

# The Use of Different Linguistic Codes in First, Second and Third Generation Italo-Costa Rican People at San Vito

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## Resumen

En el siguiente artículo presento un resumen de la administración y resultados de encuestas y entrevistas con el objetivo de investigar a fondo, utilizando una metodología mixta, si hablantes de primera, segunda y tercera generación de origen italiano en el cantón central de San Vito de Coto Brus cuentan en sus respectivos repertorios lingüísticos con el italiano estándar, el dialecto italiano de su región de origen o el de sus progenitores y el español de Costa Rica. Los resultados de las encuestas administradas en la tercera generación demuestran que los informantes no usan ni el italiano estándar ni tampoco el dialecto italiano y se consideran en su gran mayoría hispanoparlantes. Los resultados de las entrevistas administradas en la segunda y tercera generación, por el contrario, demuestran que en estas dos generaciones y a diferencia de la tercera, el uso del italiano estándar y el español de Costa Rica constituyen los dos códigos lingüísticos o variedades de mayor uso. El uso del dialecto italiano es muy limitado en la segunda, pero se mantiene entre la primera generación en situaciones comunicativas muy específicas.

**Palabras claves:** dialecto, italiano estándar, español de Costa Rica, Costa Rica, San Vito de Coto Brus

## Abstract

In the following article, I present the administration and results of both a survey and interviews in a mixed methodology in order to find out if first,

second and third generation informants chosen at San Vito de Coto Brus spoke Standard Italian, Italian Dialect, or Costa Rican Spanish as part of their linguistic codes. The results of the survey demonstrated that in the third-generation speakers' use of Standard Italian and Dialect is nonexistent and informants consider to be mostly a Spanish speaking community. On the other hand, the results of the interviews found in the first and second generation demonstrated that the use of Spanish and Standard Italian constituted their two major languages or codes used. The use of Italian Dialect is very limited.

**Key words:** dialect, standard Italian, Costa Rican Spanish, Costa Rica, San Vito de Coto Brus

## Introduction

The recent study of the different linguistic varieties in three generation at San Vito de Coto Brus (southern region of Costa Rica) shows a very complex situation, particularly in the second generation; these informants report having learned Italian as their first language at home, and Spanish as the second outside the family home, in a secondary socialization process. Education in Italian seems also to have played a very significant role, especially because of the high value they give to Standard Italian in their linguistic repertoire. Other factors such as different origins and different vernacular languages spoken by previous generations, a high socio-economic level which allows them to travel to Italy together with their families, the use of technology, and the importance they give to Italian symbols abroad, all have made it possible for them develop a standard use of Italian. This same conclusion was reached by Franceschi during the early 70's in the same community. It is also interesting to note that although nowadays they speak Standard Spanish and Costa Rican Spanish dialects fully, they also can speak a very high form of

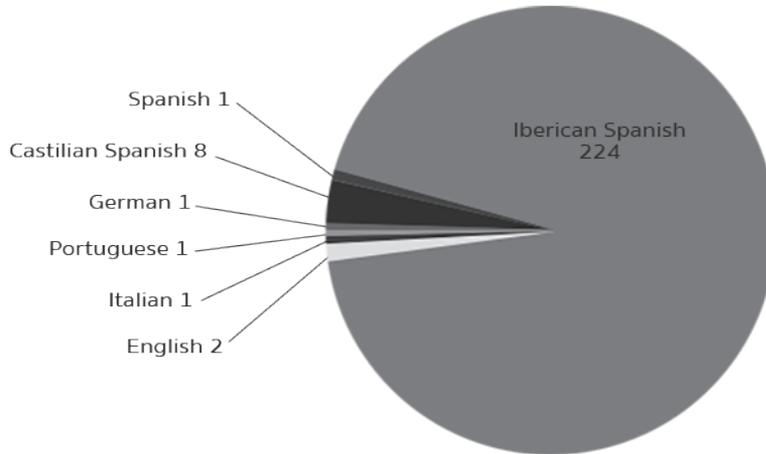
Italian quite well without the languages significantly interfering with one another. In other words, at least in the second generation, Spanish and Italian seem to coexist and develop independently. On the other hand, Italo-Romance Dialects are disappearing or in the process of erosion in the second generation of San Vito. According to the results found in both the quantitative and the qualitative research, this same competence and performance in the Italian language in the second generation may not be fully transmitted to members of the third one.

## 1. Description of the quantitative research

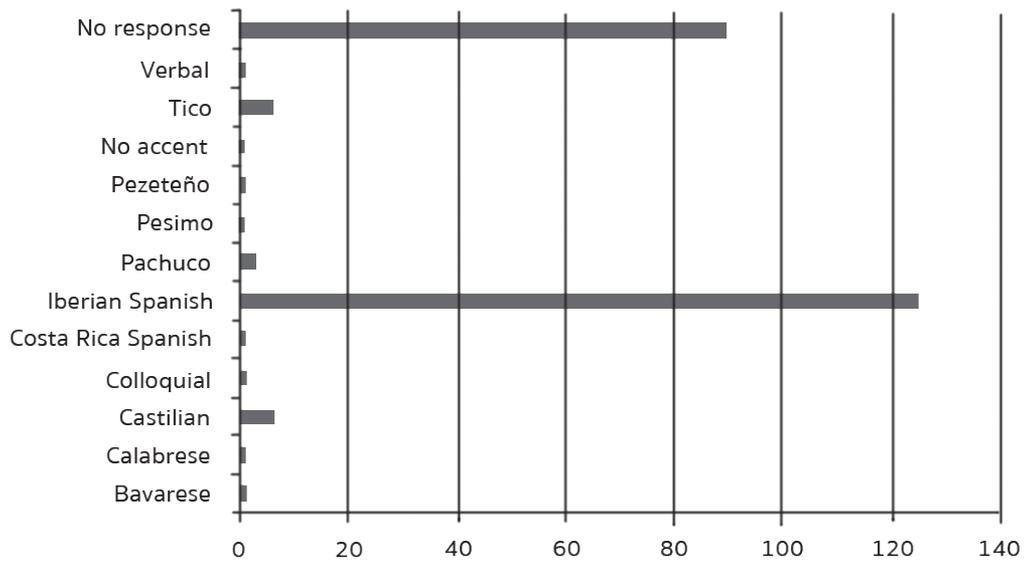
In order to assess the local repertoire in third-generation speakers, a quantitative survey was administered to two hundred thirty-eight informants or participants. The following charts and graphs show the most important uses of the three languages, that is, Spanish, Italian and Italo-Romance Dialect among third-generation speakers in San Vito de Coto Brus. After this explanation, an analysis of results and a summary are provided.

