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New insights on spoken *Cocoliche*

A linguistic analysis of three samples from Argentina

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Abstract: This paper deals with three language samples taken from previously unpublished interviews with Italian migrants living in Argentina. These excerpts are particularly interesting on account of the speakers' linguistic varieties, which, to different degrees, display consistent interference phenomena between Spanish and (southern) Italian dialects. As a further point of interest, the interviews were recorded in different periods and places (1986 in Buenos Aires, 2019 in Santa Fe), as well as with speakers coming from various Italian regions (Calabria, Campania, Sicily). This offers valuable insights into the different degrees and forms of language mixing in the community of Italian migrants in Argentina. The wide variety of data collected and examined by the authors enriches our grammatical and sociolinguistic knowledge of language contact in Argentina and delves into the problem of the so-called *Cocoliche*.

Keywords: hybrid languages, language contact, *Cocoliche*, southern Italo-Romance dialects, Argentinean Spanish

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1 Introduction

Linguistic contact between Italian (dialects) and Spanish in Argentina has been the object of considerable attention from scholars. After Grossmann's (1926, 206–215) preliminary observations, remarks and investigations on the hybrid varieties spoken by Italian migrants living in the River Plate region have proliferated thanks to specialists in Ibero- and/or Italo-Romance linguistics (cf. Wagner 1949, 130; Meo Zilio 1964 [1989]; 1993a; Lavandera 1978; Fontanella de Weinberg 1987, 138–142; 1992, 251–256; Lipski 1994, 176–179; Cancellier 1996; 2001; Schmid 2005; 2008; 2015; Jones/Pountain 2013, 386–387; Lescano Franco 2022, etc.), as well as typologists and experts in language contact (cf. Hancock 1971, 515; Whinnom 1971, 97–102; Gardani 2024). These varieties have usually been classified under the generic label of *Cocoliche*, a term borrowed from the Argentinean theatre tradition and popular literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in which it refers to an Italo-Spanish hybrid language, in many cases with a caricatural function (cf. Engels 2012; Cristelli, in print). Henceforth, we shall distinguish between *literary Cocoliche* (a possibly stereotyped and therefore not entirely reliable language) and *spoken Cocoliche*, which refers to the contact varieties used in daily life by Italian migrants.¹

Despite the large number of studies on *Cocoliche*, relatively few non-literary sources have been published to date. To the best of our knowledge,² transcriptions of interviews were provided only by Meo Zilio (1993a, 101–102), Lavandera (1978, 397–398), Asencio (1995), Falzone (2010, 49–52), and Schmid (2015, 257–258). The first published a brief excerpt of an interview with an Apulian informant (Pompeo Ortizio, born in Molfetta in 1904 and settled in Argentina in 1924), while the second shared some materials (two short texts and three sentences) from “more than 50 hours recorded by 50 first-generation Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires” (Lavandera 1978, 396) – an impressive amount of data, which unfortunately does not seem to have been preserved after the scholar passed away in 1998.³ Asencio (1995) ana-

1 German scholars refer to the latter as *Alltagssprachliches Cocoliche* or *Alltagscocoliche* (cf. Kailuweit 2004; Engels 2012); Cara-Walker (1987: 50) makes a distinction between *Cocoliche* and *mock Cocoliche*. Literary *Cocoliche* is also called *Cocoliche escénico* ('stage *Cocoliche*'), because most of the works written in this variety are plays belonging to the genres of the *Sainete* and the *Grotesco criollo*. Novels and poems in *Cocoliche* were also very successful. From a dialectological point of view, this artificial variety could be characterised by mixing Spanish either with Ligurian or southern Italian dialects (historically, the term *Cocoliche* originates from the second case), thus translating into literature the actual heterogeneity of the Italian community living in Argentina and Uruguay (cf. fn. 10).

2 Note that there are some more sources on *Cocoliche* that we were unable to consult due to their limited availability (e.g. Rosell 1970 and several contributions by G. Barrios, in particular Barrios 2013).

3 We owe this information to Dr. Salvio Martín Menéndez (Universidad de Buenos Aires).

lysed the syntax of relative clauses giving some examples from a *corpus* of *Cocoliche* spoken in Uruguay.⁴ As for Falzone's (2010) master thesis, it transcribes only a few contact words and sentences taken from interviews with first-generation migrants in Buenos Aires; the recordings of these interviews have not been further studied, although Schmid (2015, 257–258) transcribed and analysed a short passage from them.

More attention has been paid to letters (cf. Giunchi 1986, 132–133; Palermo 1990; Schmid 2005, 130–131; 2008, 323–324; 2015, 256–257; Salvatore 2017). Such documents are of great linguistic interest, yet they display a different kind of hybrid language. Non-literary written texts, by the very fact of being written, are likely to reflect the dialectal Italo-Romance component to a lesser degree than spoken interviews.

Against this backdrop, we aim to contribute to the topic by publishing three samples taken from interviews carried out in 1986 (Buenos Aires) and in 2019 (Santa Fe). Despite the diachronic and diatopic differences, we believe that each text is of remarkable value for documenting spoken interference between Ibero- and Italo-Romance. As a matter of added interest, all interviews were conducted with southern Italian speakers, which will in some cases lead to more readily comparable linguistic observations.⁵

After a brief contextualisation (§2), we will outline the edition criteria and then move on to the transcription and analysis of each sample (§3). The linguistic commentary, rather than dwelling on theoretical aspects, will address each level of analysis with the purpose of a qualitative discussion of single contact phenomena. A short conclusion (§4) will frame our results within a more general approach to language contact.

4 Elizaincín et al. (1987) also provide some short examples from interviews with Italian migrants living in Montevideo, but they explicitly state that their analysis does not take into account the outputs provided by *Cocoliche* informants.

5 It should be recalled that Meo Zilio (1964 [1989], 211) considered southern Italian migrants more interesting for the investigation of *Cocoliche* (“los meridionales presentan, para el lingüista que quiera estudiar el cocoliche, un terreno de observación e interés mucho más fecundo que los septentrionales”; ‘for the linguist who wants to study *Cocoliche*, southern migrants present a much more fertile field of research and interest than northerners’). This belief was based on the observation of different structural distances between Spanish and northern Italian dialects on the one hand and Spanish and central-southern Italian dialects on the other.

2 Italian migrants in Argentina and the nature of *Cocoliche*

2.1 Short overview on the Italian migration to Argentina

As recalled by Bagna (2011, 312), “l’Argentina si colloca al secondo posto (dopo gli Stati Uniti) tra i Paesi che nel periodo 1876–1990 hanno accolto il maggior numero di italiani nelle Americhe”.⁶ Scholars agree on identifying different phases of this large migration flow, each of them characterised by groups of speakers of different origins and social backgrounds. There is not much information about the type and origin of the migrants from Italy in the very first period (from the end of the 18th century to the first decades of the 19th century), although we know that there was a consistent group of Ligurian migrants, mainly in Buenos Aires and surroundings (cf. Nascimbene 1987, 209; cf. also Toso 2011). After that, the following migration waves can be identified:

“alla fine dell’Ottocento/inizio Novecento un’ondata emigratoria, più consistente di quella che era già cominciata intorno al 1830, con una prevalenza di soggetti provenienti dall’Italia settentrionale (piemontesi, liguri, lombardi, veneti, friulani) [...], con il 1913 come anno di punta [...], quando è già cominciata la massiccia immigrazione dall’Italia meridionale (campani, calabresi, siciliani) in concomitanza con flussi di ritorno di una parte degli emigrati; modesti flussi nel periodo tra le due guerre, a causa della recessione economica internazionale [...]; flussi nel secondo dopoguerra e anche rientri. Dopo il 1945 l’emigrazione è nettamente meridionale, da Calabria, Campania, Abruzzo, Molise, Sicilia” (Bagna 2011, 312–313).⁷

The massive impact of Italian migration had several linguistic consequences: not only the emergence of a hybrid language such as *Cocoliche*, but also the introduction of Italian dialects in different parts of Argentina and the survival (sometimes up until the present day) of these varieties among heritage speakers.⁸

6 ‘Argentina ranks second (after the United States) among the countries that received the largest number of Italians in the Americas in the period 1876–1990’.

7 ‘An emigration wave at the end of the 19th century/in the early 20th century, more consistent than the one that had already begun around 1830, with a prevalence of people from northern Italy (Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli) [...], with 1913 as the peak year [...], when massive immigration from southern Italy had already begun (Campanians, Calabrians, Sicilians) in concomitance with return flows of a part of the emigrants; [there were] modest flows in the period between the wars, due to the international economic recession [...]; flows and returns after World War II. After 1945 emigration is markedly southern, from Calabria, Campania, Abruzzo, Molise, Sicily’. An interesting profile of Italian pre- and post-World War II migrants has been outlined by Meo Zilio (1964 [1989], 209–211).

8 See Meo Zilio (1993b; 2002) and the outputs of the *Microcontact* project (§3.2). For the migration of Genoese speakers to Argentina cf. Toso (2007; 2011); for Friulian cf. Rizzolatti (2007), Finco (2014), and

Today it is possible to find both first-generation migrants still living in Argentina (predictably enough, they usually belong to the last wave: 1945–1955) and people born in Argentina of Italian heritage. The latter often share a tendency to abandon their (grand)parents' language (typically, an IR dialect); normally this already happens within the second generation. That is why, rather than the uninterrupted continuation of overseas Italo-Romance varieties, the researcher observes the 'return' of new generations to their family dialect (rarely) or to Italian (more frequently) through language courses, associations (such as the Società Dante Alighieri), media, etc.

2.2 Defining spoken *Cocoliche*

Cocoliche has been variously defined over time.⁹ Scholars have often referred to it as a *mixed* or *undifferentiated language* (cf. especially Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], who draws a boundary between *Hispanised Italian*, *Italianised Spanish*, and *Cocoliche* 'sensu stricto').¹⁰ Lavandera (1978), who examined the relationship between *Cocoliche* and Rioplatense Spanish from a sociolinguistic point of view, described the former as a *reduced* or *underdeveloped* variety of the latter (the interpretation is based on the concept of *broken language* in the sense of Ferguson/DeBose 1977). The difference between *Cocoliche* and pidgins has often been emphasised: Whinnom (1971, 97), while rejecting the interpretation of *Cocoliche* as a pidgin (it would, at best, be the result of an *incomplete* or *proto-pidginisation*), suggested "to regard this imperfect code-switching as a case of 'secondary hybridization' [...]. *Cocoliche* [...] was an open system which had, theoretically, every grade of a finite but huge number of series of *continua* ranging from (usually sub-standard) Italian to non-native *porteño* Spanish".¹¹ In the same volume, Hancock (1971, 515) spoke of "an Italianized

Iliescu/Melchior (2015); for Piedmontese cf. among others Goria (2015; 2021; 2023) and Cerruti/Goria (2021), as well as the website of the *PILAR* project (University of Turin): <<https://www.pilar.unito.it/english/the-project>> [last access: March 8th, 2025].

⁹ In this section, we provide an overview of some definitions without offering an exhaustive list. Besides Veith's review (cf. below), a summary table of different terminological proposals has been presented by Kailuweit (2004, 53), a.o.

¹⁰ Meo Zilio (1964 [1989], 247 fn. 126) refers to *Cocoliche* 'sensu stricto' also using the term "cocoliche integral". According to him, a further distinction, based on the migrants' regional origin, should be made between *southern*, *central* and *northern Cocoliche*. On the concept of *mixed language* within contact linguistics, see Berruto (2006), Meakins (2013), and Velupillai (2015).

