Investigating Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals: a summary of the main findings from the partial adaptation of MAIN

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This paper presents some of the results from a doctoral research project that relied on the partial adaptation of the Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN) to Coriglianese, an Italian dialect spoken in Corigliano-Rossano (Cosenza, Calabria). MAIN's retelling scripts and instructions for administration were adapted, translated and employed for an investigation of the linguistic development of 85 Italian-Coriglianese bilingual children and teenagers aged 7 to 18 years. The analysis of narratives focused on the linguistic aspects (i.e., microstructure), namely subordination and instances of code-switching. Specifically, the study examined how internal (chronological age) and external factors (frequent usage of L1 and L2) influence L2 development, as reflected in the participants' elicited and semi-spontaneous production of complex syntactic structures (i.e., relative clauses, RCs). Linear regression analyses revealed that both the frequency of use of Coriglianese and age had a significant impact on participants' performance in both Italian and Coriglianese. The study provides a foundation for further research into Italian-dialect bilingualism.

1 Introduction

In sociolinguistics, the term "language" refers to a linguistic system adopted by a society as a model (or "standard") for grammar codification and formal education; conversely, the term "dialect" is used to define those non-standardized languages that are employed within a community of speakers in informal and vernacular contexts. Nevertheless, in Italo-Romance sociolinguistics this term is also used to refer to the so-called "primary dialects" (see Berruto, 2018; Coseriu, 1980; Regis, 2017), which, despite their subordination to Italian, cannot be considered as "regional varieties of Italian", but as "independent linguistic systems that evolved directly from Latin and present their own structural features" (Masullo, et al. 2024, p. 27). While many studies have explored the linguistic and cognitive development of bilingual children and adults, insufficient attention has been paid to bilectal acquisition, a specific kind of bilingualism resulting from simultaneous exposure to and mixed usage of two or more structurally related varieties of a standard language as their first (L1) or second (L2) language (Grohmann &

Leivada, 2012; Leivada et al., 2017). This paper presents an attempt of adaptation of the MAIN to Coriglianese, a Northern Calabrian dialect spoken in Corigliano Calabro (Calabria, Italy). The discussion begins by examining the methodological and theoretical considerations pertinent to the study of bilingualism in Italian and its regional dialects. Following this, the work provides a brief overview of the primary linguistic features of Coriglianese. The challenges encountered in adapting MAIN's retelling scripts to this dialect are then outlined. Finally, the paper presents some preliminary results from a PhD-research, in which MAIN was utilized to assess the narrative abilities of bilingual speakers of Italian and Coriglianese in both languages.

2 Peculiarities of Italian-dialects bilingualism

Recent statistical investigations indicate that the 32.2% of the Italian population regularly speaks both Italian and local dialects with their families, with percentages being even higher in some Northen (e.g., Veneto: 62%) and Southern regions (e.g., Sicily: 68.8%) (ISTAT, 2017). Many scholars have opposed the use of the term "bilectalism" to describe Italy's sociolinguistic situation, as most dialects spoken in this area cannot be labelled as varieties of Italian (Berruto, 1987, 2018). Instead, they are historically independent linguistic systems that have become structurally closer to Italian as a consequence of a long process of bidirectional convergence, stemming from their coexistence within the Italo-Romance repertoire (Cerruti, 2011). To highlight the main traits of Italian-dialect bilingualism, Berruto (2011, p. 5) proposed the definition of *bilinguismo a bassa distanza strutturale con dilalia* (bilingualism with low structural distance and dilalia): this describes a situation in which speakers within the same community (bilingualism) end up including several structurally close varieties (low structural distance) in their repertoire, adjusting their register and competence according to various social situations (*dilalia*). In this complex relationship with the standard language, dialects experience linguistic and cultural subordination to Italian, despite their frequent use in daily communication within familiar and informal contexts (Cerruti, 2011).