1.1 Samples of survey results in third-generation interviewees

**Graphic 1**  
**Distribution by spoken Dialect among interviewees**



**Graphic 2**  
**Distribution by native language among interviewees**



**Table 1**  
**Distribution by native language among interviewees**

	<b>Absolute Figure</b>	<b>Relative figure</b>
German	1	.4
Castilian Spanish	8	3.4
Costa Rican Spanish	1	.4
Iberian Spanish	224	94.1
English	2	.8
Italian	1	.4
Portuguese	1	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2**  
**Distribution by spoken Dialect among interviewees**

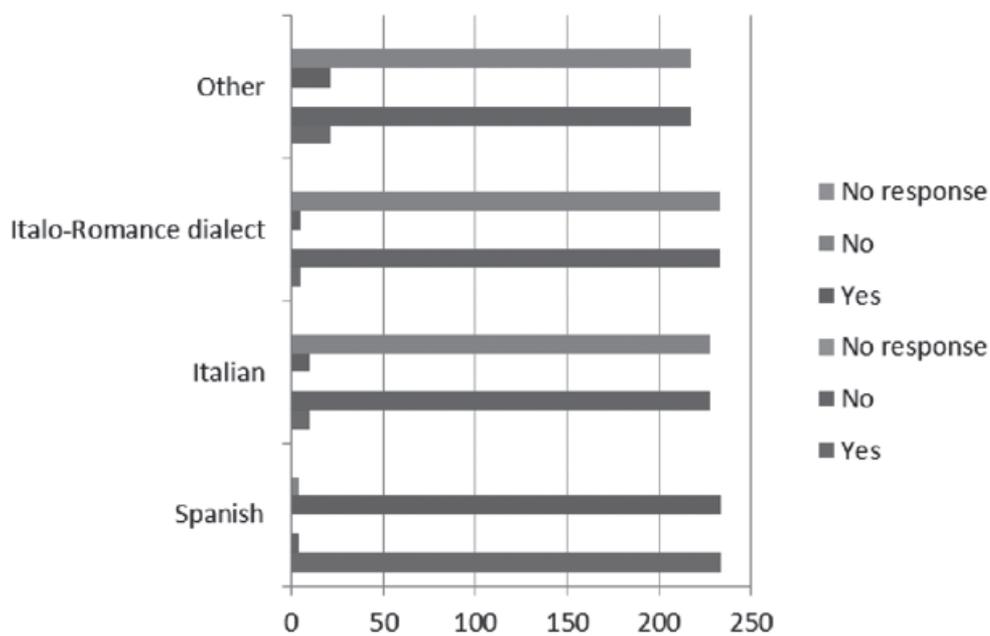
	<b>Absolute Figure</b>	<b>Relative Figure</b>
Bavarian	1	.4
Calabrese	1	.4
Castilian Spanish	6	2.5
Colloquial	1	.4
Costa Rican Spanish	1	.4
Iberian Spanish	125	52.4
“Pachuco”	3	1.3

“Pesimo”	1	.4
“Pezeteño”	1	.4
No accent	1	.4
“Tico”	6	2.5
Verbal	1	.4
No response	90	37.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3**  
**Distribution by spoken languages among interviewees**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Response</b>
Spanish	235	2	1
Italian	201	36	1
Spanish	234	4	0
Italian	10	228	0
Italo-Romance Dialect	5	233	0
Other	21	217	0

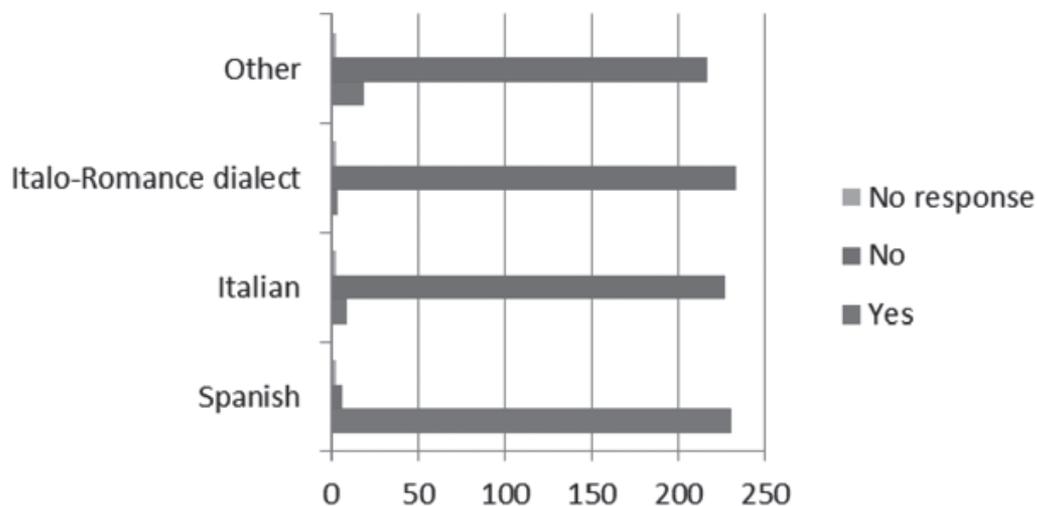
**Graphic 3**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken with the mother among interviewees**