¹¹ Lipski (1994, 177) also refers to the notion of *continuum*: "the (somewhat derogatory) term *cocoliche* [...] refers to a hybrid Italo-Spanish speech used by first-generation Italian immigrants [...]. Many people came to believe that *cocoliche* existed only in the imagination of comic authors and actors, but

Spanish” that “[m]ay be rudimentarily pidginized”. More recently, Cancellier (1996; 2001) stressed that *Cocoliche* cannot be regarded as jargon, dialect, emergency language (pidgin), or creole;¹² this *transitional mixed language* should, rather, be described as a kind of *broken language* (in accordance with Lavandera’s interpretation) or *pseudo-sabir* (in the sense of Perego 1968). Veith (2008, 38–41) reviewed some of the previous definitions concluding that *Cocoliche* should be regarded as a kind of *Übergangsvarietät* or *Übergangssprache* (*transitional language*).¹³

According to our sources (cf. e.g. fn. 11) spoken *Cocoliche* was used by first-generation migrants from Italy. Its descriptions suggest that it might be considered as a non-homogeneous language variety (“este carácter oscilante del *cocoliche* [...] determina la existencia de *tantos cocoliches como hablantes*”, Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], 209 [italics in text]).¹⁴ More precisely, *Cocoliche* has two main characteristics: it is a Spanish variety with a considerable number of transfer phenomena from the L1, and, strikingly, its speakers are apparently able to speak only this variety, giving the impression that their native language suffered such a degree of attrition¹⁵ that they “forgot” it.¹⁶

in reality a stable and consistent continuum of (dialectal) Italian-influenced Spanish was spoken for several decades in the River Plate region”.

12 A similar remark is found in Meo Zilio (1964 [1989], 207–208 ft. 2); see Veith (2008, 39–40) for other opinions on the inclusion of *Cocoliche* into the pidgin or creole group.

13 “Es wäre jedoch unzutreffend, das *Cocoliche* pauschal als Interimsprache (Lernervarietät) zu bezeichnen, da die Italiener nicht das Spanische bewusst als Zweitsprache erlernten, sondern ohne die bei Interimsprachen gegebene innere Systematik unbewusst vom italienischem zum spanischem Pol drifteten und hierbei ihre eigentliche Erstsprache verloren” (Veith 2008, 41; ‘It would be inaccurate to define *Cocoliche* as an interlanguage *tout court* (*Lernervarietät*), because Italians did not learn Spanish consciously as L2. In fact, they unconsciously drifted from the Italian to the Spanish pole without the internal systematicity that is typical of interlanguages, and in doing so they lost their original L1’).

14 ‘This fluctuating character of *Cocoliche* [...] determines the existence of *as many Cocoliches as there are speakers*’.

15 Schmid/Köpke (2017, 637–638) define attrition as follows: “We refer to any of the phenomena that arise in the native language of a sequential bilingual as the consequence of the co-activation of languages, crosslinguistic transfer or disuse, at any stage of second language (L2) development and use, as language attrition. First language (L1) attrition is therefore considered to be the process by which (a) pre-existing linguistic knowledge becomes less accessible or is modified to some extent as a result of the acquisition of a new language, and (b) L1 production, processing or comprehension are affected by the presence of this other language”. See references cited therein for more information about this process. On the effect of *language attrition* in *Cocoliche* see Schmid (2005, 131; 2008, 324; 2015, 258).

16 This was already pointed out by Meo Zilio (1964 [1989], 207–208): “Esta lengua indiferenciada no se coloca formalmente como un tercer idioma al lado del español y el italiano [...], justamente porque el hablante no tiene conciencia de emplear una lengua distinta del italiano o del español” (‘formally, this undifferentiated language should not be conceived as a third language besides Spanish and Italian [...], for the very reason that its speakers are not aware that they its speaking a language that is distinct from Italian or Spanish’).

The first property makes *Cocoliche* similar to a fossilised interlanguage,¹⁷ with which it shares the following properties:

- most *Cocoliche* speakers moved to Argentina when they were adults, thus when they had surpassed the critical period;¹⁸
- *Cocoliche* is spoken by first-generation migrants only, i.e. it is not transmitted from the parents to their children like creole languages;
- as noted above, although it has some recurring properties, *Cocoliche* varies from one speaker to another in accordance with their dialectal L1 (depending on their geographical origin) and with its distance from the target grammar (although all *Cocoliche* speakers are very far from possessing a high proficiency in Spanish);
- since *Cocoliche* speakers often lived in Argentina for decades, at some point their acquisition process of Spanish must have stopped (otherwise, they would have reached a native-like competence of Spanish). This caused the fossilisation of *Cocoliche*.¹⁹

As far as the second property of *Cocoliche* is concerned, we suggest that it is due to the interplay of two factors: the development of a fossilised interlanguage, as mentioned above, and the extreme attrition process of the L1 of *Cocoliche* speakers. This led to the result that the two varieties, a scarcely developed Spanish grammar and a highly attrited Italo-Romance grammar, became practically indistinguishable, and eventually merged into a unique, single variety.²⁰ This outcome was favoured by the structural closeness between Spanish and Italo-Romance varieties. Fig. 1 exemplifies this process.

¹⁷ According to Selinker (1972, 214), an interlanguage is “a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a T[target] L[language] norm”. Interlanguages can fossilise at any stage of development. In the data we present in this article, fossilisation seems to have started at a very low level of acquisition of the target language.

¹⁸ Starting from Penfield/Roberts (1959) and Lenneberg (1967), many linguists believe that there is a critical period (or a series of critical periods, one for each language modules) within which it is possible to reach a native competence in a language. After this point, it is almost impossible to reach a full competence (see also Chomsky 1965).

¹⁹ On *Cocoliche* as a fossilised *broken language*, see Lavandera (1978, 394–395).

²⁰ See Meo Zilio (1964 [1989], 106).

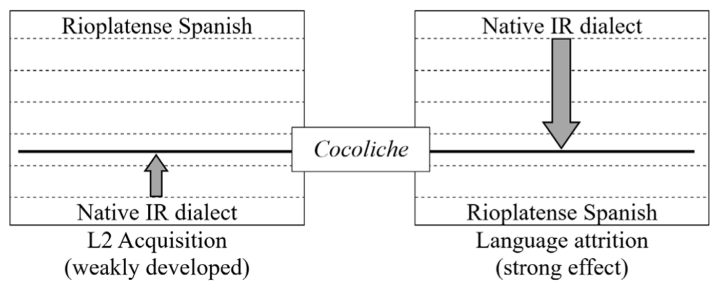


Fig. 1: The processes of interlanguage fossilisation (on the left) and L1 attrition (on the right) that led to the emergence of *Cocoliche*.

3 Three unpublished sources for the study of Italo-Argentinean hybrid languages

We now turn to our samples. Each excerpt is phonetically transcribed with IPA. Transcriptions will render all the facts that are significant from the point of view of linguistic investigation, yet they should not be regarded as extremely narrow, since an exhaustive phonetic analysis is not the main purpose of this paper (vowel length, which does not play a relevant role for our purposes, will be omitted). To account for conversational facts, we will make use of the following symbols (partly taken from Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson 1974):

Tab. 1

(a), (aba)	sound/sequence of uncertain interpretation
((laughing))	non-verbal acts
(.), (0.5)	pause (duration is indicated from 0.5 sec onwards)
ma+, ma++	final vowel lengthening
per-	word/speech interruption
=	immediate change of turn
//	overlapping with the following turn
?	interrogative intonation
<...>	indistinct meaningless sounds

Each text has been arbitrarily divided into smaller paragraphs ([1], [2], [3], etc.) so that it is easier to identify the forms mentioned in the linguistic commentary (where every example is followed by the number of paragraph(s) in which it occurs). An

English translation is provided for each sample to help readers who are interested in language contact but unfamiliar with Italo- or Ibero-Romance.²¹

3.1 A text from Giovanni Meo Zilio's interviews in La Boca (Buenos Aires, 1986)

The *Archivio di Documentazione e Ricerca sull'Emigrazione Veneta* (ADREV, part of the *Archivio di fonti orali* hosted by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice) gathers several photographs and audio recordings produced by Giovanni Meo Zilio during his linguistic investigations in Latin America (cf. Cancellier 2015, 26–30). The history and actual conditions of this archive are well described both by Milani (2021–2022) and the university website.²²

Among the ADREV audio materials there is a particularly interesting interview. It is part of track CN08CT04AFD01²³ and was carried out in Buenos Aires in 1986, more precisely in the *barrio* of La Boca (one of the most Italianised neighborhoods of the city, with a strong Genoese component, cf. Toso 2011). The informant, whose biographical information is only known from the interview itself, is a male Calabrese speaker who had been born in Casignana (in the province of Reggio Calabria) in 1903 and was therefore 83 years old at the time of the interview. According to what he says, he had arrived in Argentina when he was 24/25 years old (1927/1928), which makes his story very similar to that of the Apulian speaker whose interview was transcribed and published by Meo Zilio in 1993 (cf. §1).²⁴

After a relatively long spontaneous stretch of speech (16'39–18'16 of the entire track), presumably triggered (as we do not have this part of the interview) by a question about his last visit to Calabria, the speaker answers several questions about his migration experience and Argentinean life, with special reference to his previous jobs. Unfortunately, the interview ends after less than four minutes (20'28)

²¹ We would like to point out that the translated texts are not glosses and that they do not precisely mirror every characteristic of the original source.

²² See the following link: <<https://pric.unive.it/progetti/archivio-fonti-orali/fondi-sonori>> [last access: March 8th, 2025]. On the ADREV sound materials cf. also Chistè (2013–2014). We are thankful to Professor Alessandro Casellato (scientific head of the *Archivio di fonti orali*) for having brought Milani's and Chistè's master's theses to our attention.

²³ Before ripping, the track was materially stored on CD nr. 8; this latter was created in 2001 from the original audio tape (Box 8, Tape 4, side A).

²⁴ Meo Zilio (1993b, 487–488 ft. 41) stated that he had conducted three investigations in La Boca (in 1968, 1980 and 1986 respectively) and listed the names of his principal informants, among whom our speaker is not included.

due to an interruption by a third person which led Meo Zilio to stop the recording. After this interruption, the track suddenly changes context and informant.

The quality of the recording is not completely satisfactory since the interview was conducted outdoors (as suggested by some background noises) with a portable tape recorder. Nonetheless, as will be soon clear, difficulties in comprehension mainly relate to single sounds/words and do not substantially affect the transcription. On the other hand, it is sometimes difficult to grasp the meaning, both because of the lack of information about the context and the somewhat confusing discourse planning of the speaker himself.

3.1.1 Transcription

Transcription criteria were presented in §3. Given the turn-taking nature of the conversation between Meo Zilio and the speaker, we shall specify whether a turn is taken by the former or the latter (INT = interviewer; INF = informant; in addition, [?] is used for an unknown person who briefly takes part in the conversation). Whenever the meaning of a sentence is uncertain, the English translation is followed by a question mark and placed inside round brackets.²⁵

INF: [16'39] [1] in ka'laβrja (1.4) eh'tuβe 'la+ 'ora
'ðos 'año nel me+ 'mese ðe se't:embre (0.7)
el 'kinse ðe se't:embre (.) eh'tuβe 'trenta
'set:e 'ðia (1)

[2] pe'ro 'fw(i) dʒiri'ando 'to^ðo lo popu'lito
'para a'ja pa'k:e+ la 'ika ðe (me) si'nora (.)
ka'nufe 'mutʃo (.)

[3] ke 'le 'βa+ 'toðo los 'año 'βa a pase'are
nord a'merika i'talja 'hpaja (0.5) porto'riko
(0.8) pa 'toðo 'lao (.) l ale'manja (0.5) 'e++
(1.3) ŋ 'kuβa (.)

[4] 'ed:a 'βa pa 'toðo 'lao e s- ka'nufe 'toðo (.)
(e) me dʒe'βo kon 'e(d:)a (1) <...> 'stumo
'trenta 'set:e 'ðia (0.8)

[1] In Calabria. I was there two years ago, in September, on the fifteenth of September. I stayed there thirty-seven days.