Like speakers of other minority languages, Italian-dialect bilinguals might face language attrition due to low exposure to input, rare usage of dialect as L1 and more frequent usage of Italian as L2 (Colonna Dahlman & Kupish, 2016). They typically display higher proficiency in Italian than in their local dialect (Sanfelici & Roch, 2021). This usually occurs because many parents choose not to impart dialectal competence to their children, because of a social stigma that associates dialects with lower socio-economic contexts (Mocciaro et al., 2012). Consequently, speakers frequently underestimate their daily use of dialects as L1 or L2,[1] reporting a greater frequency of Italian usage when interviewed during sociolinguistic

[1] It is important to address here that the labels of 'L1' and 'L2' should not be intended as indications of the order of acquisition. Despite early exposure to dialectal input and mixed usage of both varieties as languages of communication in familiar and informal context, Italian-dialects bilinguals often rely more on the standard language and display better competence in Italian than in the local dialect. This occurs because Italian is the standard language used for both academic/formal and informal communication, while dialects are only used in limited contexts and lack written standard, as well as official and educational recognition. For these reasons, some scholars tend to refer to dialects as 'L2', because of the different sociolinguistic status that Italian and dialects hold, respectively, as societal and vernacular languages (cf. Berruto, 2018; Sanfelici & Roch, 2021).

investigations (Sobrero & Miglietta, 2006). While studies investigating the language development of Italian-dialect bilingual children and adults have not found significant links between dialectal exposure and proficiency in Italian, they did observe frequent transfers from Italian (which is often the speakers' dominant language) in both spontaneous and elicited productions in dialect (Colonna Dahlman & Kupish, 2016; Sanfelici & Roch, 2021). Conversely, higher rates of usage and exposure to dialects have been associated with greater levels of proficiency and accuracy in dialect language tasks (Klaschik & Kupish, 2016; Kupish & Klaschik, 2017). To sum up, taking into consideration the full range of features associated with this complex phenomenon gives linguistic research a way to provide a punctual and comprehensive analysis of the language abilities of Italian-dialects bilinguals.

3 A brief description of Coriglianese, a Northern Calabrian dialect

Calabria is a Southern Italian region with approximately 2,000,000 inhabitants (ISTAT, 2023). It is one of the Italian regions with the highest rates of simultaneous and mixed usage of Italian and dialects, alongside with other Northern and Southern regions such as Campania (75.2%), Lucania (69.4%) and Trentino (54.9%). According to the latest survey on Italians' linguistic habits (ISTAT, 2017), the exclusive use of dialect as primary language in Calabria decreased from 40.4% to 24.1% between 2007 and 2017, while the prevalent use of Italian increased from 20.4% to 25.3%. However, 68.8% of the regional sample reported speaking both Italian and local dialects with family and close friends. Dialectological studies conducted by Trumper and colleagues (Trumper & Maddalon, 1988; Trumper et al., 1995; Trumper, 1997) proposed a division of Calabria's territory into four major dialect groupings: Group 1 (Southern Lucania and North Calabria), Group 2 (Northern Calabria), Group 3 (Central Calabria) and Group 4 (Southern Calabria).

Coriglianese is an Italo-Romance dialect spoken in Corigliano Calabro (Cosenza, Calabria). As a Northern Calabrian dialect, Coriglianese exhibits some typical traits from Group 2. It features [ə] as the neutral tonic vowel in word-final positions and shows nasal assimilation of [nd] and [mb] (e.g., *kuannə* 'when', *kjummə* 'plumber'). Pronouns are always proclitic, except after imperatives (e.g., *m'u rünə?* 'can you give it to me?' vs. *runamíllə!* 'give it to me!'). Enclitic possessive adjectives are used for singular kinship terms (e.g., *frätə* 'brother' vs. *frätəma* 'my brother'). Infinitive is employed for non-finite complement clauses with modal verbs like *vulïrə* 'to want', with exceptions for asyndetic coordinated constructions with motion verbs *venïrə* 'coming' and *ghïrə* 'going' (e.g., *vuej mangiärə* 'I want to eat' vs. *vaj mangiə* 'I go eating' and *vënə mangiə* 'come eating!'). Intransitive verbs can function as transitive (e.g., *trasa a mächina* 'enter the car!') and the present perfect is used instead of the preterite (cf. Trumper & Maddalon, 1988; Trumper et al., 1995; Trumper, 1997).

Coriglianese's lexicon and grammar have been deeply influenced by the contact with various languages. Contact with Greek (e.g., *masalikö̈ja* 'basil') arose from Corigliano's geographical proximity to Sybaris, one of the most important colonies of Magna Graecia in Calabria (VIII-V B.C.), as well as from religious and cultural influence of the Byzantine Church in the area (VIII-IX A.C.). As a result of Norman-Swabian (XI-XIII A.C.) and Aragonese domination (1442-1501), Coriglianese includes borrowings from French (e.g., *jardinə*

'garden'), Spanish (e.g., *sə spagnärə* 'to get scared') and Arabic (e.g., *lumingiäna* 'eggplant'). Most notably, Coriglianese's vowel system and syntax were influenced by Neapolitan (e.g., *guagnünə* 'boy'), as Calabria was under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Naples until 1860 (cf. De Luca, 1986).