**Table 4**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken with the father among interviewees**

	Yes	No	No answer
Spanish	230	6	2
Italian	9	227	2
Italo-Romance Dialect	3	233	2
Other	19	217	2

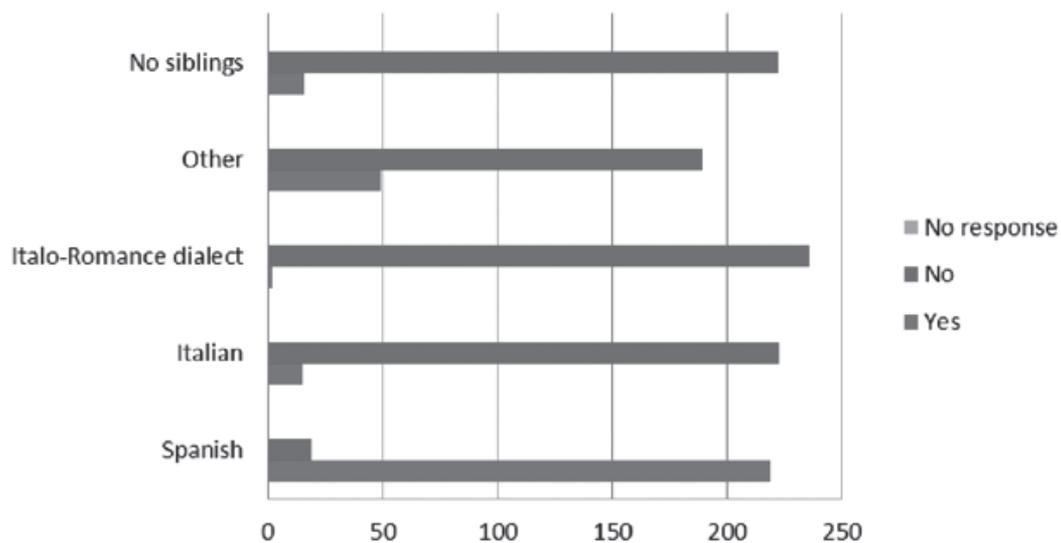
**Graphic 4**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken with the father among interviewees**



**Table 5**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken with siblings among the interviewees**

	Yes	No	No Response
Spanish		19	0
Italian	15	223	0
Italo-Romance	2	236	0
Dialect			
Other	49	189	0
No siblings	16	222	0

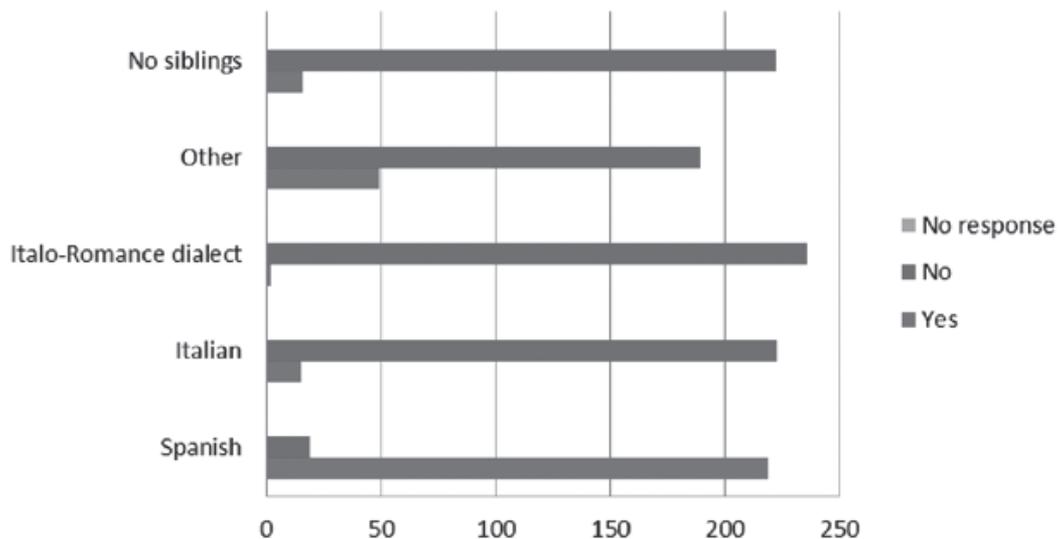
**Graphic 5**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken with siblings among interviewees**



**Table 6**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used in moments of anger among interviewees**

	Yes	No	No answer
Spanish	219	16	2
Italian	23	213	2
Italo-Romance Dialect	6	230	2
Other	62	174	2