[2] But I roamed all over the village(s) there because (my wife's daughter?) knows a lot (of people?),

[3] because she travels every year to North America, Italy, Spain, Puerto Rico, everywhere, to Germany, and Cuba.

[4] She travels everywhere and she knows a lot (of people?). And she took me with her. She stayed thirty-seven days,

²⁵ Meo Zilio's sentences (in italics) will not be phonetically transcribed as they are not interesting from a linguistic point of view (this also implies that the text will not render the scholar's Rioplatense pronunciation of Spanish, e.g. *llama* = ['ʒama]). After the very first two words, someone (probably Meo Zilio) utters a short, barely audible sentence that we leave out of the transcription (*Calabria* seems to be repeated twice, but it is impossible to understand more than that).

[5] i a'i ɣra'βam:ə 'ante ðe sa'lire 'kwando
ðe'kam:ə (0.7) 'toða la fa'mija i+ (1.4) un
'kosɔ (0.5) un 'diskɔ (0.8)

[6] i 'si es'tumo (1) u'niti 'muʃo a'i (.) por'ke
'toða la ma'ɲana me βe'nian a βus'kar i me
ðe'βaβan a ɟiri'ar 'toðo il 'kampɔ (0.5)

[7] a'onde 'ɟo la^{βu}raβa 'kwando es'taβa
a'ɟ:a a'onde (.) te'niamo il 'kampɔ nu'sotri
(0.5) 'toðo a'i (0.8) ka'nuʃu 'toðo (.) 'toðo (1)

[8] 'klaro ke 'uno no ri'korða 'ma pa'k:e 'ora
kam'bo 'muʃo i'talja (1)

[9] 'jo no me ri'korðaβa 'ma per- me per'ði
ðe βol'βer a mi 'kasa (1.4) 'kise sa'lire 'solo
'kwando+ (0.5) 'kise βol'βer pa 'kasa no me
ri'korðaβa 'ma^h (0.8)

[10] por'ke 'ora 'aj 'toða+ (1) 'kaɟas (.)
ba'rdata 'toðo (0.5) 'kaɟa 'antʃa ti'raro la
'kasa ke 'erano ɟa u'niti le i+ (.) 'pero 'antʃo (.)

[11] 'toðo 'βan:o kui 'kotʃe 'a^hta nej 'kampɔ
'ora (.) 'ante no ko um 'bur:o (po'te^an^o) 'iri
(0.5) 'ora 'βan:o kui 'kotʃe 'ahta 'entre el
'kampɔ (laughing) (0.8) si+ (0.5)

[12] a'ora 'hta 'mui 'lindo i'talja 'mui 'lindo
(1) 'ɟo se te'nia 'meno 'aɲo (0.5) (i es) te'nia
'arɣo 'la me 'iβa (2) 'pero a 'esta e'ta 'ke 'voj a
a'ser

INT: ¿cuántos años tiene usted? =

INF: [13] = o'ʃenta 'tre

INT: ¿cuántos?

INF: [14] o'ʃenta 'tre

INT: y cómo se llama =

INF: [15] = el 'kinse ðe++ il 'sinɟo ðe+ se't:jembre
lo kum'pli

INT: ¿cómo se llama usted?

INF: [16] r[-] k[-]

INT: ¿y en qué año nació?

INF: [17] en nove'fento 'treⁱ

INT: ¿en dónde nació?

INF: [18] en eu'ropa? (0.3) // en i'talja (0.5)
kasi'ɲana pro'βinʃa ðe 'reɟu ka'laβrja

[5] and there we recorded, before we left,
when we arrived, all the family, in such a
thing... I mean a disk.

[6] So, yes, we were very united there, because
every morning they came searching for me
and they took me wandering around the
countryside,

[7] where I worked when I was there, where
we had our land, (everything/everyone?)
there, I know (everything/everyone?).

[8] Of course, one doesn't remember anymore,
it's like that because Italy has changed a lot.

[9] I couldn't remember anymore, I lost myself
when I wanted to go back home, I wanted to go
out only when... I wanted to go home, I
couldn't remember anymore.

[10] This is because now roads are all walled,
they are wide roads. They tore down the
house(s) (as they were already united... but
wide?).

[11] Now everyone drives even inside the
fields. Before, they couldn't go there even with
a donkey! Now they drive even inside the
fields, yes.

[12] Now it's very beautiful in Italy. Me, if I
were younger and if I had something there, I'd
go, but at this age what do you want to do?

How old are you?

[13] Eighty-three.

How many?

[14] Eighty-three.

And what's your name

[15] On the fifteenth of... my birthday was on
the fifth of September.

What's your name?

[16] R[-] C[-].

When were you born?

[17] In 1903.

Where were you born?

[18] In Europe? In Italy, in Casignana, in the
province of Reggio Calabria.

- INT: *¿en qué parte?*
¿y a qué edad vino a América?
- INF: [19] te'nia+ 'bente 'kwatro 'bente 'sinjo 'año
- INT: *¿y había estudiado usted en Italia, había hecho la escuela?*
- INF: [20] 'no+ no 'fwe a la // es'kwela 'no 'no
- INT: *nada, no fue a la escuela*
- INF: [21] al 'kampo (.) traβa'kare 'kampo (laughs)
- INT: *aaah...*
- INF: [22] 'se+
- INT: *trabajar el campo*
- INF: [23] 'e++
- INT: *aaah...*
- INF: [24] 'kwando 'jo 'βine 'para a'ka βi'sjente te'nia un 'año
- INT: *cuando vino Vicente =*
- INF: [25] = 'kwando 'dʒo 'βine =
- INT: = *aaah, c- =*
- INF: [26] = lo ðe'ke ðe un 'año
- INT: *el hijo tenía un año*
- INF: [27] e+ la 'ʃika te'nia (0.7) 'mese (.) 'bente+ (.) 'bente e 'piko 'ðia
- INT: *¿qué trabajo hizo usted aquí?*
- INF: [28] 'jo 'sempre (nel) friyu'rifako (0.5) 'kam:ara friyu'rifika (1) 'trenta 'set:e 'año (1) ðe 'notʃe 'sjempre (1.7) e ðe 'ðia traβa'kaβa al 'otro 'lao
- INT: *¿dónde?*
- INF: [29] eh'tuβe 'pwesto ðe+ pes'kato (0.8) ^htuβe 'pwesto+ a la++ de <...> ven'dia (del) re'parto 'leʃe ku'kar:a ka'βajo (0.7) <...> (laughing)
- [30] ven'dia 'esa 'krema ðe lo^h ku'ðio ke 'koməno 'kwando 'asəno la 'fjesta 'esa 'ayrja
- INT: (laughs) *¿qué es esta crema de los judíos?*
- INF: [31] i 'si+ // 'e 'una 'krema
- INT: *¿qué crema es?*
- INF: [32] 'e 'una 'krema 'si ke la 'koməno <...> 'solo ke 'e 'ayrja

- Where?*
How old were you when you came to America?
- [19] I was twenty-four, twenty-five years old.
And had you studied in Italy? Had you been to school?
- [20] No, I didn't go to school, no, no.
No, you didn't go to school.
- [21] In the fields, working in the fields.
- Aaah...*
- [22] Yes.
Working in the fields.
- [23] Eh...
- Aaah...*
- [24] When I came here Vicente was one year old.
When Vicente came...
- [25] When I came...
- Aaah...*
- [26] I left him when he was one year old.
Your son was one year old.
- [27] And the daughter was twenty months and some days old.
What kind of work did you do here?
- [28] I always worked in the fridge, in cold chamber. I worked thirty-seven years, always at night, and during the day I worked on the other side.
- Where?*
- [29] I worked (selling?) fish, I worked ... I sold ... in the milk, (... horse?) section.
- [30] I sold this cream that the jews eat when they are having the feast(s), this sour cream.
What's this cream of the jews?
- [31] Well yes, it's a cream.
What kind of cream is it?
- [32] It's a cream, yes, that they eat, but it's sour.

INT: ¿*agria*?

INF: [33] 'ayrja (1.7) a'renge (0.5) pe'p:ino (0.5) sa'late 'toðo 'eso ke+ 'kwando 'asəno 'fjesta 'eso se kon'suma 'mufo a'i (0.8) (e re'parte ðe 'ese)

[34] (da'p:o) es'tuβe ðe se'reno a'i ku su er 'mano (0.8) a'ja (e 'sta) liberta'ðor es- kin'tero

[?]: ¿*con mi hermano*?

INF: [35] 'klaro

[?]: *yo me acuerdo*

INF: [36] ^{eh}tuβe+ a'i ^{eh}tuβe (1) 'kasi (.) 'ofo 'noβe 'año (1) '(s)i (1) i+ ðeh'pwe (.) 'ante eh'tuβe a 'otro 'lao la 'kasa (tran'tia ka) ri:'oka e 'san 'gwan (0.8) 'otro 'do 'tres 'año (0.5)

[37] 'dopo me kuβi'le+ (0.7) e traβa'kaβa ðe 'ðia e ðe 'nofɛ (0.5) e te'nia ofi'tfina ðe 'βindita ðe 'kasa ku 'otro marki'džero (0.8) 'βendita ðe 'kasa te'r:eno lo ke 'pweð(e) (0.3) 'esto 'oj toða'βia

INT: ¿*todavía trabaja*?

INF: [38] 'sɨ+ 'sɨ++ [20'28]

Sour?

[33] Sour. Herrings, cucumbers, salads, this sort of things that they eat a lot when they're having a feast... (the section of these things?).

[34] Then I worked as a guard there, with his brother, there at [Avenida del] Libertador, [Avenida Lidoro J.] Quinteros.

With my brother?

[35] Sure.

I remember that.

[36] I was employed there... I was employed almost eight, nine years, yes. And then I was first employed on the other side, (the house ... ?), La Rioja and [Avenida] San Juan... another two, three years.

[37] Then I retired. And I worked day and night, and I had (an estate agency/estate agencies?) with another (?): sale of houses, land plots, whatever. This until today.

You still work?

[38] Yes, yes.

3.1.2 Linguistic analysis

The text displays features that are to be ascribed to the Rioplatense variety of Spanish learned by the informant. These are the neutralisation of the opposition /θ/ ~ /s/ in favour of the latter (*seseo*, cf. Donni de Mirande 1996, 213), the loss of intervocalic [ð] ([a'onde] 7 bis, [lao] 3, 4, 28, 36, cf. Lipski 1994, 168–169; Fontanella de Weinberg 2004, 50), and the aspiration of preconsonantic /s/ ([a^hta] 11, [ahta] 11, [ðeh'pwe] 36, [eh'tuβe] 1 bis, 29, [h'tuβe] 29, [^{eh}tuβe] 36 bis, [hpaɲa] 3, [hta] 12, [lo^h ku'ðio] 29, cf. Lipski 1994, 169–170; Donni de Mirande 1996, 213–214; see Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], 212; Barrios 1999; Schmid 2015, 257–258 for the presence of this feature among Italian migrants). As for the loss of final /s/ and the rendering of *zéismo*, as well as the widespread presence of the fricative sounds [β], [ð], [ɣ], cf. below.

