

Patterns of language choice and language contact in formal and informal settings

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This article compares the linguistic performance of an Italo-Australian speaker in three settings characterised by different degrees of formality. The analysis focusses upon patterns of language choice and contact among three languages: Sicilian, Italian and English, and attempts to verify whether these patterns vary according to the degree of formality of each setting. The study is conducted within the framework of quantitative or "variationist" sociolinguistics.

Two main results are revealed by this work. Firstly, a major shift in the base language occurs from one setting to the other, as Italian is the base language in the formal setting, while in the more informal ones the base language is either unclear or is Sicilian. Secondly, there is a considerable increase in the amount of contact in the two informal settings, at every linguistic level considered.

These findings therefore confirm that the degree of formality of the setting has an effect on the variation of linguistic patterns. Furthermore, they show the similarity between the Italo-Australian and other multilingual communities, in so far as bilingual (and trilingual) speech occurs more frequently in informal contexts, and with group members.

1. *Introduction.*

Studies on bilingual behaviour in a micro-sociolinguistic perspective have often recognized the importance of the situational context on bilinguals' speech. In particular, such features as identity of interlocutor, topic and participants' constellations have been identified as variables which play an important role in either the choice of one of the two languages or the use of both languages (or "contact") in the course of a single interaction. These situational factors are taken into account especially in studies which follow functional or interactional approaches, since they are primarily interested in understanding language choice and contact in terms of the meaning and value that languages have for their speakers (Blom-Gumperz 1972; McClure 1981; Auer 1984; Heller 1988b).

One important finding that has emerged from previous research is that bilingual behaviour occurs more frequently with group members than with

outsiders (Poplack 1980, 1981; Gumperz 1982). Hence, when studying language choice and contact, naturalistic data collected in informal settings are preferred to interview data. In fact, interview data are usually highly structured and pre-determined in terms of language choice and discourse role, and therefore lend themselves more to the study of "intrusion" — rather than contact — of other language(s) upon the language of the interviewer and interview. On the other hand, a more genuine picture of language choice and contact can be gained through data collected in more informal settings, which are less structured in terms of language use and participants' roles, and where language preferences can be followed more freely.

These issues regarding interview data are particularly relevant in the case of language studies which deal with Italian migrant communities, such as the Italo-Australian one. The linguistic repertoire of the majority of Italians who migrated to Australia in the 50s and 60s include an Italian dialect as their first language, a regional-popular variety of Italian and English. So far, using the interview as the main fieldwork method has meant choosing Italian — the formal language of the repertoire — as the language of the interview, to the exclusion of both dialect and English. While these studies have been valuable in analysing the intrusion of English and the dialect upon Italian (Bettoni 1981, 1986; Kinder 1986), they can throw little light on the issues of choice and contact among the three codes, once these are put on an equal footing.

In this article I intend to further the understanding of the bilingual (and trilingual) behaviour of Italo-Australians by examining it in different contexts. Therefore the linguistic performance of a trilingual speaker is analysed in formal and informal settings, and patterns of language choice and language contact are identified and compared. By doing so, we also intend to assess the role of situational factors on bilingual behaviour, to verify whether, and in what way, language choice and contact are related to the degree of formality of the setting.

2. Methodology.

2.1. Fieldwork approach.

In order to go beyond the limits of the interview and obtain more spontaneous and naturalistic speech, data were collected within the domestic environment by means of ethnographic oriented fieldwork methods. My approach drew largely on the methods adopted by Blom and Gumperz in Norway (1972), Gal in Austria (1979) and Milroy in Belfast (1987, 1987²). In particular, Milroy's methodology represented an important model, because of the changes that she brought to the position of the fieldworker

from a participant observer to "a friend of a friend", thus ensuring her the status of an insider within the community. This approach was deemed more suitable to the Italo-Australian context, as the position of mere acquaintance or of "outsider with special rights", in Blom-Gumperz's and Gal's style, would not have enabled a total stranger to have access to the core of the domestic environment. It was necessary instead to develop close contacts with the informants, gain their confidence and trust, build up a genuine relationship of friendship and become part of the family circle.

However, gaining the position of "an insider of a special kind" within an Italo-Australian family, as postulated by Milroy, proved more difficult than expected by her account. Several months of fieldwork were necessary to the researcher to change her initial position of total stranger and become part of the normal family life. Progress in the fieldwork was helped by various strategies developed by the researcher together with favourable circumstances outside her control, which arose during the initial period of observation. A detailed account of the fieldwork is given in Rubino (1990).

2.2. The informants.

The data were collected within a Sicilian-Australian household where three generations are present: grandparents, parents and children. Sicilian was chosen as it is the dialect of origin of the researcher; the presence of the three generations would ensure the use of all three languages — Italian, Sicilian and English — in the house. Young children were preferred to teenagers as they were likely to spend more time at home and thus be easier to record.

The family is fairly representative of the Sicilians who migrated to Australia at the end of the 50s: both parents arrived here at the age of 14, from the same fishing village. Carlo, the father, is a fisherman himself, while Anna, the mother, is a homemaker. Their two sons — Rino and Giorgio — are aged 12 and 9. The children see their grandparents very often, and their maternal grandfather — who is a widower — often spends long periods with them. Neither parent has ever gone back to Italy. Since both parents come from very large families, almost all their social life is contained within the family network.