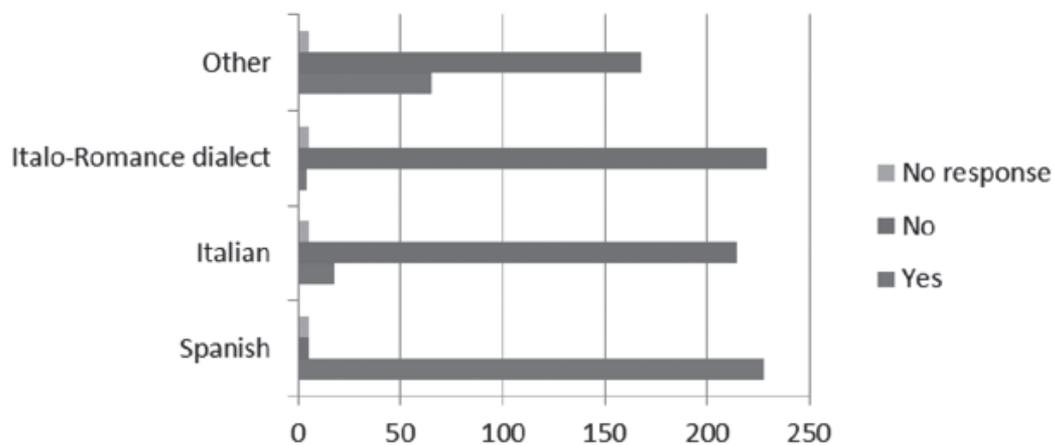
**Graphic 6**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used in moments of anger among interviewees**



**Table 7**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used with friends in moments of joy among interviewees**

	Yes	No	No answer
Spanish	228	5	5
Italian	18	215	5
Italo-Romance Dialect	4	229	5
Other	65	168	5

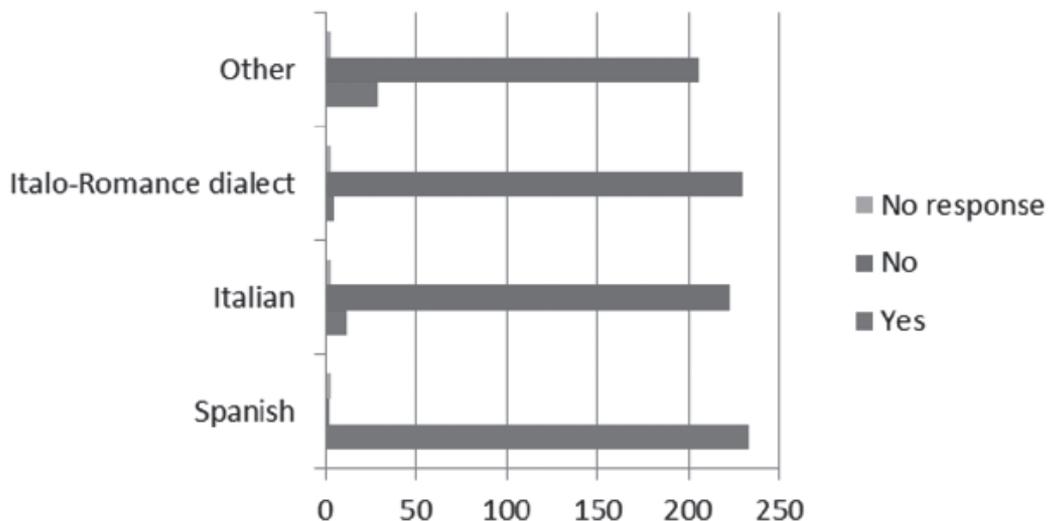
**Graphic 7**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used with friends in moments of joy among interviewees**



**Table 8**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used when sharing meals among interviewees**

	Yes	No	No Response
Spanish	233	2	3
Italian	12	223	3
Italo-Romance Dialect	5	230	3
Other	29	206	3

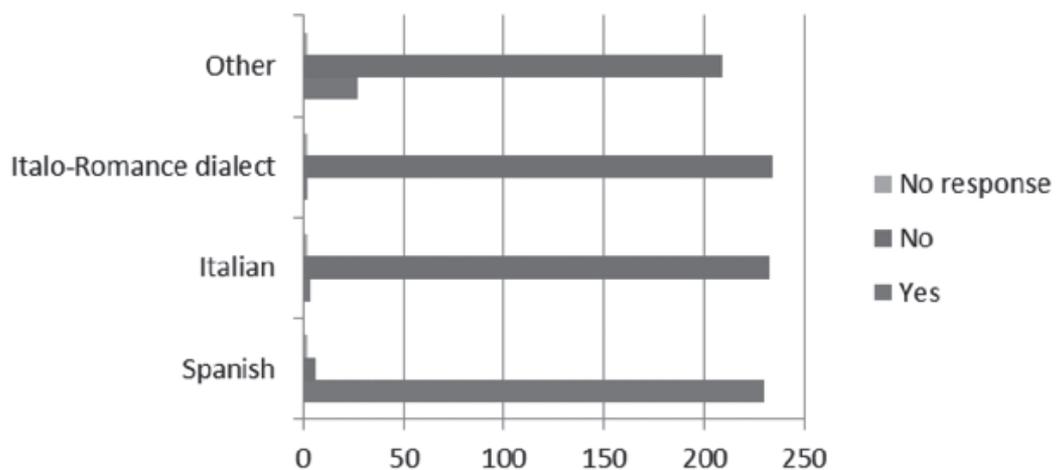
**Graphic 8**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used when sharing meals among interviewees**



**Table 9**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect learned first as a child among interviewees**

	Yes	No	No Response
Spanish	230	6	2
Italian	3	233	2
Italo-Romance Dialect	2	234	2
Other	27	209	2