Concerning vocalism, in tonic position we do not always find the expected Spanish result: cf. ['sempre] 'always' 28 (vs. ['sjembre] 28), ['set:e] 'seven' 1, 28, [set:embre] 'september' 1 bis (vs. [set:jembre] 15), [r:ɨ'korða] 'remember.PRS.IND.3SG' 8, [nove 'fento] 'nine hundred' 17, ['bente]/[βente] 'twenty' 19 bis, 27 bis, and ['noβe] 'nine' 36; an overextension of the diphthong (cf. Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], 228; Engels 2012,

93) is displayed by [βi'sjente] 'Vicente' 24. The same can be said for unstressed vowels, as exemplified by the following forms: [si'nora] 'lady, wife (?)' 2, [nu'sotri] 'we' 7, [asəno] 'do.PRS.IND.3PL' 30, 33, [koməno] 'eat.PRS.IND.3PL' 30, 32, and [friyu'rifəko] 'fridge' 28 (vs. [-lika] 28); add here also [ku] 'with', [il] 'the', [se] 'if', and other monosyllables that will be discussed below (morphology). The large majority of these forms can easily be linked to a corresponding Italian or Calabrese word ([nu'sotri] probably crosses Sp. *nosotros* and Cal. [nu'a(u)tri], cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 58). Considered the absence of analogous centralisation processes in southern Calabria (cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 36–38), [asəno], [koməno] and [friyu'rifəko] might instead mirror the interaction with migrants who spoke different IR varieties (*dialect mixing*, cf. Prifti 2014, 57–58). As we shall see, the same explanation can account for other peculiarities too. This is the case of unstressed vowels in final position: here we also find some remarkable forms, namely [-u] in [ka'nuʃu] 'know.PRS.IND.1SG' 7 and [redʒu] 'Reggio (Calabria)' 18, [-ə] in [yɾa'βam:ə] 'record.PRF.IND.1PL' 5 and [dʒe'kam:ə] 'arrive.PRF.IND.1PL' 5, as well as [-i], [-e], [-o] in a number of verbs that in Spanish are apocopated and thus end with a consonant ([iri] 'go.INF' 11, [pase'are] 'walk.INF' 3, [sa'lire] 'leave.INF' 5, 9, [traβa'kare] 'work.INF' 21, [βan:o] 'go.PRS.IND.3PL' 11 bis, [erano] 'be.IMPF.IND.3PL' 10, the already seen [asəno] 'do.PRS.IND.3PL' 30, 33, [koməno] 'eat.PRS.IND.3PL' 30, 32 and the less certain [po'te^an^o] 'can.IMPF.IND.3PL' 11). Now, while [-u] and [-i] are compatible with southern Calabrese (which has a trivocalic Sicilian system), [-e], [-ə], and [-o] might depend on the influence either of Italian or other IR dialects (cf. Loporcaro 2013, 80–82).

Against a well known phonological rule of Spanish, initial /e/ is sometimes not realised when followed by /sC/ (even if /s/ is aspirated): [hpaɲa] 'Spain' 3, [hta] 'be.PRS.IND.3SG' 12, [stumo] 'stay.PRF.IND.1PL' 4.

As for consonants, the speaker very frequently produces the fricatives sounds [β], [ð], and [ɣ]. Given that analogous weakened variants of /b/, /d/, and /g/ are widespread in Calabrese dialects, one could link examples like [toðo βan:o] 'everyone goes' 11, [lo ðe'ke] 'I left him' 26, [friyu'rifəko] 'fridge' 28, etc. to the speaker's native variety rather than to the influence of Rioplatense Spanish. The hypothesis, although attractive, does not hold up to the evidence, since the examples do not respect the allophonic distribution of Calabrese varieties, where the weak (fricative) variant occurs in intervocalic position while the strong (occlusive) variant is realised in case of syntactic doubling (*raddoppiamento fonosintattico*) or after a consonant.²⁶ Indeed, our speaker utters [me βe'nian a βus'kar] 'they came searching for

²⁶ It should be added that southern Calabrese displays [v] (not [β]) as the weak variant of /b/ (cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 48–49). The dialects of Reggio Calabria and its surroundings either render /g/ as [ɣ] or delete it, but in this area the weakening of /d/- and /g/- started not until after 1908 (cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 50).

me' 6, [per'ði] 'lose.PROF.IND.1SG' 9, [r:ikor'daβa] 'remember.IMPF.IND.1SG' 9, [arɣo] 'something' 12, [te'nia+ 'bente 'kwatro 'βente 'sin̩ko 'aɲo] 'I was twenty-four, twenty-five years old' 19, and even deletes intervocalic [ð], a treatment which we find in Argentinean Spanish yet not in Calabria (cf. above). That being said, it is still possible that a propriety of the speaker's native dialect reinforced the acquisition of a (similar, although non-identical) feature of the L2.²⁷

There are some examples of [-t]- instead of [-ð]-: [bar'data] 'walled' 10, [pes'kato] 'fish' 29, [sa'late] 'salad(s)' 33, [u'niti] 'united' 6, 10 (see also [e'ta] 'age' 12, [βind̩ɟita] 36 and [βend̩ɟita] 36 'sale'). The substitution of [x] with [k] (cf. Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], 211; Whinnom 1971, 97; Barrios 1999; Engels 2012, 98, etc.) is quite frequent, as in [ðe'ke] 'leave.PROF.IND.1SG' 26, [i'ka] 'daughter' 2, [kuβi'le] 'retire.PROF.IND.1SG' 36, [ku'ðio] 'jews' 30 ([lo^h ku'ðio]), [traβa'kare] 'work.INF' 21, [traβa'kaβa] 'work.IMPF.IND.1SG' 28, 36.

The loss of /s/ in final word position is widely attested: [ðos 'aɲo] 'two years' 1, [trenta 'set:e 'ðia] 'thirty-seven days' 1, 4, [toðo los 'aɲo] 'every year' 3, [pa 'toðo 'laol] 'everywhere' (Sp. *para todos lados*) 3, 4, [ante] 'before' 5, 11, 36, [toða la ma'ɲana] 'the entire morning' 6, [te'niamo] 'have.IMPF.IND.1PL' 7, [ma] 'anymore' 8, 9 (Sp. *más*), [kadʒas (.)bar'data] 'walled roads' 10, [kadʒa 'antʃa] 'wide roads' 10, [toðo] 'everybody' 11, [kuɪ 'koʃe] and [kuɪ 'koʃe] 'with the cars' 11, [nei 'kampo] 'in the fields' 11, [meno 'aɲo] 'less years' 12, [tre] 'three' 13, 14, [lo kum'pli] 'I had birthday' 15 (Sp. *cumplir los años*), [βente 'sin̩ko 'aɲo] 'twenty-five years' 19, [kampo] 'fields' 21, [mese] 'months' 27, [βente e 'piko 'ðia] 'twenty (months) and some days' 27, [trenta 'set:e 'aɲo] 'thirty-seven years' 28, [lo^h ku'ðio] 'the jews' 30, [pe'p:ino] 'cucumbers' 33, [kin'tero] '(Avenida Lido) J. Quinteros' 33, [noβe 'aɲo] 'nine years' 36, [ðeh'pwe] 'after that' 36, [otro 'do 'tres 'aɲo] 'another two-three years' 36, [kasa] 36 bis, [te'r:eno] 36.²⁸ The deletion, which is not systematic, can occur before a pause as well as a word starting with a consonant or a vowel. It is easier to find a preserved sibilant before a vowel ([ðos 'aɲo] 1, [toðo los 'aɲo] 3, [tres 'aɲo] 36) than before a consonant (it happens only once, but in this case /s/ is followed by a short pause: [kadʒas (.) bar'data] 10); no conservative example is to be found before a pause. If a word starting with a consonant follows, an aspiration rather than a deletion may take place (the forms were presented at the beginning of the paragraph); this occurs

²⁷ It is well known that Spanish avoids the spirantisation of /b/ and /g/ after a nasal, that of /d/ after a nasal or a lateral (all three consonants are plosives after a pause). Our speaker seems to respect this distribution in that he never weakens the plosive in cases such as [kwando] 7, 24, 25, [um 'bur:o] 11, [ven'dia] 29, 30, [βind̩ɟita] 36, [βend̩ɟita] 36, but he also pronounces [bar'data] 10.

²⁸ In some cases it is not clear whether the example is singular or plural (e.g. [to^o lo popu'lito] 2, [muʃo] 2, [toðo] 4, 7 bis, [la 'kasa] 10).

even before a pause ([*ma^h*] 9). The speaker also produces an isolated vocalisation ([*nove^h*ʔento *treⁱ*] 17).

We should recall that the aspiration and loss of *-s/* are found in almost the entire Argentinean territory (cf. Donni de Mirande 1996, 213), albeit with different characteristics that depend on diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic factors (cf. also Lipski 1994, 169–170; Fontanella de Weinberg 2004, 47–48): it is thus hard to establish whether we are dealing with the acquisition of an indigenous phenomenon or with an innovation within the group of Italian migrants (evidently due to the asigmatic nature of their varieties). In any case, Lavandera’s (1978) observations on the systematicity of the deletion of *-s/* among Italian informants points to a substantial difference between its occurrence in *Cocoliche* and the more articulated repertoire of Argentinean speakers.²⁹

One of the most interesting features in the text is the variable realisation of RSp. /ʒ/ (cf. Lipski 1994, 170; Donni de Mirande 1996, 214–215; Fontanella de Weinberg 2004, 48–49).³⁰ It is well known that among Italian migrants in Argentina [dʒ] often rendered /ʒ/ (cf. Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], 211). Our speaker himself provides several examples of this realisation as well as various other outcomes. We can summarise them as follows:³¹

Tab. 2

(-)[dʒ]-	-[dː]-	-[dː]-	-[j]-	(-)[j]-
[<i>dʒa</i>] 10 (Sp. <i>ya</i>), [<i>dʒe</i> βaβan] 6 (Sp. <i>llevaban</i>), [<i>dʒe</i> βo] 4 (Sp. <i>llevó</i>), [<i>dʒe</i> ʔkamːə] 5 (Sp. <i>llegamos</i>), [<i>dʒo</i>] 7, 12, 25 (Sp. <i>yo</i>), [<i>ʔkadʒas</i>] 10, [<i>ʔkadʒa</i>] 10 (Sp. <i>calles</i>)	[<i>edːa</i>] 4 (Sp. <i>ella</i>)	[<i>aːdːa</i>] 7 (Sp. <i>allá</i>), [<i>edːa</i>] 4 (Sp. <i>ella</i> , uncertain)	[<i>kaʔβajo</i>] 29 (Sp. <i>caballo</i>)	[<i>aʔja</i>] 2, 33 (Sp. <i>allá</i>), [<i>jo</i>] 9, 24, 28 (Sp. <i>yo</i>)

It is difficult to rationalise this data without knowing the details of the informant’s linguistic biography. One should recall that Calabria shows an extreme degree of

29 According to the scholar, this very fact would make *Cocoliche* a *reduced* or *underdeveloped* variety of Rioplatense Spanish. On the deletion of *-s/* among Calabrese and Campanian migrants in Montevideo, see Barrios (1999). The feature is very common in literary *Cocoliche* (cf. Engels 2012, 45).

30 It is worth recalling that “although the original sound was voiced [ʒ], most younger residents of Buenos Aires now pronounce a voiceless [ʃ], and the devoicing is spreading throughout Argentina” (Lipski 1994, 170). See Rohena-Madrado (2015).

31 We do not list [*markiːdʒero*] 36, which might be useful given the presence of *-[dʒ]-* but remain semantically (and thus etymologically) unclear. The meaning of [*kuːkarːa kaʔβajo*] 29 is also opaque, but in this case it seems plausible enough to interpret [*kaʔβajo*] as ‘horse’ (Sp. *caballo*).

variation in the outcomes of Lat. -LL-, which include [ll], [dʒ] (> [r]),³² [d], [j], [t]/[tʰ], [ʃ], [d], [ʌʌ], and [ʒ] (cf. Bianco 1981; Trumper/Maddalon 1988, 250; De Luca 2023; Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 54; as for Casignana, the speaker's place of origin, the local result is [ʃ]). The analysis is further complicated by the fact that Argentinean Spanish itself exhibits a wider range of pronunciations than just Rioplatense *žeísmo* (cf. Lipski 1994, 170–172; Donni de Mirande 1996, 214).