Carlo and Anna speak Sicilian as their first language, excellent regional-popular Italian and have a very good command of English. In terms of language use, they speak Sicilian to each other and to relatives in their age group or older; the mother speaks more Sicilian (or Italian) than English to the children as well as to younger relatives, while the father tends to use English more often than Sicilian. The children understand Sicilian and Italian very well, but they tend to use English with their parents and some Sicilian with their grandparents.

2.3. *The data.*

The data collected display the family's linguistic performance in a variety of situations, following the changes that took place in the fieldwork throughout the months.

In the first encounters, the researcher is a complete outsider who comes to visit the family. She is treated as a guest, and is at the centre of attention. Consequently, the data are similar to those of an interview in terms of discourse structure, speech roles and participants' constellations. The conversations present a pattern constrained by the social relationships of the participants, with an asymmetrical distribution of speech roles and a clear two-part discourse: the researcher initiates the topic and asks questions, while the parents provide the answers. Moreover, talk is mainly confined to the adults, while the two children remain at the margins, are talked about indirectly or addressed together.

In the last phase of the fieldwork the situation within the house has changed markedly, as a relationship of mutual friendship has developed and the researcher visits more freely, often helping the children with their homework. As a result, the data collected during the last visits are quite different, as the family members more and more revert back to their normal patterns of communication. The focus of attention has now moved away from the researcher to the children, who play the central role in the normal, everyday activities in which all participants—the researcher included—carry on.

In terms of discourse structure, speech roles and participants' constellations, conversations are often initiated by the children or by the mother, rather than by the researcher; no longer is there the clearcut question-answer structure of the first visits, and all participants take on a range of different speech roles; the conversations now take place frequently between adults and children.

In addition to these two settings, data were gathered also within the core of the family. On a few occasions the researcher asked the family to record their own speech, in her absence. These data collected "from the inside" by the informants themselves complete the picture of the speech repertoire of the family.

Thus, the corpus (about 20 hours of recording) consists of data collected in some very distinct settings, covering the spectrum from formality to informality: the formal visits of the initial fieldwork, the more informal final phase, and the informal family situation. In each setting, Italian, Sicilian and English are used differently, in response to different situational features. The changed relationship among participants in the first and the last phase of the fieldwork is one of the major factors which modifies the level of formality of the setting. The linguistic analysis in the following sections focusses on identifying and comparing patterns of language choice and contact in each setting.

For the analysis, representative episodes of comparable length were selected from each of the settings. The analysis focusses on the mother's speech, given that she is the speaker who does most of the talking in the three settings and the one who displays changes in her speech more clearly than anybody else, both in terms of language choice and language contact.

2.4. *Analytical framework.*

In order to link linguistic variation to contextual features, a model of analysis with ten variable groups was developed: six of them are linguistic and deal with the language and contact configurations of the clause, as well as its linguistic environment; the remaining four are situational variables and deal with type of interlocutor, topic, tone and general setting. As this article focusses upon linguistic patterns, the situational variables are not described in detail.

2.4.1. *The linguistic variables.*

For the linguistic analysis, the clause was adopted as the main unit. In fact, a unit firmly anchored on grammatical grounds, and for which a detailed structural description is available (eg. Halliday 1985a), seemed preferable to others less clearly defined (eg. utterance). A total of 1,726 clauses uttered by the mother were analysed, divided as follows: 557 clauses for the first setting, 615 for the second one, and 554 for the family speech.

In terms of the first group of variables, each clause was coded either for its language or for its contact configuration. In fact, a clause can be entirely in Italian, Sicilian or English, or can display two major types of contact configurations: transference and mixing. Secondly, clauses were also coded for the language of the preceding adjacent clause, either if uttered by Anna herself or by a different speaker. Thirdly, clauses were coded for the language of preceding turn uttered by Anna within the same interaction. In the following sections these variable groups are presented in detail.

2.4.1.1. *Contact within the clause: transference.*

In this study transference refers to the occurrence of a lexical element in L2 or L3 in a clause in L1. The element is clearly identifiable in the clause, which is in a different language.

Clauses containing a transfer were coded for the following linguistic combinations appearing in Anna's speech: (1) an English transfer in an Italian clause; (2) a Sicilian transfer in an Italian clause; (3) an English

transfer in a Sicilian clause; (4) an Italian transfer in a Sicilian clause. Some examples of the four types of transfers respectively follow:¹

- (1) EVERYBODY ce l'hanno allora?
'everybody has got it then?'
- (2) ognuno si deve fare a sua
'everyone has to do their own'
- (3) a leggiri FIRSI
'you have to read first'
- (4) chistu cca s'ava livari cosi
'this one has to be taken out like this'

The issue of distinguishing between transference (i.e. signalling a change in language) and borrowing (i.e. use of a word fully assimilated in the recipient language) is unresolved in contact studies. Different criteria have been suggested to distinguish between the two, ranging from formal criteria, such as degree of phonological and morphological integration (Poplack 1980), to functional criteria, such as participant's view (Auer 1984, 1988). In my case, the situation is made more complex by the fact that three languages are at play here, and that two of them are closely related. Therefore, in order to conduct the analysis consistently across and within the three sets of data, a clear set of criteria was to be devised.