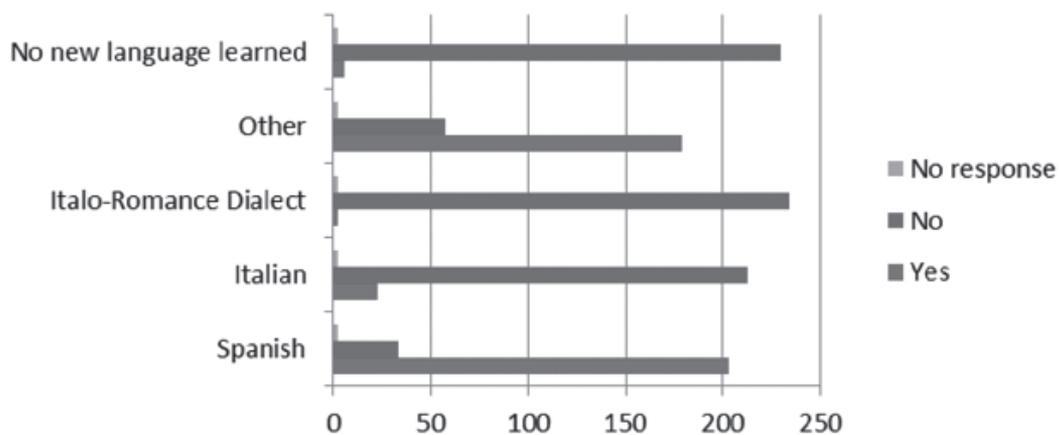
**Graphic 9**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect learned first as a child among interviewees**



**Table 10**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect learned in school**

	Yes	No	No response
Spanish	203	33	2
Italian	23	213	2
Italo-Romance Dialect	2	234	2
Other	179	57	2
No new language learned	6	230	2

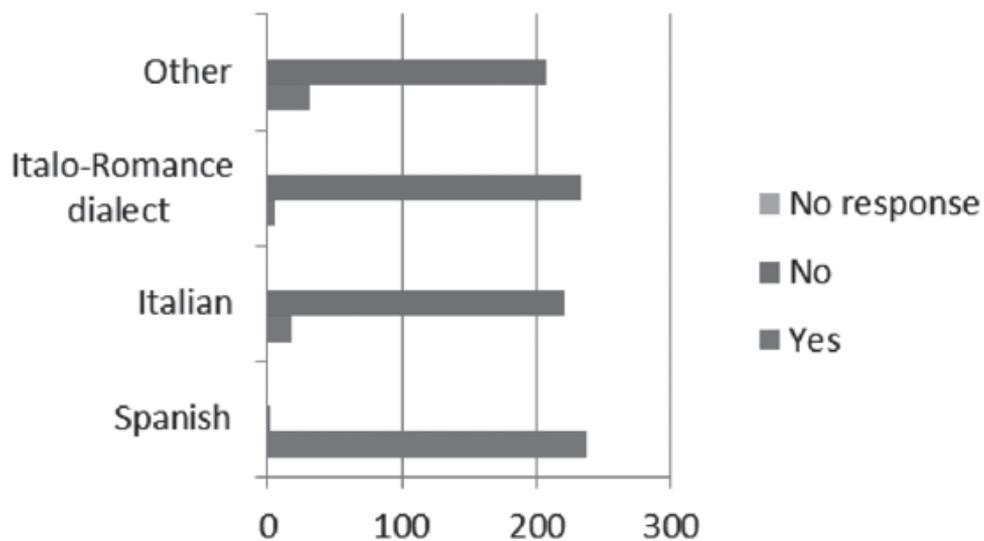
**Graphic 10**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect learned in school**



**Table 11**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken by parents to interviewees**

	Yes	No	No Response
Spanish	237	1	0
Italian	17	221	0
Italo-Romance Dialect	5	233	0
Other	31	207	0

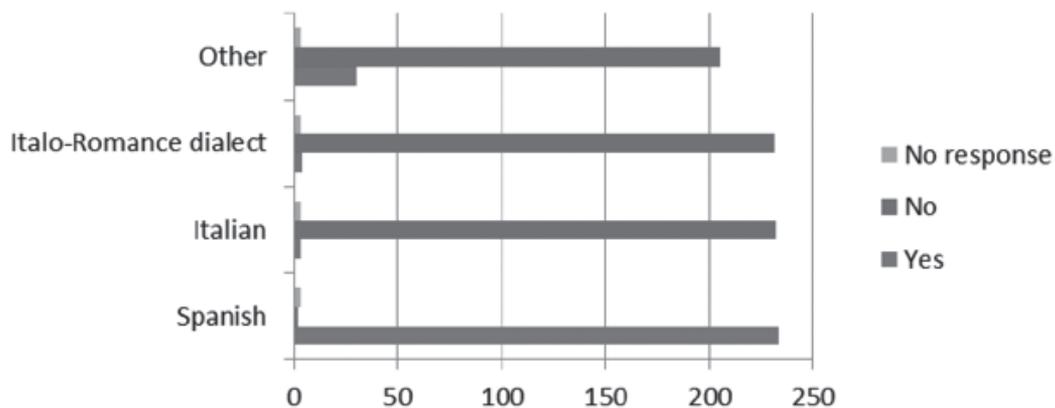
**Graphic 11**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect spoken by parents to interviewees**



**Table 12**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect known before starting elementary school**

	Yes	No	No Response
Spanish	233	2	3
Italian	3	232	3
Italo-Romance Dialect	4	231	3
Other	30	205	3

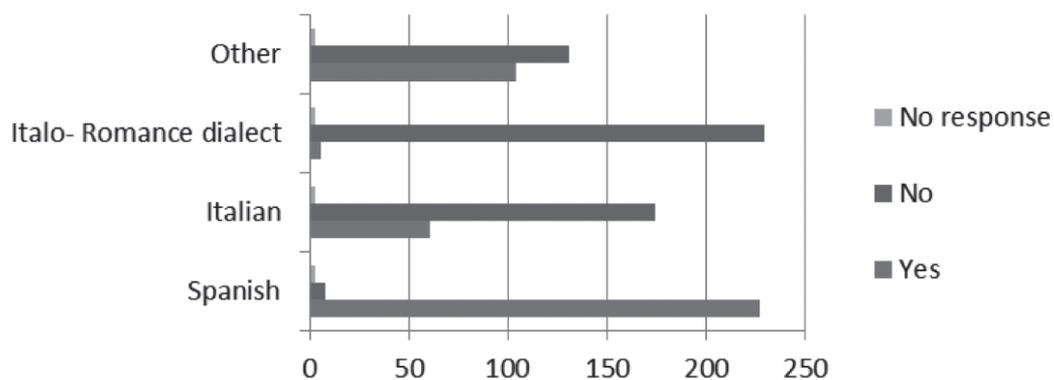
**Graphic 12**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect known before starting elementary school**