Among the forms that display a geminate consonant, [kam:ara] 'room' 28, [pe'p:ino] 'cucumbers' 33, [ʎra'βam:ə] 'record.PRF.IND.1PL' 5, [dʒe'kam:ə] 'record.PRF.IND.1PL' 5 and [βan:o] 'go.PRS.IND.3PL' 11 bis are noteworthy. The first is related to Cal. [kam:ara] (cf. AIS 4, 874; NDDC, s.v. *cámmara*). The three verbs also have the same endings as the corresponding Calabrese forms (cf. Falcone 1976, 73, 78). The case of [pe'p:ino] is harder to explain, unless one assumes that the influence of the (formally) similar hypocorism *Peppino/Peppinu* 'Giuseppe' somehow affected the pronunciation of the word.

An interesting case of interesting case of rhotacism is displayed by [a'ɾɔ] 'something' 12 (Sp. *algo*). This feature probably reflects a phonological process of the speaker's native dialect, since this kind of phenomenon is well documented in southern Calabria (cf. e.g. AIS 1, 165: *u karkáñu*, pt. 794; 3, 414: *a kárçi*, pt. 794; Rohlfs 1966–1969, §243; Falcone 1976, 50). On the contrary, the voicing of /k/ (for Sp. /x/) in [san] 'gwan' 36 (Sp. *San Juan*) can generically be associated with southern Italy, but not with southern Calabria (cf. Rohlfs 1966–1969, §257; Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 56).³³ It is likely that this place name bears trace of the linguistic contact with migrants coming from different parts of Italy. An analogous example may be offered by [dʒe'kam:ə] 'arrive.PRF.IND.1PL' 5 (Sp. *llegamos*), given that the devoicing of intervocalic /g/ is found in southern Lazio, northern Campania, Puglia and Salento, whereas it is absent in Calabria (cf. Rohlfs 1966–1969, §217; Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 49–50). As we already observed about the rendering of *žeísmo*, the lack of information about the speaker's biography precludes deeper observations.³⁴

³² This kind of rhotacism is only found in some outcomes of (EC)CU(M) ILLU(M).

³³ A similar example is [a'renge] 'herrings' 33 (Sp. *arenque*), but in this case the form can more easily be explained as a loan from Italian (*aringhe*) or Calabrese (cf. NDDC, s.v. *ringa/renge*).

³⁴ It is worth mentioning also [fa'mija] 'family' 5, a form that diverges from Sp. *familia* as well as from Cal. [fa'mij:a] (cf. DDCM, s.v. *famigghia*; on the outcomes of -LJ- in southern Italy, i.e. [ʌ], [j:], and [j], see Rohlfs 1966–1969, §280). Note that both [nove'fento] 17 and [pro'βinfa] 18 are problematic: one could think of an ASp. pronunciation of It. *novecento* and *provincia*, but in Argentina (unlike in other Latin American countries) the "affricate /č/ almost never loses its occlusive element" (Lipski 1994, 169); at the same time, Calabrese dialects do not have -[ʃ]- as the usual evolution of -c^e- and -cj-. Now, the normal outcome of -c^e- is -[ʃ]- in central Italy and in some southern dialects (cf. Rohlfs 1966–1969, §213), so that [nove'fento] might be another form reflecting a super-regional phonetic treatment. The adoption of -[ʃ]- may have been encouraged by the parallel presence of an analogous postalveolar sound (though

As for morphology, an interesting metaplasm is that of [ˈkaɖzas] 10, [ˈkaɖʒa] 10 ‘roads’ (Sp. *calles*). Plural nouns and articles are often just asigmatic (see among the examples of loss of *-s/* listed above); [uˈniti] ‘united’ 6 (M.PL), 10 (M/F.PL?), [aˈreŋge] ‘herrings’ 33, and [saˈlate] ‘salads’ 33 (if it is not singular) show instead the IR inflectional type. Alongside several examples of the Spanish article *el*, we also find the Standard Italian form [il] ([il ˈkampo] 6 and [il ˈkampo] 7 ‘the land’, [il siŋko] ‘the fifth’ 15).³⁵ Articulated prepositions may also exhibit the IR form ([nel ˈmese] ‘in the month (of September)’ 1, [nel friyʉˈrifəko] ‘in the fridge’ (uncertain) 28, [nej ˈkampo] ‘in the fields’ 11, [kuɿ ˈkoʃe] and [kui ˈkoʃe] 11 ‘with the cars’). As for pronouns, it is worth mentioning [nuˈsotri] ‘we’ 7 (cf. above) and [ˈle] ‘she’ 3 (It. *lei*, whereas Calabrese moves from ILLA(M), cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 58). Simple prepositions: note [in] ‘in’ 1, [ku] 33, 36 and [ko] 11 ‘with’ (cf. DDCM, s.v. *cu*). Conjunctions: except [se] ‘if’ 12 and the frequent [e] ‘and’, one should consider [paˈk:e] ‘because’ 2, 8 (cf. the Calabrese forms provided by AIS 4, 730); see also [peˈro] ‘but’ 2 alongside [ˈpero] 10, 12.

Verbs are often formed as (or similarly to) the corresponding verbs of Italian or southern Calabrese (for the latter, cf. the paradigms in Falcone 1978):

- [asəno] ‘do.PRS.IND.3PL’ 30, 33, [koməno] ‘eat.PRS.IND.3PL’ 30, 32, [βan:o] ‘go.PRS.IND.3PL’ 11 bis;
- [erano] ‘be.IMPF.IND.3PL’ 10, [poˈteˈnʰo] ‘can.IMPF.IND.3PL’ 11 (uncertain);
- [yɾaˈβam:ə] ‘record.PRF.IND.1PL’ 5, [ɖeˈkam:ə] ‘arrive.PRF.IND.1PL’ 5;
- [tɪˈraro] ‘pull.PRF.IND.3PL’ 10;
- [iri] ‘go.INF’ 11, [paseˈare] ‘walk.INF’ 3, [saˈlire] ‘leave.INF’ 5, 9, [traβaˈkare] ‘work.INF’ 21 (vs. [aˈser] ‘do.INF’ 12, [βolˈβer] ‘return.INF’ 9 bis, [βusˈkar] ‘search.INF’ 6, [ɖɟiriˈar] ‘roam.INF’ 6).

voiced) among Ligurian speakers (cf. e.g. Rohlfs 1966–1969, §214; VPL, s.v. *trexentu*), who constituted a large part of the Italian community living in La Boca (see §3.1). As for [proˈβinʃa], it is possible that the speaker extended *-[ʃ]* to the postconsonantic position based on the following proportion: if Cal. *-[tʃ]* in intervocalic position (cf. Cal. [duʃʃentu] in AIS 2, 305) corresponds to *-[ʃ]*, then Cal. *-[tʃ]* in postconsonantic position (in learned words such as [pruvintʃa], cf. Accattatis 1895, s.v. *pruvincia/pruvinza*) will correspond to *-[ʃ]* as well. In any case, note that intervocalic *-[ʃ]* in lieu of *-[tʃ]* is not generalised (cf. [ˈɔʃfenta] 13, [oʃfenta] 14, [ˈleʃe] 29) and only occurs where Rioplatense Spanish has *-[sj]*; however, [ʃ] cannot simply be considered an idiosyncratic rendering of [sj], since our speaker clearly utters [ˈsjembre] 28 and [βiˈsjente] 24.

³⁵ It is uncertain whether [toˈlo popuˈlito] 2 is singular or plural: in the first case, we should list a further form of article. This form would mirror a generic southern IR type *lo/lu*, since before consonants southern Calabria has *u* (cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 57).

As for [e] ‘be.PRS.IND.3SG’ 31, 32 bis and [te’niamo] ‘have.IMPF.IND.1PL’ 7, the forms may depend on the deletion of *-s/* (cf. above); see also [stumo] ‘stay.PRF.IND.1PL’ 4, [estumo] ‘be.PRF.IND.1PL’ 6, which are interesting *allegro* forms for Sp. *estuvimos*.

Some syntactic constructions also mirror the contact between Italo-Romance and Spanish:³⁶ *però fu(i) giriando todo lo populito para* (vs. Sp. *por*) *allà* 2,³⁷ *estumo uniti mucho* 6 (Sp. *estuvimos muy unidos*), *ora vanno cui coche ahta entre el* (= It. *dentro il*, etc.) *campo* 11, *tiraro la casa que erano* (vs. Sp. *estaban*) *già uniti* 10; this latter example is not entirely clear (what is the subject of *erano*?), so that *que* may be interpreted either as a relative pronoun (*la casa* ‘the houses’ being the antecedent) or a generic introducer of an adverbial clause (*che polivalente* within the tradition of Italian studies).³⁸ The influence of Calabrese is visible in *lo deque de un año* ‘I left him when he was one year old’ (cf. Accattatis 1895, s.v. *annu*: “De quanti anni sī?” ‘How old are you?’). Differential Object Marking (‘DOM’) never occurs, although none of the potential contexts is certain, either due to the dubious interpretation of the quantifiers *mucho* and *todo* (examples in 2, 4, 7) or for the presence of a short pause, which could signal a sudden reorganisation of the speech (the only example is in 5); the absence of the feature would be particularly interesting, given that Calabrese and Spanish both share DOM (cf. Chilà/De Angelis 2024, 73–75; see §3.2.1.2). The pronominal use of *recordar* ‘to remember’ (examples in 9) can be linked both to American Spanish (cf. DA, s.v. *recordar(se)*) and to the IR background of the speaker (cf. NDDC, s.v. *arricordare*). At the interface between morphology, syntax and lexicon we find the substitution of *ni* with *no* in the following example: *ante no co un burro poteano iri* 11 (Sp. *antes ni con un burro podían ir*).³⁹

On a purely lexical level, *giriando* [ḡiri’ando] 2 and *giriari* [ḡiri’ar] 6 clearly show the interference with the speaker’s Calabrese dialect (cf. NDDC, s.v. *giriari*; DDCM, s.v. *giriàri* ‘to roam’), while an interesting example of calquing is exemplified by *populito* 2, a form with which the speaker intends to render Sp. *pueblito(s)*

³⁶ Syntactic and lexical examples will be generally provided with a non-phonetic transcription (Spanish orthography is employed, with some adjustments: e.g. <g> = [ḡ]). The same will be done in §3.2.2.2.

³⁷ For this feature cf. §3.2.2.2. *Pa(ra)* respects the Spanish grammar in *pa todo* 3, 4, *pa casa* 9, *para acà* 24.

³⁸ See Asencio (1995, 47–61) for a survey of this syntactic phenomenon in the *Cocoliche* of Montevideo.

³⁹ Some other constructions, rather than expressing language contact, provide evidence for generic features of spoken Spanish or Italo-Romance; this is the case of the resumptive pronoun *la* 32 (for an analysis of this feature in Uruguayan *Cocoliche* cf. Asencio 1995, 44–46). Some unexpected solutions are possibly due to the unplanned organisation of the speaker’s speech (*ahora htà muy lindo Italia, muy lindo* 12; perhaps *me perdí de volver a mi casa* 9 as well).

‘village(s)’.⁴⁰ Rather than peculiar adaptations of Sp. *conoce* and *conozco*, [ka'nufe] ‘know.PRS.IND.3SG’ 2, 4 and [ka'nufu] ‘know.PRS.IND.1SG’ 7 are integral Calabrese forms (cf. NDDC, s.v. *canúscere*; DDCM, s.v. *canuscìri*). As for *callas bardata* [kaɖzas bar'data] 10, which refers to ‘roads provided with an enclosure wall’, one should recall that an analogous derivative of Sp. *barda* ‘hedge, fence or wall’ (cf. DLE, s.v. *barda*²) is found in Mexico (cf. DA, s.v. *bardado*, -a ‘provided with a fence, wall or other solution that delimits its perimeter or separates it from other land’, and again DLE, s.v. *bardado*², -da ‘protected by a *barda*’).⁴¹ There are some generic Italianisms: *dopo* ‘later’ 36, *ora* ‘now’ 8, 10, 11 bis, *là* ‘there’ 1, 12.

