA**. However this is not indicative of a pull *toward* **ENG**, because it is also occurring on a mountainside in rural Puglia (where **ENG** isn't used).
- Heritage **ITA** is more complex than Homeland, though with same \emptyset -subject rate.

Image credits: Craig Diegel &
<http://www.momahler.com/ProArtistManifesto>

Type of claims we can't support with this data

- “The loss of previously existing distinctions seems to occur more easily in social situations where speakers of different languages or dialects colonize new territories, bringing their varieties into contact...
- Simply put, dialect contact usually implies altered replication, since the structural constraints are not wholly acquired in contact between adults.”

(Fernández-Ordóñez 2012:73-4)

감사합니다 Дякую Grazie molto Спасибо 多謝 gratsia namuor:ə			
HLVC RAs:	Tonia Djogovic	Vina Law	Will Sawkiw
Cameron Abma	Joyce Fok	Kris Lee	Maksym Shkvorets
Vanessa Bertone	Paolo Frascà	Nikki Lee	Vera Richetti Smith
Ulyana Bila	Matt Gardner	Olga Levitski	Anna Shalaginova
Rosanna Calla	Julia Grasso	Samuel Lo	Konstantin Shapoval
Minji Cha	Rick Grimm	Arash Lotfi	Yi Qing Sim
Abigail Chan	Dongkeun Han	Paulina Łyskawa	Mario So Gao
Ariel Chan	Natalia Harhaj	Rosa Mastri	Vlodymyr
Karen Chan	Taisa Hewka	Timea Molnár	Sukhodolskiy
Joanna Chociej	Melania Hrycyna	Valeriya Mordvinova	Awet Tekeste
Vivien Chow	Michael Iannozzi	Francesco Muio	Letizia Tesi
Sheila Chung	Diana Kim	Jamie Oh	Josephine Tong
Tiffany Chung	Janyce Kim	Maria Parascandolo	Sarah Truong
Courtney Clinton	Iryna Kulyk	Deepam Patel	Dylan Uscher
Radu Craioveanu	Mariana Kuzela	Rita Pang	Qian Ling Wang
Marco Covi	Ann Kwon	Andrew Peters	Ka-man Wong
Naomi Cui	Alex La Gamba	Alessia Plastina	Junrui Wu
Zahid Daujee	Carmela La Rosa	Tiina Rebane	Olivia Yu
Derek Denis	Natalia Lapinskaya	Hoyeon Rim	Minyi Zhu
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