4 Adaptation of the MAIN retelling scripts to Coriglianese

In this section, the partial adaptation of MAIN, which mainly consisted of creating story scripts for the retelling mode for the Cat and Dog stories, will be presented. MAIN's adaptation to Coriglianese was conducted as part of a PhD-research project aimed at investigating elicited and semi-spontaneous production of relative clauses (RCs) by Italian-Coriglianese bilingual children and teenagers (see Section 5.1). To the author's knowledge, there are no available tests for Coriglianese or other Italian dialects which are particularly aimed at evaluating dialectal speakers' narrative skills. MAIN was selected because it was developed to assess the narrative abilities of bilingual children with both typical and atypical development (Gagarina et al., 2019). Furthermore, a recent study employed this tool for the investigation of both comprehension and production skills by Italian-Vicentino bilingual children (see Sanfelici & Roch, 2021). The adaptation of MAIN to Coriglianese was carried out in order to collect information regarding Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals' language skills and to compare it with other data relative to other Italian-dialect bilinguals' narrative abilities.

The Coriglianese version was adapted from the Italian version. Translation was conducted by the author, a native speaker of Coriglianese. This process involved referring to works on Coriglianese' vocabulary and grammar (De Luca, 1986; Longo, 1978) collaborating with other native speakers interviewed during the research and consulting the adaptation guidelines outlined in the MAIN manual (Bohnacker & Gagarina, 2020; Gagarina et al., 2019). Retelling modality and stories were selected because the two scripts (*Cat*, *Dog*) feature protagonists (a cat, a dog, a boy) familiar to speakers from every sociocultural background and, more importantly, use nouns and verbs that are highly frequent in both Italian (*gatto*, *cane*, *ragazzo*) and Coriglianese (*gattə*, *känə*, *guagnünə*). Additionally, both stories take place in familiar settings (a pond, a countryside) and describe every-day actions (fishing, shopping) that are easily relatable to Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals.[2] For the translation of *Cat* story script, it was decided to set the story on a beach by the sea, so the sentence *a cheerful boy was coming back from fishing* was translated to *nu guagnünə sə stapja rikugghjennə kuntjentə i ru märə* 'a little happy boy was coming back from the sea'. This partial change of the story content, although deviant from the accepted adaptation procedure (cf. Bohnacker & Gagarina, 2020; Gagarina et al., 2019), was done so that participants could be more encouraged to draw on their personal experience and cultural context while engaging with the task.

Some difficulties arose in translating some of the internal state terms related to characters' states of mind and emotions, which are essentials for the understanding of episode structure built on characters' goals, attempts and outcomes, or macrostructure (Stein & Glenn,

[2] Corigliano's main economic resources stem from fishing and agrifood production, and one of the local specialities is dry spicy sausage, or *satsittsa*.

1979). For example, the English adjectives *playful* and *cheerful*, which are used in both scripts to introduce the main characters (cat/dog, boy), were translated into Italian with *giocoso* 'playful' and *allegro* 'merry, happy'. Initially, it was considered appropriate to translate both terms using the Coriglianese adjective *felicə* 'happy', due to its structural similarity to the Italian *felice*. However, it was later decided to choose *felicə* as equivalent for *cheerful*, while the item *playful* was translated with the Coriglianese *kurjiüsə* 'funny, lovable', which commonly used by native speakers to refer to animals, particularly pets, that display a quirky yet funny and joyful attitude.

Additional challenges emerged in translating English words such as *butterfly* and mouse, which correspond to *farfalla* and *topo* in Italian, respectively. In Coriglianese, there is no direct equivalent for *farfalla*, as this Italian term is commonly used by native speakers to refer specifically to butterflies. Ultimately, it was decided to use the term *palummella*, which is more frequent and familiar to native speakers and can be used to identify winged insects like butterflies or, more precisely, moths. For the translation of *topo* 'mouse', the Coriglianese equivalent *süricə* was initially considered; however, some native speakers noted that this term is mainly recognized and used by older speakers of Coriglianese. We ultimately chose to use the Italian loanword *tòpə*, which was deemed more appropriate to children and teenagers due to its structural similarity to Italian.