**Table 13**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used by the interviewees when thinking**

	Yes	No	No Response
Spanish	227	8	3
Italian	61	174	3
Italo-Romance Dialect	6	229	3
Other	104	131	3

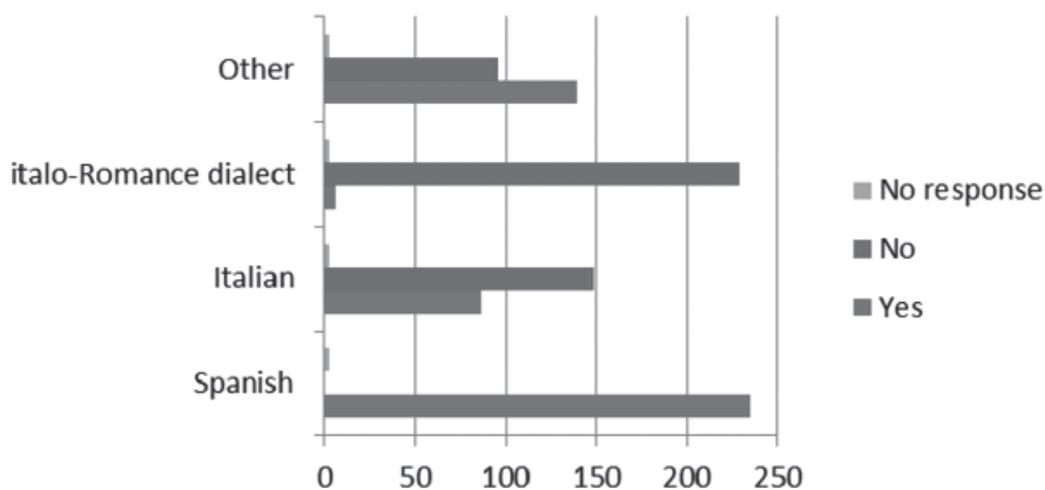
**Graphic 13**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used by the interviewees when thinking**



**Table 14**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used by the interviewees when writing**

	Yes	No	No response
Spanish	235	0	3
Italian	86	149	3
Italo Romance dialect	6	229	3
Other	139	96	3

**Graph 14**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used by the interviewees when writing**



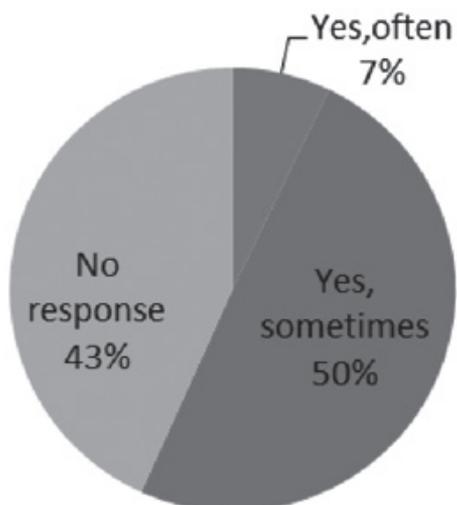
**Table 15**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect preferred by the interviewees to read books or magazines**

	Yes	No	No response
Spanish	228	5	5
Italo-Romance dialect	67	166	5
Other	150	83	5

**Table 16**  
**Distribution by frequency of language or Dialect preferred by the interviewees to read books or magazines in Italian**

	Absolute Figure	Relative Figure
Yes, often	17	7.1
Yes, sometimes	118	49.6
No response	103	43.3
Total	238	100.0

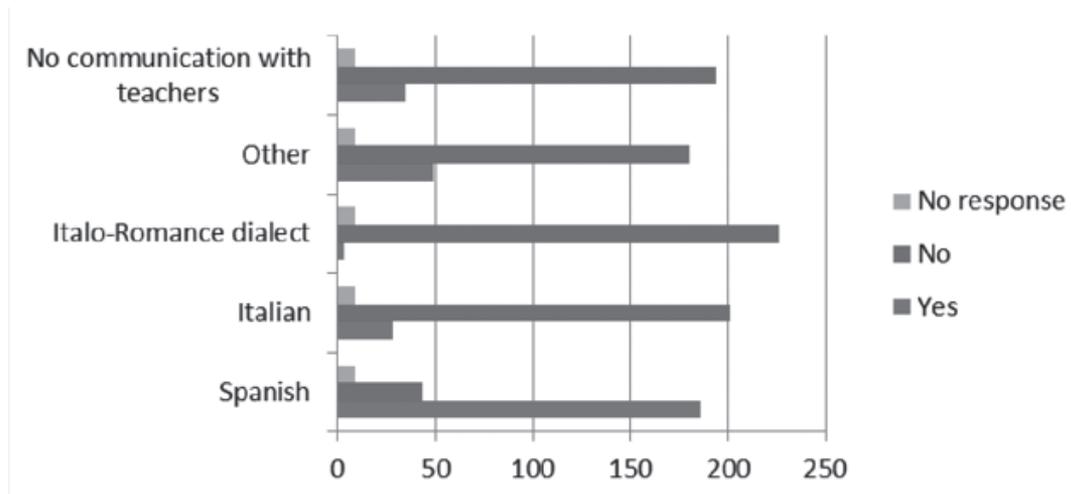
**Graphic 15**  
**Distribution by frequency of language or Dialect preferred by the interviewees to read books or magazines in Italian**



**Table 17**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used by the interviewees to speak to teachers**

	Yes	No	No answer
Spanish	186	43	9
Italian	28	201	9
Italo-Romance dialect	3	226	9
Other	49	180	9
No communication with teachers	35	194	9

**Graphic 16**  
**Distribution by language or Dialect used by the interviewees to speak to teachers**



**1.2 Interpretation of results**

Third-generation Italo-Costa Ricans in San Vito de Coto Brus definitely constitute a fully Spanish speaking community. The use of Spanish as the first language both within and outside home is evident in most of the responses given.