With regard to Sicilian and Italian transfers, initially I intended to follow a morphological and grammatical criterion, following the example of eg. Berruto (1989), as the two languages are quite differentiated on grammatical grounds, while they share many lexical morphemes. However, while identifying words ending with Sicilian grammatical morphemes did not present great difficulties in set 1, where Italian is the language used most, it was much more difficult in sets 2 and 3, where all three languages are freely used. In case of formal coincidence between the two languages, the morphological criterion could no longer be called upon. For example, in (5) "i fucchetti" is clearly Sicilian, but "i bicchieri" could be an Italian phrase in a Sicilian clause—and thus the clause containing it would be coded as mixed—or it could be considered Sicilian on the basis of the linguistic environment—and thus the clause would be coded as entirely Sicilian.

- (5) *pigghia i fucchetti e i bicchieri*

¹ In the excerpts, in order to highlight the three languages, Italian is transcribed in plain text, Sicilian in Italics and English in small caps. Normal spelling has been used for English and Italian. Fully integrated transfers from English are transcribed in small caps and the original word is added in square brackets, for easier comprehension. The letters on the left indicate the speakers, as follows: A = Anna, the mother, R = Rino, eldest child, G = Giorgio, younger child, C = Carlo, the father, N = Nina, the researcher.

Other signals used are the following:
/ clause boundaries
: : : : phonemic lengthening
— latching

At the end, this latter solution seemed more acceptable in that it attempted to reflect the speaker's choice of language. Furthermore, in the absence of any signals within the speech itself indicating otherwise, it seemed preferable to postulate the occurrence of monolingual rather than bilingual speech, given that the latter is generally believed to be a more marked choice. On the other hand, with this solution the risk to minimise the role played by Italian within domestic speech remains.

With regard to transfers from English, a lexical criterion was followed in the analysis, given that my main interest was in the different degrees of English occurring in the three settings rather than in the "form" in which it appears. Therefore even transfers from English fully integrated phonologically and morphologically into the recipient language were assigned to English. Below, (6) shows an unintegrated transfer occurring in a Sicilian clause and (7) one which is fully integrated into the phonology and morphology of Sicilian. Both were coded as English transfers.

- (6) *c'è u ROCK MELON ddocu*
'there is the rock melon there'
- (7) *chisti i RICIARGIAO (RECHARGE) iddu*
'these ones (batteries), he recharged them'

2.4.1.2. Contact within the clause: *mixing*.

The second type of contact within the clause is mixing, which refers to the occurrence of lexical and/or grammatical elements drawn from different languages in such a way that it is impossible to assign that clause to a particular language.

Mixed clauses were further classified for the following language combinations: (1) Italian and Sicilian; (2) Italian and English; (3) English and Sicilian; (4) Italian, Sicilian and English. Some examples are given below.

- (8) *no è buono cu u legnu no*
'no, it's no good with the wood'
- (9) *e io devo andare THIS AFTERNOON*
'and I have to go this afternoon'
- (10) *YOUR WRITING est macari*
'it's your writing even'
- (11) *vuoi u DRINK?*
'do you want the drink?'

This type of contact generally presents a continuous configuration, as the lexico-grammatical elements from different languages appear at phrase level. This is the case for instance in (8), (9) and (10) above. More rarely

some discontinuous configurations can also appear: typically, when all three languages occur, as in (11), where the verb is in Italian, the article in Sicilian and the noun in English; or when Italian and Sicilian come into contact, as in both clauses in (12) below.

- (12) ah quando poi *te-o* corregge a maestra / poi *t-a* fai tu poi a copia
'when the teacher corrects it, then you copy it down'

Thus, in this study mixing refers specifically to one type of contact, at one particular linguistic level. In other studies, the term has been given very different meanings, ranging from a cover term referring to various types of contact (Pfaff 1979) to a term referring to a process of partial pidginisation (Kachru 1978).

2.4.1.3. Contact above the clause: switching.

As mentioned above, clauses were coded also for the language, or contact configuration, of the preceding adjacent clause, either if uttered by Anna herself or by a different speaker. If two clauses in different languages or presenting transference or mixing appear one after the other in Anna's speech, I talk of "switching between clauses".

In (13) several clauses uttered by Anna are shown, which are characterised by switches between different languages or different contact configurations.

- (13) COME ON / SIT DOWN PROPERLY / guarda / come fai a sedia rà / *tuttu tutt-u*
muru hai fatto / t'ammazza dopo papà
'come on, sit down properly, look what he does on the chair, you are dirtying all the wall, your dad will kill you'

Clauses in different languages or containing transference or mixing can also appear one after the other, but uttered by two different participants: Anna and another one. This is called "switching across participants".