Since MAIN was used with the aim of collecting information regarding participants' spontaneous resort to RCs (see Section 5.1), specific attention was paid to scripts' linguistic content, or microstructure (cf. Gagarina et al., 2019). Table 1 shows the total number and type of words, sentences and coordinate and subordinate clauses in English, Italian and Coriglianese' scripts for the retelling mode (*Cat* and *Dog* stories).

Table 1. Number and type of coordinate and subordinate clauses in MAIN *Cat* and *Dog* (Gagarina et al., 2019).

	English (Gagarina et al., 2019)		**Italian (Levorato & Roch, 2020)**		**Coriglianese**	
Story script	*Cat*	*Dog*	*Cat*	*Dog*	*Cat*	*Dog*
N total words	178	174	164	165	172	175
N total sentences	34	34	33	33	33	33
N direct speech sentences	2	2	2	2	2	2
N coordinating constructions	5	5	5	5	5	5
N subordinating constructions	14	14	14	15	14	15
N subject relative clauses	4/14	4/14	4/14	4/15	4/14	4/15
N non-finite complement clauses	3/14	3/14	4/14	4/15	4/14	4/15
N finite complement clauses	2/14	2/14	1/14	2/15	1/14	2/15
N adverbial subordinate clauses	5/14	5/14	5/14	5/15	5/14	5/15

The Coriglianese scripts are equivalent to the English and Italian scripts in terms of number of coordinating and subordinating constructions. Italian and Coriglianese exhibit similar syntactic

properties regarding the derivation of complement, adverbial and RC. Both languages use unmarked complementizers *che* (Italian) and *ka* (Coriglianese) 'that' in finite complement clauses with perceptive verbs (e.g., *non si era accorto che il cane stava mangiando una salsiccia* vs. *unn si nn'era akkuertə ka u känə si stapja pijannə na satsittsa* 'he did not notice that the dog had grabbed a sausage') and subject RC (e.g., *un gatto giocherellone che vide una farfalla* vs. *nu gattə kurjüsə ka avja bbistə na palummella* 'a playful cat that saw a butterfly). They also feature non-finite complement clauses introduced by modal (e.g., *voglio prendere un pesce* vs. *vuej pijärə nu piššə* 'I want to grab a fish') and phrasal verbs (e.g., *si mise a piangere* vs. *s'è mmïsə a ciàngerə* 'he started to cry'). Casual subordinate clauses are introduced by adverbs like *perché* and *pirkì* 'because' (e.g., *fece un salto perché voleva prenderla* vs. *ge tsumpätə pirkì u vulja akkjappärə* 'he leaped forward because he wanted to catch it') or prepositions like *di* and *i* 'to' (e.g., *il gatto era molto contento di mangiare un pesce così gustoso* vs. *gera kuntjentə i si mangiärə nu bbjellə piššə* 'the cat was very pleased to eat such a tasty fish'). Temporal adverbial clauses are introduced by *quando* and *kuannə* 'when' (*quando vide la sua palla cadere…* vs. *kuannə a bbistə u pallünə ghïrə intra l'akkua…* 'when he saw his ball rolling into the water…').

5 Narrative abilities of Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals: Main results and findings

5.1 Introduction

I will now present part of the data collected for a doctoral study aimed at analysing production of RCs of school-aged Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals and the role of age and daily usage of dialect as L2 on participants' linguistic development. Studies about bilingual syntactic development revealed that bilinguals tend to resort more to subject RCs and to avoid object RCs in elicited and spontaneous production in L2; this might be due to lack sufficient syntactic knowledge and computational skills to process derivational features of object RCs (i.e., movement, cf. Friedmann et al., 2009), because of low exposure, infrequent usage of L2 and transfer from dominant L1 (cf. Andreou & Tsimpli, 2020; Schneidnes & Tuller, 2014, 2019). Studies that investigated comprehension and production of RCs in bilectal children and adults (see Covazzi, 2019 for Friulan-Italian and Garraffa et al., 2015; 2017 for Sardinian-Italian bilingualism) never found links between exposure to dialects and delays in development of syntactic capacities in Italian as standard language. However, other studies suggested that more frequent usage of Italian as dominant language and chronological age should be considered as key factors influencing individuals' proficiency in dialects as L2 (Klaschik & Kupish, 2016; Kupish & Klaschik, 2017). The aim of the study was to investigate if Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals resemble the same patterns of linguistic development of other bilingual and bilectal populations, and particularly regarding the production of RCs.