3.2 The *Microcontact* project

The project *Microcontact. Language Variation and Change from the Italian heritage perspective* (funded by the European Research Council) was led by Prof. Roberta D'Alessandro (Utrecht University) and lasted five years (2017–2021). Its main aim was to collect data from different IR dialects spoken in the Americas by speakers that were born in Italy and who subsequently moved to Argentina, Brazil, Canada (Quebec), or the USA. It focused on the effects of language attrition and contact-induced change.⁴²

The data were collected through fieldwork and crowdsourcing. With regard to Argentina, two data collection fieldwork trips were carried out: the first in 2018, by Francesco Maria Ciconte, and the second in 2019, by the second author of this paper. In total, around 100 people were interviewed: most of them had been born in Italy, but some second-generation migrants were also included. In the second round (2019), 71 informants were interviewed: of them, 58 were first-generation migrants, while 13 were heritage speakers who were born in Argentina and acquired the IR dialect from their parents or grandparents (aged 26–92; mean age 74; 29 partici-

⁴⁰ A similar example might be offered by the second text edited in this article (cf. §3.2.1.2). Note that *popolo* for Sp. *pueblo* occurs in Alberto Novión's *La chusma* (1913): “La mia fidanzata è una donna di capelli bianchi, bianchi, con dei bambini che sono anche miei. Abbita in un *popolo* d'Italia che si trova sperduto tra le montagne [...]” (apud Blengino 1977, 427, emphasis added).

⁴¹ *Coso* 5, which denotes an undefined object, is a well-known Americanism (cf. DA, s.v.) and occurs in informal Italian as well. As already noted (fn. 31), it is uncertain what [ku'kar:a] 29 and [marki'dʒero] 36 mean; the latter clearly cannot be linked to ASp. *marquillero* ‘a person who only wears branded or fashionable things’ (DA, s.v.).

⁴² See <<https://microcontact.sites.uu.nl/>> [last access: March 8th, 2025] for further details on the project.

pants were female).⁴³ The informants came from different regions of Italy, and they lived in various places in Argentina: interviews were conducted in the capital district of Buenos Aires, as well as in its province (e.g. La Plata, San Justo and San Martín); in the cities of Rosario, Santa Fe, Córdoba, and in the village of Colonia Caroya (province of Córdoba), which was founded by Friulian settlers in 1878. The interviews were structured into two parts. In the first, spontaneous data were gathered: the interviewer asked some generic questions (e.g. “How was the trip from Italy to Argentina?” or “What did you do as soon as you arrived in Argentina?”), to which the informant answered in their native IR variety. This part lasted around 5–10 minutes (sometimes longer, if it was clear that the informant was keen on telling stories about their past). Subsequently, some specific tasks were carried out to gather data in relation to the syntactic phenomena targeted in the *Microcontact* project. Most importantly, the setting of the whole interview was in the local language spoken by the informant, or, if this was not possible, in Italian: Spanish was hardly ever used, and the informants themselves appreciated the opportunity to talk in their IR variety (cf. Andriani et al. 2022a, b).⁴⁴

In this paper, we analyse two samples taken from the interviews collected in Santa Fe in 2019. As we will see, the two samples differ in the ways in which the two languages known by the informant interact: in the first, Sicilian and Rioplatense Spanish are used in a continuous stream of code-switching; in the second, the informant uses a fossilised interlanguage that she developed after she had arrived in Argentina, and which is still far from the grammar of the target language. It is also far from her native (Campanian) dialect, even if she was explicitly asked to speak dialect.

3.2.1 The Sicilian informant

The first sample comes from a male Sicilian informant that grew up in Rosolini (province of Siracusa, South-Eastern Sicily). He moved to Argentina when he was 24 years old, and he was 88 at the time of the interview. He was educated up to primary school level. He declared that he stopped speaking Sicilian after he arrived in Argentina because he did not have contact with other Sicilian migrants.

In the sample, the informant told the interviewer how his life in Sicily used to be when he was a child.

⁴³ All the spontaneous data collected during the fieldwork are publicly available on the interactive atlas of the project (<<https://microcontact.sites.uu.nl/atlas/>> [last access: March 8th, 2025]).

⁴⁴ This is an important difference with the text collected by Meo Zilio and discussed in §3.1.

3.2.1.1 Transcription

[0'04"] [1] fa'tfeva i 'p:ane (0.7) a'p:reso 'una 'stantsa (1.1) e+ (0.7) 'fetfe un 'forno 'grande, a 'l:ep:a (1.8)

[2] en'donse (0.7) lo vɨ'tfino (0.7) non te'nia 'kwesto 'forno a'si (.) en'donse ve'nivano a 'fare il 'pane en mi 'kasa (0.7)

[3] 'eđo portava la fa'rina (1.9) la am:a's:ava (1.5) e lo po'neva a'i (0.5) a'r:iba una 'mesa en kwa'kjer 'lado (.) kon man'tel 'blaŋko e 'tođo (0.8) per'ke si- per'ke fa'tfeva- si do'veva levi'tare il 'pan (0.6) 'ke te'nia 'levito (.)

[4] non si po'deva 'sub:ito 'met:ere a 'forno (1.3) te'nia ke ſpe't:ar no'me 'due o 'tre 'ora (1.0)

[5] en'donse 'eža mi ma'ma (1.2) le me't:eva en el 'forno, prepa'rava el 'pane, lo u'f:iva (1.1) e ko'si 'kada 'uno no 'dava no 'se de 'kwanto 'kada 'kilo (1.2) pos:ib:il'mente 'due 'tre 'pani (1.0)

[6] i kon 'esto no'sotro en la 'ger:a non su'frim:o 'nađa (.)

[7] pe'k:e no se po'dia (.) 'vender 'pane (1.2) e go'vjerno unika'mente 'dava una li'b:ret:a (1.4) 'ke do'vevano 'fare (1.2) un 'medjo 'kilo de 'pan po p:er'sona (1.5) di 'pju 'no (1.8)

[8] 'era pane'ria de go'vjerno (1.0)

[9] de 'pju non si po'deva (1.0) 'ne ven'dere fa'rina (.) 'ne 'trigo (.) 'nađa (1.1)

[10] e a'i 'e 'onde sa'liva el ban'dido đul'jano (1.5) sa'lio por 'kwe'to (0.8) pe'k:e 'lui fa'tfeva ke kom'prava 'trigo (2.0) i lo ven'deva (1.1)

[11] lo aga'r:amo 'una 've (.) 'dos 'vese (.)

[12] una 've 'iso 'komo (2.0) un ka'xon de 'mwerto (0.8) es'taba 'tođo 'pje(laughing))no de 'trigo (laughing)) (.)

[13] en'tonse la poli'sia lo aga'r:o (1.9) e de 'ese mo'mento lo 'puso 'preso (0.6) 'pero 'poj ska'p:o (1.0) e se fuę a la mon'tap:a (0.6)

[14] a'i 'e 'onde se 'iso fa'moso ke ma'tava ('trop:o) poli'sia i 'tođo (0.7)

[15] ora si'silja e fa'moso por 'eso tam'bjen (laughing)) (.)

[1] [My mum] made bread. She took a room and made a big wood oven.

[2] So, the neighbors didn't have such an oven, therefore they came to make the bread in my house.

[3] They brought the flour, kneaded it and left it there, on any part of a table, covered with a white towel and everything. Because the dough had to proof, because it contained yeast.

[4] You couldn't put it in the oven right away, you had to wait two or three hours.

[5] So, my mum put them in the oven, she prepared the bread, she removed it from the oven, and so everybody gave us a bit – I don't know how much exactly – for each kilogram, maybe two or three loaves of bread.

[6] And with this we didn't suffer at all during the war.

[7] Because you couldn't sell bread, the government gave us only a ration book, so that we could receive half a kilo per person, no more than that.

[8] It was a government bakery.

[9] You couldn't have more than that, you could not sell flour or wheat, nothing at all.

[10] And that's when the Bandit Giuliano became famous, because he bought wheat, and then sold it.

[11] We caught him once, twice.

[12] Once he made a sort of coffin, it was full of wheat.

[13] So the police caught him, and after that they kept him in prison, but he escaped and fled to the mountains.

[14] That's when he became famous, because he killed many policemen, and did much more.

[15] Well, Sicily is famous for that as well.

- | | |
|---|---|
| [16] e ko'si (1.0) | [16] And so... |
| [17] i 'ehte 'e la 'vida i a'si kri('ovan) no'sotros, a [no'jaʃi] (1.8) | [17] And so is life, and we grew up in these times. |
| [18] 'era 'dopo de la 'gwera (1.3) 'ke do'vevamo 'fare? (0.7) | [18] It was after the war, what were we supposed to do? |
| [19] no a'veva 'njente (.) 'nel 'popolo 'i- [2'27"] | [19] There was nothing in the village and... |

3.2.1.2 Linguistic analysis

In this sample, the informant spoke freely, without being interrupted by the interviewer or by his daughter (who was present, but never talked). At first sight, it is clear that he speaks a very different type of *Cocoliche*, compared to that of the Calabrese speaker discussed in §3.1: while the latter displays a language in which Italo-Romance and Spanish show a high degree of fusion, in the present sample the Italo-Romance and the Spanish parts can be distinguished most of the times, so that the linguistic shape of this recording appears to be the result of a continuous code-mixing between the two varieties known by the speaker. Nevertheless, this sample is interesting because the speaker keeps switching involuntarily, although he was explicitly requested to speak in Sicilian and the interviewer (i.e., the second author of this paper) pretended he did not know Spanish at all. According to the informant's daughter, he has always used a language characterised by this type of mixing. To illustrate his way of building sentences, we repeat here utterance 2, in which we mark the IR chunks with italics, while the RSp. chunks are underlined:⁴⁵

[2] en'donse (0.7) lo vi'tfino (0.7) non te'nia 'kwesto 'forno a'si (.) en'donse ve'ni'ano a 'fare il 'pane en mi 'kasa.

Since this sample allows to distinguish quite clearly between the parts in Spanish and those in Italo-Romance (even though they are not adjacent), we will discuss them separately.

In the Spanish chunks, a first set of features is typical of Rioplatense Spanish (cf. §3.1.2; for Santa Fe, cf. Donni de Mirande 2004). These include *seseo* (the neutralisation of /θ/ ~ /s/), as in [en'donse] 2, [en'tonse] 'thus' 13, ['vese] 'times' 11, ['iso] 'make.PRF.IND.3SG' 14; the almost complete loss of final -s/ ([lo vi'tfino] 'the neighbours' 2, [en'donse] 'thus' 2, 13, [eɟo] 'they' 3, [ora] 'hours' 4, [no] 'us' 5, [no'sotro] 'we' 6, [ve] 'time' 11, 12, [e] 'is' 10, 17, [su'f:rim:o] 'suffer.PRF.IND.1PL' 6, [aga'r:amo] 'catch.PRF.IND.1PL' 11 – exceptions in ['dos] 'two' 11, [no'sotros] 'we' 17; cf. §3.1.2); and *žeísmo* (e.g. [eɟo] 'they' 3, [eʒa] 'she' 5). The aspiration of preconsontic /s/

⁴⁵ Note that *vi'tfino* is difficult to attribute to Spanish or Italo-Romance: the plural is without doubt Spanish, but the presence of the affricate is typical of Italian and several IR varieties.

and the loss of intervocalic /d/ ([ð]) are not found consistently. The former is attested in one out of three cases ([ˈesto] ‘this’ 6, [esˈtaba] ‘stay.IMPF.IND.3SG’ 12 vs [ehte] ‘this’ 17 – note that it is also found in IR [ˈkweh̥to] ‘this’ 10), the latter has only one dubious occurrence ([paneˈria] 8, possibly from Sp. *panaderia*).