Examples of code switching across participants are given in (14) and (15): in (14), the child speaks in English and the mother acknowledges his statement in Sicilian; in (15), Anna's reply to Giorgio's remark is in Italian with a transfer from English.

- (14) G FIRST I GOTTA DO THIS / THIS IS DUE BY TOMORROW
A *ah:: dumani ci l'a partari*
'you have to hand it in tomorrow'
(15) G MA:: HERE YOU FORGOT TO PUT THE TOMATO SAUCE IN THERE
A oh::: la TOMATO SAUCE doveva mettere / come si faceva poi?
'did I have to put the tomato sauce? then what would have happened to it?'

Clauses were also coded for the language or contact configuration of the preceding turn uttered by Anna within the same interaction (or "exchange"), in order to bring to light possible switches across turns. The term "turn" is used here in the classic sense of the conversationalists, as what is said by one person before or after another starts to speak (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). By restricting the analysis to the same interaction, I intended to exclude switches which are related to changes in situational factors, such as change in interlocutor. In case of turns with more than one clause, the language of the opening clause of the turn was compared to the one of the closing clause in the previous turn. This contact configuration is called "switching across turns". The example below shows a switch from Sicilian to English in Anna's second turn:

- (16) A *oh unu'è c-annasti?*
'where did you go?'
G NEAR THE WHARF
A WHAT FOR?

In conclusion, an explanation on the way the term "switching" is used here is in order. As shown above, unlike in most of the literature, in this study switching can refer also to occurrences where two adjacent clauses or turns do not necessarily display a complete change in the languages used. An example is shown in (13), where switches are coded both between the second and third clause, and between the third and fourth, although in this latter case the two clauses differ only in some lexico-grammatical elements. Although it could be argued that these occurrences are different and should be kept separate, it must be remembered that my main interest is on comparing the degree of changes occurring in the three sets of data. Therefore the term "switching", while not distinguishing among types of switches, when applied consistently throughout the corpus gives a global measure of the changes that occur above clause level.

In other studies the term "switching" or "code switching" has been used in a variety of meanings, ranging from code choice (Fasold 1984: 180), to a much more restricted sense indicating the use of one L2 word only in an L1 sentence (what I have called here transfer; eg. Poplack 1980: 583). In this work, on the other hand, "switching" refers specifically to contact above clause level, occurring either between clauses (in the same speaker's speech or across different speakers), or across turns.

Furthermore, in this work switching does not refer exclusively to the point of departure from a particular language, as found in other studies (eg. Huerta-Macias 1981: 154). In my coding both the clause departing from a language or contact configuration, and the clause going back to it have been considered instances of switching. Therefore switching indicates the juxtaposition of two adjacent clauses in different languages or contact configurations; or the change in language across every turn—not just the

first one—in a particular interaction. Some of the reasons why this criterion was adopted are the following: a) this study deals with three languages, so that there could be a sequence of three clauses all in different languages or contact configurations; b) in some of my data it is impossible to establish what other studies call the “base language”, adopted as the language of departure for the switches (on this point, cf. 3.1.).

2.4.2. *The situational variables.*

Three of the four situational variables chosen for the analysis were the following: interlocutor, topic and tone, as they were found to be the major contextual features differentiating the three sets of data. With regard to interlocutor, eight were present in my data. With regard to topic, a distinction was made between “activity oriented topic”, referring to talk directly linked to some action taking place there and then, and “non-activity oriented topic”, referring to talk about past experiences. With regard to tone of the interactions, a distinction was made between a neutral tone and a more varied and expressive one, coded as strong emotive speech. Changes in tone are indicative of the changes in the relationship among participants, and particularly of the researcher’s relationship with the family.

A fourth situational variable coded each clause for the general setting, as (1), (2) or (3), that is belonging to the initial phase of fieldwork, to the later phase, or when the family recorded their own speech in the absence of the researcher.

3. *Analysis.*

The main hypothesis underlying this study concerns the changes (or “variation”) of language choice and language contact in different types of setting. It is hypothesised that linguistic patterns in Anna’s speech will vary according to the degree of formality of the situation. Therefore this study will:

- a) examine patterns of language choice and contact at different linguistic levels, i.e. within and above the clause, in order to verify whether any changes occur in language distribution, type and amount of contact in the three settings;
- b) analyse in detail language contact at one particular level, i.e. within the clause, in order to verify whether the same contact type displays any changes in the three settings with regard to two main features, i.e. languages that come into contact within the clause itself and linguistic environment of the clause displaying the contact (preceding and following clauses).

3.1. *Language choice.*

In this section the question of language choice in the three settings is investigated, focussing within clauses. Table 1 shows the percentage of clauses uttered by Anna in each of the three languages. The fourth column refers to clauses which are not uttered entirely in one language, but display some form of contact, either mixing or transference.

TABLE 1
Choice of language in the three sets

	Italian	Sicilian	English	Mix & Transf.
Set 1	74.86%	2.87%	8.26%	14.01%
Set 2	30.08%	19.02%	18.05%	32.85%
Set 3	5.42%	58.12%	17.15%	19.31%

The distribution of the three languages changes remarkably from one setting to the other. In set 1, Italian is by far the language most used, set 2 shows a more even distribution of languages and contact configurations; in set 3, the highest percentage of clauses is uttered in Sicilian, but English and contact configurations are relatively high.