However, Italian is known by 201 informants or 85.45% of the informants (table and graph 3). It is used in very specific instances such as reading magazines and newspapers (86 of the informants or 36.13%, table and graph 17 and 67 of the informants, or 28.15% graph and table 16), when

they engaged in mental processes (61 of the informants, or 25.63%, table and graph 14), when talking to teachers in school (28 people, or 11.76%, graph and table 18), and when they were angry (23 subjects, or 9%, table and graph 7), language learned in school other than Spanish (23, or 9%, table and graph 11), with friends on joyous occasions or at moments of happiness (18 informants, or 7.56%, graph and table 8). Italian was also the language taught by parents other than Spanish (17, or 7.14%, table and graph 12), and was employed when talking to siblings (15, or 6.30%, table 6), at family meals (12 informants, or 5.04%, table and graph 6), when talking to their mothers (10, or 4.20%, table and graph 4) as well as to their fathers (9, or 3.78%, table 5), and to fellow town residents (7, or 2.94%). It is important to note that Italian was being taught at

the elementary, secondary, and university levels in this town.

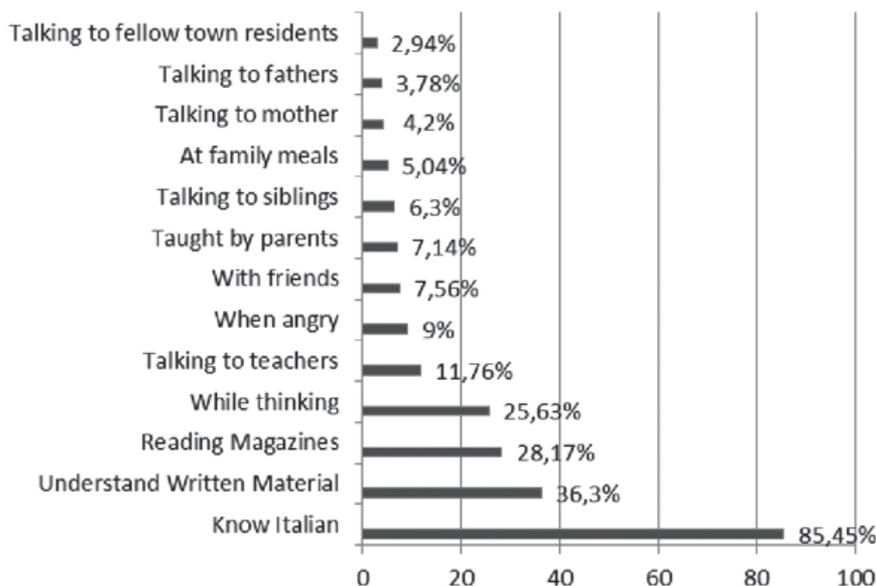
The understanding itself of the word “Dialect” as seen in the answers to the survey is related to the different varieties of Costa Rican Spanish, “Peseteño”, “Pachuco”, “Costarriqueñismo” (Costa Rican Spanish), etc. (see table and graph 2)

A single informant reported “Calabrese,” and just one other informant reported “Bavarese.” In fact, the term “Dialect” understood as such by scholars in Italy was completely unknown by these participants.

### 1.3 Summary

In brief, the use of Italian in third generation speakers in San Vito may also be observed in the following graph.

**Graphic 17**  
**Most important uses of Italian in third generation speakers**



In short, results again show that Italian is not the main language but Spanish. In Australia, language loss was also investigated from an ethnographic perspective, by Rubino, this time in the second-generation speakers.

The last stages of language erosion among the second generation were found to be characterised by highly variable language mixing, simplification, hypercorrections, and frequent

hesitation markers. In these stages it is common to find that communication in the family occurs in a bilingual mode, with the parents speaking Italian and/or Dialect and the children using English extensively. In this situation Dialect and Italian no longer have any communicative function for the children, but are limited to a kind of phatic or expressive function (2000, p.5).

## 2. Description of the qualitative research

### 2.1. Background information of informants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>First Generation</i>	<i>Second Generation</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Place of birth</i>	<i>Mother tongue</i>	<i>Italo-Romance Dialect(s) spoken</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Religion</i>
M	agronomist		X	M	San Vito	Italian	Tuscan, Florentine	college	-
C	psychologist		X	F	San Vito	Italian	Florentine, Tuscan	college	Catholic
D	retired		X	F	San Vito	Italian	Pugliese	college	Catholic
F	retired	X		M	Bologna, Italy	Italian	Bolognese	fifth grade elementary	Catholic
G	farmer		X	M	San Vito	Italian	Triestine	high school	Catholic
C	doctor		X	M	San Vito	Italian	Italian	college	-
E	retired		X	F	San Vito	Italian	Poggiomoinesse Lazio	college	Catholic
M	farmer		X	M	Rome, Italy	Italian, Spanish	Roman	high school	Catholic
L	Cook	X		F	Bergamo, Italy	Bergamasque	Bergamasque	seventh grade high school	Catholic
T	retired	X		F	Treviso, Italy	Venetian	Venetian	third grade elementary	Catholic
AM	Waiter		X	F	Rome	Roman	Roman	high school	Catholic