Other phonetic properties of the Spanish parts are the presence of a tonic pentavocalic system, coherent with both Sicilian and Spanish, the assimilation [rp] > [p:] in [po p:erˈsona] ‘per person’ 7, and the voicing of /t/ in [enˈdonse] ‘thus’ 2, 5 (but [enˈtonse] 13). In addition, we observe four properties that might be due to the IR background of the speaker, namely the realisation of /s/ as affricate ([viˈtʃino] ‘neighbours’ 2; cf. It. [viˈtʃino]), the presence of [v] instead of [β] in [ˈdava] ‘give.IMPF.IND.3SG’ 5 and [goˈvjerno] ‘government’ 7, 8, and the accent retraction in [se ˈfue] ‘go.away.PRF.IND.3SG’ 13; finally, the alternation in the realisation of RSp. /ʒ/ as [ʒ] or [dʒ]. Two cases present consonant lengthening ([suˈf:rim:o] ‘suffer.PRF.IND.1PL’ 6 and [monˈtaɲ:a] ‘mountain’ 13): this might be due either to a phonological process, or to the borrowing of an IR form (code-mixing).

Turning now to morphology, the loss of final /s/ leads to a systematic change of the nominal and pronominal plural morphology (e.g. [lo] ‘the.PL’ 2, [eˈdʒo] ‘they’ 3, [no] ‘us’ 5, [noˈsotro] ‘we’ 6 – but [noˈsotros] 17). We can observe that the morphological system is coherent with what we would expect, except for some uses of [e] instead of [i] ‘and’, and the verb forms [saˈliva] ‘come out.IMPF.IND.3SG’ (?) 10, [cri(ˈovan)] ‘grow.up.IMPF.IND.3PL’ 17 (in both cases, though, the exact form is difficult to perceive, and it might indicate that the speaker himself was unsure about how to realise them); see also [teˈnia] ‘have.IMPF.IND.3PL’ 2 and [porˈtava] ‘bring.IMPF.IND.3PL’ 3 (and maybe [amˈa:s:ava] ‘knead.IMPF.IND.3SG(/PL)’, [poˈneva] ‘put.IMPF.IND.3SG(/PL)’), which are unlikely to depend on a phonetic process, given that the loss of final /n/ does not seem to be a typical feature of Argentinean Spanish (cf. Lipski 1994, 168; final /n/ is realised in all other cases, e.g. [ˈpan] ‘bread’ 3, 7, [kaˈxon] ‘box’ 12, [tamˈbjen] ‘also’ 15).

On the syntactic level,⁴⁶ the most notable properties are the expected use of the possessive pronoun without article (*en mi casa* ‘in my house’ 2), while the use of the complementiser *que* with a generic adverbial function (*se hizo famoso que mataba...* ‘he became famous because/when he killed...’ 14, cf. §3.1.2) and the absence of DOM (*así cri(ˈoban) nosotros* ‘they brought us up like that’ 17) might be due to the influence of Italo-Romance, and in the second case more specifically to Italian (Sicilian has DOM, like Spanish). Finally, we observe some phenomena which might be attributed to a spontaneous, unplanned structuring of the discourse, such as the re-

⁴⁶ Syntactic and lexical items are cited by using the Spanish orthography for the Spanish chunks and the Italian for the IR ones.

duplication in *ella mi mamá* 5, the construction of an indirect interrogative (*no sé de cuánto* ‘I don’t know how much’ 5), and the absence of agreement in *este es la vida* ‘that’s life’ 17 and *Sicilia es famoso* ‘Sicily is famous’ 15. In the latter case, it is also interesting that the name *Sicilia* is used without article, in accordance with the Spanish, but not with the IR, usage.

For a discussion of lexis, cf. below.

Turning to the IR sections, we observe some properties that can be attributed to the Sicilian background: in phonology, these concern the presence of the retroflex in [no’jaʃi] ‘we’ 17, the doubling of /b/ ([’sub:ito] ‘immediately’ 4, [pos:ib:il’mente] ‘possibly’ 5), assimilation ([pe’k:e] ‘because’ 7, 10, [a ’f:orno] ‘in the oven’ 4, [i ’p:ane] ‘the bread’ 1), and syntactic gemination ([a ’l:ejn:a] ‘wood-fired’ 1). In syntax, Sicilian features are the use of the *passato remoto* (e.g. *fece* ‘do.PRF.IND.3sg’ 1) and the transitive use of *uscire* ‘exit.INF’ 5. Finally, there are some lexical elements that show the Sicilian origin of the informant: *levito* ‘yeast’ and *levitare* ‘make.rise.INF’ 3 without diphthong (cf. AIS 2, 235, pt. 859 [Mascalucia, Catania]: *u lēvitu* ‘the yeast’), *spettar* ‘wait.INF’ 4 without the vowel *a*- (cf. AIS 8, 1643, pts. 819, 838, 875 in Eastern Sicily: *spittāti* ‘wait!’) and the use of feminine *libretta* ‘ledger’ 7 instead of It. *libretto* or *libro contabile* (Angela Castiglione, p.c.).⁴⁷

In addition to these properties, at the phonetic level there are some phenomena that are probably due to Spanish influence, such as the voicing of /t/ in [po’deva] ‘be.able.IMPF.IND.3sg’ 4, 9, the (not consistent) aspiration of preconsonantic /s/ ([’kwe^hto] ‘this’ 10 – but [’kwesto] 2) and the weakened pronunciation of the labiodental in [ve’ni^vano] ‘come.IMPF.IND.3PL’ 2). A notable phenomenon is stress shift in [ven’dere] ‘sell.INF’ 9 and [do’vevamo] ‘must.IMPF.IND.1PL’ 18, which follow the Spanish stress pattern. Finally, ‘war’ is referred to once through the Sp. form ([’ger:a] 6), and once with an IR form because it displays [gw]- ([’gwera] 18) – but note that it should have a geminated /r/ in both Sicilian and Standard Italian, as in Spanish.

In morphology, the informant usually produces the expected forms. Exceptions are found in the use of the article [el] in [el ’pane] ‘the bread’ 5, which is otherwise realised as [il], and the use of the preposition [de] ‘of’ (9, 18), which contrasts with [di] in 7. For some peculiar verb endings, see the analysis of the Spanish parts above.

Turning to syntax, we observe some constructions that might be due to the contact with Rioplatense Spanish, such as the causative use of *levitare* (*si doveva levitare il pan* ‘we had to proof the bread’ 3), the use of the prepositions *a* in *a forno*

⁴⁷ *Libreta* is attested in different Latin American countries with the meaning of ‘booklet’, although only in Cuba it can refer to a ‘ledger’ (cf. DA, s.v.).

‘in the oven’ 4 and *de* in *dopo de la guerra* ‘after the war’ 18; and finally the use of *avere* with existential meaning in *no aveva niente* ‘there was nothing’ 19.⁴⁸

In terms of lexis, we begin by observing the distribution of Spanish and IR forms. In total, the sample consists of 263 tokens: 144 of them are in Spanish (55% of the total words), 103 in Sicilian or Italian (39%), and 16 are ambiguous.⁴⁹ However, the proportion of words used in one or the other language is not evenly distributed among word categories: if we count the number of lexical types, nouns and adjectives are predominantly in Spanish (21 vs 8 and 3 vs 1, respectively), while there are more IR than Spanish verbs (16 vs 13), see Fig. 2. This seems to point to the fact that the informant’s Spanish lexicon has acquired a greater variety in the case of nouns, while he tends to switch more often to IR when he uses a verb. A particularly interesting lexical feature of this speaker is *popolo*, which might have the meaning of ‘village, town’ (Sp. *pueblo*, as seen in §3.1.2), although the context is incomplete.

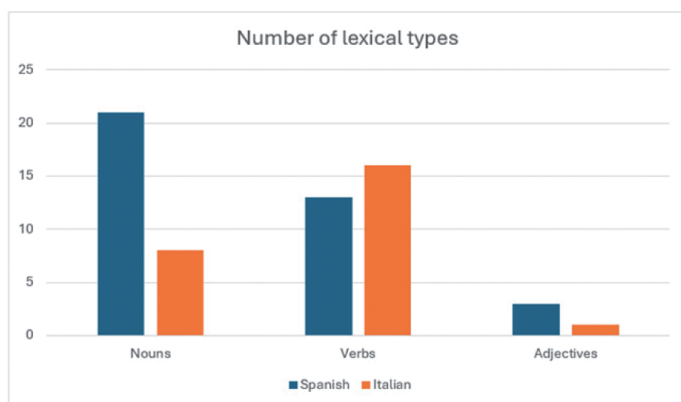


Fig. 2: The number of different lexical types in Spanish and Italo-Romance (Sicilian informant).

3.2.2 The Campanian informant

The second sample from the *Microcontact corpus* was collected from a female informant who was originally from Gesualdo (province of Avellino, Irpinia). She

⁴⁸ *Avere*-existentials are attested in some dialects of Italy, but crucially not in South-Eastern Sicily, cf. Bentley/Ciconte/Cruschina (2015).

⁴⁹ Words that have the same (or a very similar) form in both Spanish and IR or Italian were assigned to one of the two languages if both the preceding and the following chunks were in the same language. If they were different (the preceding chunk in IR/Italian and the following in Spanish, or vice versa), they were considered ambiguous.

moved to Argentina when she was 23 years old and was 90 at the time of the interview. She completed her primary school education. She declared that after moving to Argentina she kept speaking her local (Irpinian) dialect with her husband, who died several years before 2019. Since her husband was very conservative, she did not work, and she used to spend most of her time at home, working as housewife and bringing up her children.

In the interview, she tells an anecdote about an argument she had with the clerk of a dry cleaning shop, where she wanted to pick up her husband's suit although she had left the receipt at home. This story was brought up by the granddaughter of the informant, who was present during the interview. Note that also in this case the informant was asked to speak in her dialect.

3.2.2.1 Transcription

As in the first sample, we indicate with INF the informant and with INT the interviewer, and we place uncertain translations inside round brackets. In addition, GD refers to the informant's granddaughter.

- INF: [34'35"][1] 'dʒo 'fui a a'se lim'pja un 'sak:ə de mi e'spɔso (.) lo 'fui a- o dʒe've a lim'pja (1.2)
- [2] e 'pɔ me 'fui+ m ingon'trai a pa's:a+ (0.7) e 'dikə'ora 'dʒo 'stɔi pa's:andə por a'k:a 'dikə 'pɔ 'pa vol've 'ɔtra 've 'kə 'dʒo (vi'viamə par a'ʒa 'ante) (.)
- [3] en'tonse 'digə pa's:e par a'i (.) 'dʒo lo 'vi es'pɔsta a'i sta 'bolga de 'tɔdo (.) 'digə por'fa-'bon 'dia 'ke 'se 'ʒo (.) 'digə 'dam:ə il 'sak:o de mi e'spɔso 'digə 'dʒa 'sta a'i 'este 'e 'm:ə 'est 'e 'm:io (.) 'dikə dam:e'lo (.)
- [4] "nɔ si'nɔra (.) no 'ai bol:et:a no 'ai 'sak:o" (.)
- [5] "por fa'vore 'dikə dam:e'lo se 'e 'm:io (.) (no 'voi) a bus'ka un 'sak:ə de 'otrə" (.)
- [6] "nɔ si'nɔra, no 'ai bol:et:a (.)
- [7] no 'ai bol:et:a no 'ai 'sak:o"
- GD: *el ticket*
- INF: [8] no 'ai bol:et:a
- INT: *si certo, la ricevuta*
- INF: [9] 'ai pa'pito, 'kwanto 'tuve də lu'tf:a, no me lo 'dʒo ɛ [35'35"]
- [1] I had brought a suit of my husband to the dry cleaner's, to have it cleaned.
- [2] And once I happened to pass nearby, I say well, I'm just nearby, so I don't need to come another time (we used to live far away)
- [3] so I say, I passed nearby, I saw the whole (package?) visible there, I say "good morning" and so, I say "please give me my husband's suit, it's over there, it's mine", I say "give it to me."
- [4] "No madam, no receipt, no suit".
- [5] "Please", I say "give it to me, it's mine! I am not looking for someone else's suit!"
- [6] "No madam, you have no receipt.
- [7] No receipt, no suit."
- The receipt.
- [8] "No receipt...".
- Sure, the receipt.
- [9] Alas, I tried so hard, he didn't give it to me!