An interesting question that needs to be addressed at this point—and which is relevant to the analysis of contact that will follow—is whether, on the basis of these figures, a “base language” can be identified in the settings. In other studies, this notion varies a great deal, ranging from the language to which most phonological and morphological features of a discourse can be attributed (Hasselmo 1970: 181), to the recipient language or the dominant language (Poplack 1980: 584, 605), to the language explicitly preferred by the speaker (Huerta 1978: 53). Following the type of analytical framework adopted in this study, where choice of language and contact are analysed at different linguistic levels, in my definition of base language I have attempted to take into account more than one level. Therefore, base language indicates the language in which the highest number of clauses is uttered and which, at the same time, shows the lowest degree of variation between clauses and across turns. The degree of variation of a language in each setting is arrived at on the basis of the number of switches preceding the clauses uttered in a particular language. In this way, my definition rests on a view of the clause not only on its own, but also within its linguistic environment.

On the basis of these criteria, in set 1, the base language is Italian as it clearly is the language in which the highest number of clauses is uttered (Table 1). Furthermore, Italian shows the lowest degree of variation among

the three languages: 167 (85.64%) Italian clauses are followed by other Italian clauses, while only 28 (14.36%) are followed by a different language or contact configuration (Table 2). Likewise, 89 (82.40%) clauses closing a turn are followed by Italian clauses opening the next turn uttered by Anna.

TABLE 2
Language variation in set 1

Between clauses From preceding clause		Ital	Sicil	Engl	Mix & Transf
Into base language clause	Ital	167	9	9	22
	Sicil	8	—	—	1
	Engl	3	—	5	4
	Mix & Transf	17	2	4	7
Across turns From clause in preceding turn		Ital	Sicil	Engl	Mix & Transf
Into base language clause	Ital	89	2	2	11
	Sicil	1	—	—	—
	Engl	7	—	8	6
	Mix & Transf	11	2	2	4

In set 3, the base language is Sicilian. In fact, it is the language in which the highest number of clauses is uttered (Table 1); moreover, 100 (64.10%) Sicilian clauses are followed by Sicilian clauses (Table 3); likewise, 34 (58.62%) clauses closing a turn are followed by Italian clauses opening the next turn. Therefore Sicilian shows the lowest degree of variation both between clauses and across turns.

In set 2, the picture is not so clear, since there is a more even distribution of languages and contact configurations (Table 1). Firstly, the majority of clauses is not uttered in any of the three languages, but contains some form of contact (either mixing or transference). Secondly, among the three languages although Italian is the language in which the highest number of clauses is uttered, the difference between the number of Italian clauses and that of clauses uttered in the other two languages is much lower than in the other sets. Thirdly, with regard to variation (Table 4), 48 (48.97%) Italian clauses are followed by another Italian clause; 25 (42.37%) Sicilian clauses are followed by another Sicilian clause; 25 (39.68%) English clauses are followed by another English clause. With regard to turns, 17 (43.58%)

TABLE 3
Language variation in set 3

Between clauses From preceding clause		Ital	Sicil	Engl	Mix & Transf
Into base language clause	Ital	2	5	4	4
	Sicil	5	100	28	28
	Engl	2	23	4	11
	Mix & Transf	5	28	13	13
Across turns From clause in preceding turn		Ital	Sicil	Engl	Mix & Transf
Into base language clause	Ital	1	4	—	2
	Sicil	5	34	10	4
	Engl	1	14	7	4
	Mix & Transf	—	6	8	4

clauses closing a turn are followed by Italian clauses opening the next turn. For Sicilian and English the percentages are 20% and 23.52% respectively. Thus, although Italian shows the lowest degree of variation, the difference among the three languages (but between Italian and Sicilian particularly) is not so marked as in the other sets. These trends at inter-clause and turn level, together with the lack of a dominant language at clause level, make it difficult to identify a clear base language in set 2. Hence, the base language can be considered unclear or changing throughout the different exchanges that take place in this setting.

In conclusion, a major shift in base language occurs in the three settings. A formal setting is characterised by a clear base language where choice of the other two languages or the presence of contact configurations among the three languages are kept to a minimum. More informal settings, on the other hand, can display a base language but allow choice of the other languages or transference and mixing to a greater extent, even to the point that the base language can become unclear.

Another finding that emerges from these data is that an unclear base language favours contact within the clause. As shown in set 2, in a setting which is not characterised by a clear orientation towards one language, it is more likely that transference and mixing will occur.

Finally, it is to be noted that the percentage of clauses uttered in one single language compared to the other two is much higher in set 1 than

TABLE 4
Language variation in set 2

Between clauses From preceding clause		Ital	Sicil	Engl	Mix & Transf
Into base language clause	Ital	48	10	12	22
	Sicil	13	25	11	16
	Engl	11	10	25	3
	Mix & Transf	26	14	15	44

Across turns
From clause in preceding turn

Into base language clause		Ital	Sicil	Engl	Mix & Transf
Ital		17	3	3	6
Sicil		1	5	1	9
Engl		4	8	4	13
Mix & Transf		17	9	9	18

in the other sets. In other words, set 1 displays the constraints of a monolingual norm, while the other sets point to the "flexibility" of a bilingual norm.