5.2 Methods

MAIN was administered to three groups of participants of different ages: a group of primary school children of 7–10-years-old (24 females, 12 males, mean age = 9;1, SD = 1;0), a group of middle school children of 10–13-years-old (12 females, 6 males, mean age = 11;9, SD = 1;1) and a group of high school students of 14–18-years-old (19 males, 12 females, mean age = 15;9,

SD = 1;3).[3] Participants and their families were asked to fill out a questionnaire (see Mattheoudakis et al., 2016) regarding daily language usage. The mean percentage of current usage of Italian and Coriglianese, shown in Table 2, were calculated following the same procedure used by Andreou et al. (2021) and Mattheoudakis et al. (2016). Specifically, points were given to each language (Italian and Coriglianese) based on the number of people interacting with participants on a daily basis. Italian or Coriglianese was given 1 point, depending on whether a certain person (parents, siblings, friends, teachers, etc.) was interacting with the participant in that one language, respectively. If a person interacted with the participant in both languages, the point was divided between the two languages (0.5 points each). This score was later normalized by calculating the percentage relative to the total number of individuals interacting with the child in Italian or in Coriglianese.

Table 2. Mean percentage of daily usage of Italian and Coriglianese for each group of participants.

Group	**Italian** M (SD)	**Coriglianese** M (SD)
Age 7–10	78.43% (17%)	21.57% (17%)
Age 10–13	50.39% (16%)	49.61% (16%)
Age 14–18	53.90% (19%)	46.10% (19%)

As seen in Table 2, each group of participants declared more frequent use of Italian as language for daily communication. While usage of dialect is particularly low between younger participants, Coriglianese finds a broader and more balanced use in older groups. This allows to attribute to Italian the status of participants' dominant L1, while Coriglianese should be seen as the weaker L2 (cf. Andreou et al., 2021; Colonna, Dahlman & Kupish, 2016).

The *Cat* and *Dog* stories were presented to participants following MAIN's guideline for administration and assessment for telling mode. The order of presentation was randomized regarding language (Italian, Coriglianese) and story (*Cat*, *Dog*), as suggested by the counterbalancing procedure in MAIN's manual (cf. Gagarina et al., 2019). Participants were tested in two separated sessions, one for Italian and one for Coriglianese. Instructions for administration were provided by the researcher herself in Italian or Coriglianese, according to the language under examination. First, participants were asked to sit on a table in front of the experimenter and to choose between three different envelopes, all containing the same story chosen for administration. They were instructed to keep the picture in front of them and visible to them only and explained that the experimenter did not know what story they were choosing, so they could be encouraged to be as much precise as possible while telling the story (cf. Tsimpli et al., 2016). They were asked to take a first look at the whole story and then to tell the story starting from the first two pictures. They were told to keep telling the story by unfolding the next pictures two by two until the full story was visible. Prompts and encouragements were given to participants from the beginning to the end of the task, especially when they were showing confusion or anxiety. Once the task was concluded, they were praised and asked to

[3] Participants were recruited within students from primary, middle and high schools in Corigliano's urban area. The overlap in age between Group 1 and Group 2 is due to the fact that two students enrolled in first class of middle school were slightly younger than their classmates at the time of testing.

answer to comprehension questions. This modality was chosen to observe participant's ability to generate narrative texts in Italian as L1 and Coriglianese as 2L1 or L2 (cf. Gagarina et al., 2019; Gillam & Carlisle, 1997).

The analysis involved narrative texts' microstructure and relied on the subordination index as measure for syntactic complexity (cf. Schneider et al., 2006), namely the ratio of subordinate clauses to the total number of C-units (i.e., one main clause with all dependent clauses, cf. Hunt, 1965), the ratio of RCs to the total number of subordinate clauses and the ratio of words in the target and non-target languages to the total number of words as measure for code-switching (cf. Gagarina et al., 2019). One-way ANOVAs and the non-parametric alternative to ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test, were used to check for significant differences between the three groups and linear regression analysis was used to look for significant effects of explanatory variables (daily use of Coriglianese and age) on participants' performance.

5.3 Results

In Tables 3 and 4, results regarding analysis of narrative microstructure (i.e., Subordination index, subject RCs, and object RCs) for the three age groups in Italian and Coriglianese, respectively, are displayed.

Table 3. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of rates of subordination (subordination index, subject RCs and object RCs) in Italian narrative texts, per age group.