3.2.2.2 Linguistic analysis

This sample is very different from the preceding one, and much more similar to what we have seen in §3.1: it is a case of hybrid language, in which it is impossible to clearly separate Spanish and IR chunks. We therefore propose a comprehensive description of all the properties together (as we did in §3.1.2).

At a phonetic level, there are properties that are typical of Rioplatense Spanish, some of which coincide with what we have found with the other informants. First of all, *seseo* ([en'tonse] 'thus' 3), *žéismo* ([ʔɔ] 'T' 1, 2, 3, [ʔɔ] 'T' 3, [ɔ] 've' 'bring.PRF.IND.1SG' 1, [a'ʒa] 'there' 2, [ɔ] 'already' 3), and the loss of final /s/ ([ʔe] 'time' 2, [ante] 'before' 2, [en'tonse] 'thus' 3). In addition, this speaker displays stressed enclitics in imperatives, see [dam:e'lo] 'give.IMP=me=it' 3, 5 (cf. Meo Zilio 1964 [1989], 217; Colantoni/Cuervo 2013). Conversely, two typical properties of Rioplatense Spanish are absent: the spirantisation of intervocalic /d/ (we have instead [tɔdo] 'everything' 3), and the aspiration of prevocalic /s/ ([stɔ] 'be/stay.PRS.IND.1SG' 2, [es'pɔsta] 'display.PST.PTCP.F.SG' 3, [sta] 'be/stay.PRS.IND.3SG' 3, [es'pɔso] 'husband' 1, 3, [este] 'this' 3, [bus'ka] 'search.INF' 5).

Other phonetic features are typical of the Irpinian dialect spoken by the informant. First of all, her vowel system seems to consist of seven stressed vowels, with /e/ distinguished from /ɛ/ and /o/ from /ɔ/ (although with some overlapping): for /e/ see e.g. [ɔ] 'bring.PRF.IND.1SG' 1, [ve] 'times' 2, [este] 'this' 3, [ke] 'what' 3, [se] 'know.PRS.IND.1SG' 3, [bo'l:et:a] 'receipt' 4, 6, 7, 8, while /ɛ/ is found in [e] 'is' 3, 5. In the case of the back vowels, we find the open-mid vowel in [(d)ɔ] 'T' 1, 2, 3 (but [ɔ] 3), [es'pɔso] 'husband' 1 (but [es'poso] 3), [pɔ] 'then(?)' 2, [stɔ] 'be/stay.PRS.IND.1SG' 2, [ɔtra] 'other' 2 (but [otrə] 5), [es'pɔsta] 'display.PST.PTCP.F.SG' 3, [tɔdo] 'everything' 3, [dɔ] 'give.PRF.IND.3SG' 9, while the close-mid vowel is present in [ora] 'now' 2, [en'tonse] 'thus' 3, [bon] 'good' 3, [dam:e'lo] 'give.IMP=me=it' 3, 5, [si'nora] 'madam' 4, 6, [fa'vore] 'favour' 5. Another feature of this sample is the absence of /e/ in word-initial position, when followed by /st/ (cf. §3.1.2): [stɔ] 'be/stay.PRS.IND.1SG' 2, [sta] 'be/stay.PRS.IND.3SG' 3 (but [es'pɔso] 'husband' 1, 3).⁵⁰ Other properties are the presence of [i] in [ɪŋon'trai] 'happen.PRF.IND.1SG' 2, [il] 'the' 3, [si'nora] 'madam' 4, 6, the presence of a final vowel in [fa'vore] 'favour' 5, and in particular the very frequent weakening of final unstressed vowels, which are reduced to schwa (e.g. [sak:ə] 'suit' 1, 5, [dikə] 2, 3, 5 and [digə] 'say.PRS.IND.1SG' 3, [pa's:andə] 'pass.GER' 2, [kə] 'that' 2, [dam:ə] 'give.IMP=me' 3, [otrə] 'other' 5), coherently with what happens in Irpinian.⁵¹ Finally, we observe accent retraction in [fui] 'go.PRS.IND.1SG' 1, 2, as in the Sicilian speaker (cf. §3.2.1).

⁵⁰ [sta] 'this' in 3 might be due to the same process or mirror an IR form (cf. It. *stavolta*, *stanotte*, etc.). We also find the demonstrative [este] 3, which is however used as pronoun.

⁵¹ Notably, weakening to schwa seems to occur also after deletion of final /s/, in [vi'viamə] 'live.IMP.F.IND.1PL' 2.

Regarding consonants, the informant displays various cases of geminates, usually when this corresponds to her native dialect ([sək:ə] ‘suit’ 1, 5, [pa:s:a] ‘pass.INF’ 2, [pa:s:andə] ‘pass.GER’ 2, [dām:ə] ‘give.IMP=me’ 3, [dām:e’lo] ‘give.IMP=me=it’ 3,5, [pa:s:e] ‘pass.PRF.IND.1SG’ 3, [bo’l:et:a] ‘receipt’ 4, 6, [sək:o] ‘suit’ 4, 6). The doubling in [a’k:a] ‘here’ 2 has a Campanian correspondent in the forms [k:a], and even [a’k:a]. Conversely, the lengthening of [ε ‘m:io] ‘it’s mine’ 3, 5 is due to *raddoppiamento fonosintattico*. Other changes affecting the consonants are the voicing of /k/ when it follows a nasal ([ɲgɔn’trai] ‘happen.PRF.IND.1SG’ 2, cf. §3.1.2), and the loss of final -/r(e)/ in infinitives ([a’sɛ] ‘make.INF’ 1, [lim’pja] ‘clean.INF’ 1, [pa:s:a] ‘pass.INF’ 2, [vol’ve] ‘come.back.INF’ 2, [bus’ka] ‘search.INF’ 5, [lu’f:a] ‘fight.INF’ 9). All these processes are again transferred from the informant’s IR dialect.

In morphology, we find both Spanish and IR features. In the nominal domain, [(d)ʒɔ] ‘I’ 1, 2, 3 and the possessive pronoun [mi es’pɔso] ‘my husband’ 1, 3 are features of Spanish; on the other hand, the masculine article is It. [il] in [il ‘sək:ə] ‘the suit’ 3, while the Irpinian object clitic [o] ‘him’ is once used (in other cases, we find [lo], which is both Italian and Spanish). In the verbal domain, Spanish forms are [stɔj] ‘be/stay.PRS.IND.1SG’ 2, existential ‘have’ ([aj] ‘there is’ 4, 6), [sɛ] ‘know.PRS.IND.1SG’ 3, [digə] ‘say.PRS.IND.1SG’ 3 (but [dikə] 2, 5), [vojʔ] ‘go.PRS.IND.1SG’ 5; [fui] ‘go.PRS.IND.1SG’ 1, 2,⁵² [pa:s:e] ‘pass.PRF.IND.1SG’ 3, [vi] ‘see.PRF.IND.1SG’ 3, [tuve] ‘have.PRF.IND.1SG’ 8, [djɔ] ‘give.PRF.IND.3SG’ 9. IR forms are the already mentioned [dikə] ‘say.PRS.IND.1SG’ 2, 5, [ɲgɔn’trai] ‘happen.PRF.IND.1SG’ 2, all the infinitival forms (see above), and [es’pɔsta] ‘display.PST.PTCP.F.SG’ 3.

At the syntactic level, we observe the calque from IR *m’ingontrai a passa’* 2 (cf. It. *mi trovai a passare* ‘I happened to pass’), the use of *para* instead of *por* (*passé para ahí* ‘I passed nearby’ 3, cf. §3.1.2), and the use of *de* instead of *que* with deontic *tener* (*tuve de lucha* ‘I had to fight’ 8), maybe influenced by Irp. *agge da* ‘I have to’.

The lexicon can be described as based on Rioplatense Spanish; some notable expressions are the filler *que sé yo* (‘I don’t know’, lit. ‘what do I know?’) and *ay papito!* (‘my gosh!’, lit. ‘ahí daddy!’), which are both very frequent in Argentina. There are a few borrowings from IR (*po(i)* ‘then’ 2, *ora* ‘now’ 2 – see also *esposta* ‘display.PST.PTCP.F.SG’ 3, since it exhibits It. phonology, but they do not affect the overall picture.

52 In 1, [fui] is ambiguous between the ‘go’ reading and the ‘be’ reading (which would be ascribed to IR).

4 Conclusions

In this paper, we have discussed three language samples that display different degrees of fusion and overlapping between two or even three related languages (Spanish, an IR variety, and in some cases also Italian). These recordings show how the concrete reality of *Cocoliche* can vary, but also that they derive from a common background: this hybrid language characterises people that came to Argentina as young adults (they were all 23–25 years old), when they had completely acquired their native language (their local IR dialect); at this age, they had also overcome the critical period, which according to influential acquisitional linguists is crucial for a native-like acquisition of a language (cf. fn. 18). A further ingredient in their linguistic biography is that they arrived in a country where there was a huge number of Italian migrants; this means that they never completely deactivated their native language (maybe with some adaptation towards an IR *koiné*). Conversely, they usually had limited access to Spanish, and it is probable that the Spanish input they received often came from other L2 speakers, thus it might have been an already modified version of Rioplatense Spanish.

The three samples show on the one hand the transfer from L1 to L2. This includes the application of phonological rules of their L1 in the L2 and the use of L1 morphology, syntax, and lexicon. On the other hand, we observed the results of L1 attrition, with transfers from the L2 to the L1. While these processes are expected, what is more striking is the fusion of L1 and L2, which can show up as continuous code-switching between the two languages, or as a fossilised interlanguage, in which the informants have acquired some parts of the target grammar and lexicon, but their acquisition process then stopped, due to probably external reasons. The result is what looks like a hybrid language, an impression that is made stronger by the fact that Spanish and Italo-Romance are typologically and genetically closely related languages. A second striking point is that *Cocoliche* is apparently the only language these speakers are able to speak:⁵³ the Spanish interlanguage and the attrited L1 converged in a middle point, in which, depending on the speaker, the language may be closer to the L1 or to the L2 (see Fig. 1 above).

The emergence of a peculiar language like *Cocoliche* was made possible by almost unique external factors, such as the huge waves of migration to Southern America, the age at which these people arrived in Argentina, the close relation be-

⁵³ This fact was directly verified by one of the co-authors during the 2019 fieldwork campaign; we do not have direct information in this sense for the Calabrese speaker interviewed by Meo Zilio, since it is impossible to know how autonomous his IR dialect still was. In any case, while speaking *Cocoliche* he must have been convinced that he was using Spanish, because Meo Zilio spoke this language during the whole interview.

tween the languages of these migrants and the official language of Argentina; probably, the low education level of many migrants also contributed to the fact that they had limited access to Spanish. Today, spoken *Cocoliche* is very difficult to investigate due to the lack of living speakers. While continuing, where possible, to identify additional informants, future investigation should be oriented towards the discovery and valorisation of other unpublished recordings, either within the materials gathered and preserved by the *ADREV* and the *Microcontact* project or through still unknown sources.

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List of abbreviations

- ASp. = American Spanish
 Cal. = Calabrese
 GD = granddaughter
 INF = informant
 INT = interviewer
 IR = Italo-Romance
 Irp. = Irpinian
 It. = Italian
 Lat. = Latin
 lit. = literally
 pt(s). = point(s) (of a linguistic atlas)
 RSp. = Rioplatense Spanish
 Sp. = Spanish