3.2. Type and amount of contact.

The second question to be explored is the incidence of contact at various linguistic levels in the three settings: within the clause, between clauses, across turns and across participants.

3.2.1. Within the clause.

In Table 1 it was shown that contact configurations within the clause are distributed differently in the three sets. In Table 5 transference and mixing are presented separately. Notice that lexical transference, which can be considered the "lighter" form of contact, occurs more frequently in set 1; while mixed clauses are more numerous in each of the other two sets. In a setting constrained by a monolingual norm, such as set 1, a circumscribed type of contact is preferred to heavier mixtures (cf. Poplack 1981: 181, where "noun switches"—called transfers here—were found to be by far more numerous in speech with a non-group member).

TABLE 5
Language choice and contact within the clause

	Transfer	Mixing	Ital	Sicil	Engl
Set 1 n = 557	8.09%	5.92%	74.86%	2.87%	8.26%
Set 2 n = 615	14.96%	17.89%	30.08%	19.02%	18.05%
Set 3 n = 554	9.03%	10.28%	5.42%	58.12%	17.15%

3.2.2. Between clauses.

With regard to language contact above clause level, Table 6 shows language choice and contact in Anna's speech in sequences of clauses. In set 1, 258 of Anna's clauses are preceded by another clause uttered by her. As shown in the Table, 67.83% of them do not display any change of language or contact configuration (mixing and transfer) from her previous clause, and language choice from clause to clause varies only to a low degree (32.17%). The situation is very different in the other two settings, where well over half of Anna's clauses displays a change of language or contact configuration from her preceding clause. Notice also that the percentages (59.35% and 58.91%) are quite similar in the two informal settings.

TABLE 6
Language choice and contact between clauses

	Set 1 n = 258	Set 2 n = 305	Set 3 n = 275
No switches	67.83%	40.65%	41.09%
Switches	32.17%	59.35%	58.91%

Two major considerations can be made on the basis of these findings. Firstly, in the formal setting the constraint towards a monolingual norm is operating beyond clause level as well. It was shown above that in set 1 a high number of clauses was uttered in one language only. Likewise, sequences of clauses do not display any change of language. Secondly, the use of Italian as base language elicits a much lower degree of variation between clauses than Sicilian as a base language.

3.2.3. *Across turns.*

The pattern displayed in Anna's speech at inter-clause level is confirmed also at a higher level, that is across turns. In set 1, 146 of Anna's clauses are preceded by another turn uttered by her; as shown in Table 7, only 32.20% of them display any change of language or contact configurations from her previous turn. The situation is different in sets 2 and 3, where switching across turns reaches high percentages (74.02% and 55.77% respectively). Her switching across turns therefore is higher in the informal settings, and where the base language is not Italian.

TABLE 7

Language choice and contact across turns

	Set 1 n = 146	Set 2 n = 127	Set 3 n = 104
No switches	67.80%	25.98%	44.23%
Switches	32.20%	74.02%	55.77%

3.2.4. *Across participants.*

The last feature analysed in this section is language use across participants (Table 8). In set 1, 270 of Anna's clauses are preceded by a clause uttered by another speaker; in this set Anna's choice of language generally follows the language of the previous speaker (78.15% of the times). In the other two sets, on the other hand, well over half of her clauses constitute a change from the language of the previous speaker.

As in the case of language use between clauses and across turns, in set

TABLE 8

Language choice and contact across participants

	Set 1 n = 270	Set 2 n = 272	Set 3 n = 190
Clauses not preceded by a diff. lg.	78.15%	35.66%	43.16%
Clauses preceded by a diff. lg.	21.85%	64.34%	56.84%

1 the constraint of a monolingual norm is at play also across participants. The informal settings, on the other hand, allow greater freedom and participants can follow their own language preferences.

The findings presented in this section confirm that the amount and type of contact vary in the different settings. The formal setting displays the lowest degree of contact among the three languages, at every linguistic level analysed: within the clause, between clauses, across turns and across participants. In the two informal settings, on the other hand, language contact is much more prominent. One final point to note is that, at every level, set 2 displays a higher degree of contact than set 3. As mentioned before, this can be explained by the lack of a clear base language in set 2. Both of these factors: lack of a clear base language and the higher incidence of contact in set 2 compared to the family situation of set 3, can be explained in the light of some specific features of set 2. In the conversations of this set, Anna is often trying to mediate among participants with different language preferences: the children using English and on the other hand the researcher using Italian.

3.3. *Mixing.*

So far language contact has been presented in global terms, analysing its incidence in the different settings. In this section a more specific analysis is carried out into one contact configuration within the clause in order to: a) see which languages mix most; b) see which language "triggers" (cf. Clyne 1967) the mixed clause by examining their linguistic environment (i.e. preceding and following clauses); c) verify whether both these features: language combinations and direction of mixing, vary in the three settings.