Group	**Subordination index** M (SD)	**Subject RCs** M (SD)	**Object RCs** M (SD)
Age 7–10	0.58 (0.33)	20.61% (15%)	0.17% (1%)
Age 10–13	0.73 (0.24)	25.94% (12%)	2.01% (6%)
Age 14–18	0.91 (0.41)	23.57% (10%)	2.99% (5%)

Table 4. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of rates of subordination (subordination index, subject RCs and object RCs) in Coriglianese narrative texts, per age group.

Group	**Subordination index** M (SD)	**Subject RCs** M (SD)	**Object RCs** M (SD)
Age 7–10	0.43 (0.27)	31.04% (25%)	3.17% (9%)
Age 10–13	0.58 (0.22)	22.36% (17%)	2.04% (5%)
Age 14–18	0.33 (0.63)	30.16% (23%)	4.60% (7%)

The statistical analyses revealed that oldest group (age 14–18) outperformed the youngest group (age 7–10) regarding the subordination index ratio in both Italian ($F(2, 82) = 4.63$, $p = .01$) and Coriglianese ($F(2, 82) = 4.26$, $p = .02$). They also outperformed younger participants in the production of object RC, but only in Italian ($K = 7.88$, $df = 2$, $p = .02$). It is also interesting to notice how both older and younger participants performed better in Coriglianese tasks regarding spontaneous production of object RCs. A linear regression analysis revealed a significant effect of age on the subordination index ($R^2 = 0.103$, $F(3, 81) = 3.092$, $p = .03$), confirming a relationship between this variable and a more frequent use on subordination in both Italian ($\beta = 0.270$, $p < .01$) and Coriglianese ($\beta = 0.192$, $p = .02$).

Table 5 shows the results regarding instances of code switching in the Coriglianese narrative tasks, and particularly the ratio of words in the target (Coriglianese) and non-target language (Italian) to the total number of words:

Table 5. Mean number of words and mean percentage words in the non-target (NT) and target (T) language in the Coriglianese narrative task, per age group.

Group	**Total words** M (SD)	**% NT** M (SD)	**% T** M (SD)
Age 7–10	90.94 (26.74)	43.08 % (34%)	56.92% (29%)
Age 10–13	113.17 (36.24)	27.19 % (22%)	72.81% (23%)
Age 14–18	99.03 (29.09)	19.30 % (22%)	80.70% (18%)

The youngest group (age 7–10) code switched more frequently to Italian during the Coriglianese narrative task than the older groups ($K = 14.52$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$), demonstrating weaker production abilities in this language and frequent transfers from their dominant L1. Middle school students (age 10–13), on the other hand, produced longer narrative texts than primary school children (age 7–10) ($F(2, 82) = 3.34$, $p = .04$), while high school students resorted more to Coriglianese compared to the younger participants ($K = 17.73$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). These differences between the three groups were confirmed by a linear regression analysis, which highlighted a negative effect of daily usage of Coriglianese on the percentages of words in code-switching ($R^2 = 0.204$, $F(3, 81) = 6.92$, $\beta = -0.413$, $p < .01$) and a positive effect on the percentages of words in target language ($R^2 = 0.237$, $F(3, 81) = 8.39$, $\beta = 0.397$, $p < .01$). These results were employed to support the notion that more frequent usage of dialect correlates with higher levels of proficiency in that language (Klashick & Kupish, 2016; Kupish & Klashick, 2017).

6 Conclusions

The partial adaptation of MAIN to Coriglianese has provided valuable insights for the investigation of the syntactic abilities in both languages of Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals. Administration of MAIN's retelling scripts (*Cat* and *Dog* stories) for assessment of participants' narrative skills was helpful to understand how age and daily exposure to dialect significantly and differently impact proficiency in Italian L1 and Coriglianese L2, and particularly semi-spontaneous production of complex subordinate clauses (object RCs). The study also highlights the importance of recognizing and preserving dialectal heritage within the context of contemporary bilingualism, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of language acquisition that embraces both standard and non-standard varieties within the Italo-Romance repertoire.

Further results stemming from the PhD-dissertation will be published soon, including new research focused on comprehension and production of narrative story grammar (i.e., macrostructure). Other works will explore both quantitative and qualitative differences in the use of complex subordinate clauses in Italian and Coriglianese, such as prepositional RCs. Additionally, a complete adaptation of MAIN is planned to be conducted to ensure a more

reliable crosslinguistic comparison (cf. Gagarina et al., 2019). This will provide new evidence regarding the linguistic and cognitive development of Italian-Coriglianese bilinguals.

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