Table 9 shows the distribution of mixed clauses in the three sets, and specifies their language combinations.

In set 1, the majority of mixed clauses includes some lexico-grammatical elements drawn from Italian, in combination with the other language(s). In set 3, most mixed clauses include elements from Sicilian. In set 2, on

TABLE 9

Mixed clauses in the three sets

	Set 1 n = 33	Set 2 n = 110	Set 3 n = 57
Italian and Sicilian	51.52%	50.00%	49.12%
English and Sicilian	6.06%	15.45%	31.58%
Italian and English	24.24%	10.91%	7.02%
All three languages	18.18%	23.64%	12.28%

the other hand, the language combinations are distributed more evenly. This different distribution across sets would point to an important feature: in both sets 1 and 3 the base language is present in the majority of mixed clauses. This first insight, however, needs to be explored further in the light of the linguistic environment of the mixed clauses.

Looking at the clauses surrounding mixing, we observe that in terms of language direction, preceding clauses seem more relevant than following clauses. In fact, generally, mixed clauses do not occur at the start of an exchange: in all three sets, 80-90% of them are preceded by clauses uttered by Anna herself or another speaker, while only about half of Anna's mixed clauses are followed by a clause uttered by her.

With regard to preceding clauses, in set 1 the majority (60%) of mixed clauses are preceded by clauses entirely in Italian or—more rarely—in Italian with a transfer (uttered either by Anna or other speakers). This factor, together with the other two features noted above (i.e. Italian as base language in this setting, and the presence of Italian lexico-grammatical elements in most mixed clauses) points to the fact that in set 1 mixing occurs as a temporary shift away from the base language (Italian) into either Anna's preferred language (Sicilian) or into bilingual speech. Mixing then is a way of "slipping" out of the constraints of the interview-type conversations, as aptly shown in (17). The brief exchange between mother and father is recorded at the end of a visit where most of the talk has been in Italian. The researcher is on the point of leaving when the father offers to show her the backyard. We are reminded here of the Labovian advice (1972) regarding the occurrence of "casual speech" at the end of the interview.

- (17) C: faccio vedere un po' di MESS a signora
 A: eh per un poco *na* IARDA
 C: 'I'll show the lady some mess'
 A: 'just for that little bit in the yard'

This role of mixing is confirmed also in the clauses following mixing. In set 1, 17 mixed clauses are followed by another clause uttered by Anna, 15 of which are in Italian. It is clear therefore that mixing marks a movement "out of" Italian, soon followed by a return to the base language.

The situation is different in set 3. While, like in set 1, most mixed clauses include the base language (Sicilian), sets 1 and 3 differ in the linguistic environment of mixing. In fact, many mixed clauses in set 3, while containing Sicilian, are not necessarily preceded by clauses in Sicilian or containing Sicilian. In particular, mixed clauses displaying different language combinations (eg. Sicilian and Italian, Sicilian and English; all three languages) can be preceded by clauses entirely in English, uttered either by Anna herself or by other speakers (generally the children). Compared to set 1, therefore, mixing in set 3 signals a higher degree of variation among languages and contact configurations, as it can occur with a complete change of languages—as in (18) below—, rather than with just a partial change.

- (18) WAIT A MINUTE / ne vuoi *n-utra* pocu?
 'do you want a little bit more?'

This, then, confirms what the global figures shown in 3.2. had already revealed, i.e. that Sicilian as base language elicits a higher degree of variation compared to Italian as base language. Furthermore, mixing in set 3 does not necessarily occur in a centrifuge direction to the base language, as a sort of "infringement" of the monolingual norm towards more familiar patterns of speech, as in set 1. In set 3 mixing appears instead as part of a bilingual mode of speaking, that is a type of discourse characterised by the regular and frequent use of elements drawn from languages other than the base language (cf. Hasselmo 1970; Poplack 1980).

This role of mixing in set 3 is particularly noticeable across participants, when Anna's mixed clauses in Sicilian and English occur in reply to the children's use of English. In these cases it is the language of the other participant that is inserted in Anna's replies, perhaps in the attempt to "move" towards them. Typical in this respect are some configurations, where the mother "quotes" part of the children's statements and incorporates them in her replies, as in Anna's last turn in (19) (cf. the principle of "reciprocity" across participants, mentioned by Huerta-Macias 1981: 161). Thus, while in set 1 mixing marks a movement away from the language of the interaction, in these cases mixing goes in the opposite direction: towards the language of the other participant.

- (19) A: non ha studiato *propria iddu*
 'he didn't study at all'
 R: YES I DID
 A: WHEN
 R: LAST NIGHT
 A: LAST NIGHT e LAST NIGHT *tu aieri manciasti / oggi manciasti macara no?*
 'last night and last night you ate yesterday and you did today, didn't you?'

While sets 1 and 3 differ in terms of clauses preceding mixing, they are more similar in terms of clauses following it. Like in set 1, in set 3 clauses uttered by Anna after mixing generally mark a return to her base language, Sicilian, as in (19). However, as mentioned above, the occurrence of mixing is best explained in the light of what precedes, rather than what follows.

A further feature that emerges from set 3 concerns the direction of language contact. It was noted above that in set 1 a clause in Italian tends to be followed by a mixed clause where Italian enters in contact with Sicilian. On the other hand, set 3 shows that a clause in Sicilian does not show the same clear direction as Italian does. In fact it can be followed by mixed clauses displaying various combinations (eg. Sicilian and Italian, Sicilian

and English, and so on). Patterns regarding "preferences" of contact thus emerge: Italian mixes more easily with Sicilian; Sicilian mixes more easily with English than Italian does.

Two considerations can be made on this basis. Firstly, it is here confirmed that Italian is the language eliciting a lower degree of variation. Moving from an Italian base to a mixed clause in Italian and Sicilian means switching "less" than going from Italian to a mixed clause in Sicilian and English (cf. the notion of "code shifting" in Auer & Di Luzio 1982). Secondly, these preferences point to a different degree of permeability of the two languages: the choice of Italian implies a high degree of formality and control by Anna over her speech, therefore contact is either avoided or minimised. The use of Sicilian, on the other hand, indicates a more relaxed and informal attitude which lowers her "barriers" to contact.

In set 2, mixed clauses present a more complex picture, for a number of reasons: firstly, as noted above, the occurrences are distributed more evenly across the language combinations, so that they do not point clearly towards a particular direction; secondly, clauses preceding mixing are uttered in any of the three languages or contact configurations; thirdly, clauses following mixing also display a range of languages or contact configurations. However, by analysing mixing in close connection to preceding clauses, certain patterns already noted in the other two sets can be identified in this context as well.

As in set 1, if the preceding clause—either uttered by Anna or by another speaker—is in Italian (or in Italian in contact with another language), the mixed clause will necessarily display some Italian; furthermore, mixed clauses displaying Italian and Sicilian occur most in this type of linguistic environment. As in set 3, if the preceding clause is in Sicilian, mixed clauses can be in a range of combinations, generally including Sicilian as well. A Sicilian-Italian mixed clause is the frequent type of occurrence also after a clause in Sicilian. If, on the other hand, the preceding clause is in English, English is not necessarily present in the mixed clause, which can instead display the other languages, Sicilian and Italian, like in set 3.

These patterns in set 2 therefore confirm trends already noted in the other sets: the preference of contact (eg. Italian coming into contact with Sicilian more easily than with English) and degree of variation (Italian being followed by a mixed clause containing Italian, thus marking a lower degree of variation). Furthermore, they confirm the importance of the clauses preceding mixing in explaining language mixing itself.

Set 2, on the other hand, differs from the other sets with regard to clauses following mixing. While sets 1 and 3 show a clear return to the base language, in set 2 mixed clauses are followed by a range of languages or contact configurations. An Italian-Sicilian mixed clause, for instance, can be followed by a clause in Italian, in Sicilian, by an Italian clause containing a transfer, or by another mixed clause (but, interestingly, never

by a clause in English). The same happens with a Sicilian-English clause or with a mixed clause where all three languages occur. A second point to observe is that in set 2, more than in the other two sets, mixed clauses can occur in sequences, as in (20).

- (20) THAT'S ALL / ci puoi mettere *dda atre du parole / la fai più: na pochettino*
cchìu lungicedda
'you can put another two words there and do it a little bit longer'

On the basis of these patterns, then, it seems that in set 2 mixing occurs partly as a way of "moving" away from a certain language, as in set 1 but without the constraints of a monolingual norm, and partly as a bilingual mode of speaking, as in set 3. But a further element needs to be considered here: the interlocutor. Some of the factors discussed above (i.e. the higher frequency of mixed clauses, the occurrence of whole sequences of mixed clauses, and the lack of a clear pattern in the return language) can be explained with the fact that in this set mixing is frequently used by Anna as a way of mediating among interlocutors with different language preferences. Mixed clauses occur when Anna is either trying to include in her address both the researcher and the children, or changing interlocutor (eg. from the researcher to the children, or vice versa), or when Anna is speaking to a child together with the researcher and shifts from the researcher's language preference towards her own, as in (21).

- (21) (Giorgio has to copy some information from a book into a worksheet)
N: e non c'entra
N: 'it doesn't fit'
A: non ci entra *dda a-mamma / lo vedi chi? / c'a stu b-b-bezzettu di spazio*
così / e *chisti ci cavi ddocu*
A: 'it doesn't fit dear, can't you see? you have a little space here and that's how much you can fit there'

In set 2, then, mixing takes on the roles which are found also in the other two sets, but adds a new one. Mixed clauses are a tool to avoid one particular language choice while trying to accommodate to different interlocutors.

In conclusion, mixing is a contact configuration which does appear in all three settings, but displaying different language combinations, occurring in different linguistic environments and thus marking different degrees of language variation. As it responds to the different discourse and contextual features of each setting, its role varies in the three contexts: in set 1 mixing marks a momentary shift from Italian as the base language, in set 3 it represents a bilingual mode of speaking, while in set 2 it can be one or the other, or an attempt at accommodating interlocutors with different language preferences.