**Scale:**

M=Male, F=Female,  
 1=First generation, 2=Second generation,  
 Ret=Retired, Psych=Psychologist,  
 Agron=Agronomist, Wai= Waitress,  
 Doc=Doctor, Agric=Agriculturist,  
 Co=Cook,  
 SV= San Vito, Berg=Bergamo, Bolog=  
 Bologna, Trev= Treviso, Ro=Rome.  
 ST=Signora Teresa  
 DC=Dottore Cesare  
 M=Martino  
 Mau=Mauro  
 C=Caterina  
 D=Dora  
 AM=Anna Maria  
 F=Fausto  
 G= Giampaolo  
 E= Eva  
 SL=Signora Liliana  
 Int=Interviewer

**2.2 Transcriptions conventions:**

, Short break without pause  
 . Short pause during the same turn  
 ... Long pause during the same turn  
 ((pause)) pause lasting longer than 3 seconds  
 @@ laughing  
 : lengthening (of a vowel sound)  
 ? Interrogative intonation  
 ! sentence final exclamatory intonation  
 - Break off, unfinished sentence  
 CAPITAL LETTERS emphasis  
 / self-corrections  
 [...] omissions  
 Note: the languages occurring within the extracts quoted throughout the research have been transcribed using the following conventions:  
 Italian Roman  
 Spanish Italics

Italo-Romance

Dialect bold italics

Taken from Guerini, F. 2006

**2.3 Origins and languages spoken****First generation**

The origins of the people interviewed, as well as the languages spoken, reveal a number of different locations and diverse languages. Among the first-generation speakers (Fausto, Teresa, Liliana), their origins are respectively Bologna, Veneto, and Bergamo. Consequently, their Italian varieties correspond to northern Italy. Regarding languages spoken, two of them recognized the Italo-Romance Dialect as the first language learned at home with parents, while the Italian was the second language, which was learned in school. This is the case of Liliana and Teresa, who stated that the corresponding Italo-Romance Dialect constituted their mother tongue, and Italian the second.

**(1)-**

552 Int: Signora Teresa parliamo un po' della lingua imparata a casa.

553 T(F-1-TREV-RET): Io, il dialetto e l'italiano quando uno va a scuola impara l'italiano.

On the other hand, Fausto mentioned Italian as his mother tongue and Bolognese as the Italo-Romance Dialect spoken. Both were learned simultaneously. Spanish is the third language. Their repertoire indicates the influence of the three varieties.

They report being fluent in the three varieties (Italo-Romance Dialect, Standard Italian and Spanish)

although the Italo-Romance Dialect is reported as little used in all the cases in this first generation of Italo Costa Ricans, except with family members and/or friends in Italy when traveling there, when talking on the phone, or using Internet:

(2)-

215 Int: Signor, ricordi di detti, proverbi, canzoni in dialetto possiamo dire qualcosa.

216 F(M-1-BOLOG-RET): Quando sono in Italia l'uso. Quello che hai imparato da piccolo (pause). Quando parlo con altri si mi viene.

### Second generation

On the other hand, second generation speakers' family origins differ from those of the first generation group. These origins range from Puglia for Dora, to Trieste for Gianpaolo, Lazio for Anna Maria, Mauro and Eva, and Tuscany for Cesare, Martino and Caterina. In this case, Italian was reported as the first language and Spanish as the second. However, Martino and Cesare mentioned that the Italian learned at home was just very basic. This is a common discourse among most second generation speakers whose competence and performance of Standard Italian is high though. In other words, they say and seem to believe that their level is basic but in fact their performance in the Italian language seems to contradict this assertion:

(3)-

20 Int: Adesso parliamo un po' della lingua imparata a casa.

21 M (M-2-SV-AGRON): La lingua imparata a casa... È una base...

Quando io sono tornato in Italia ho avuto difficoltà perché in Italia gli esami sono fatti tutti quanti orali quindi per riuscire a *expresarse* o spiegare bene in italiano ci ho messo qualche anno; non è che di un giorno al altro può (pause). Arrivi e parli e ti capiscono. Ci si mette qualche anno vero? Qualche annetto per riuscire a parlare abbastanza bene.

When they were asked to report phrases in Italo Romance Dialect, they generated various expressions:

(4)-

275 Int: Parliamo un po'della frequenza del dialetto.

276 DC(M-2-SV.DOC): Il napoletano tende ad usare molto spesso Ca nisciun è fess cioè qua nessuno è scemo anche Chi ha avuto ha avuto, chi ha dato ha dato significa la vita deve continuare. Eva reported phrases in Poggiomoianese, an Italo-Romance Dialect from Lazio:

(5)-

317 Int: Ricordi di canzoni, proverbi, detti in dialetto.

318 E (F-2-SV-RET): Metti la fame al dente che la fame si risente.

Anna María in Romano:

(6)-

528 Int: In Dialetto se può dire qualcosa?

529 AM (F-2-RO-WAITR): Si può dire qualcosa per esempio Ce vedemo se non ce vedemo accendiamo le luce.

(7)-

255 Int: Perdita del dialetto.

256 G (M-2-SV-AGRIC): Non sarebbe colpa nostra perché non c'è con chi parlarlo (pause). Non tanti vengono

da Trieste (pause). Il dialetto non si perde mai (pause) con la mia mamma si parla.

257 Int: Il futuro del dialetto.

258 G(M-2-SV-AGRIC): Non si perde mai.

The rest of the speakers stated that they do not speak any Italo-Romance Dialect. Here the Italo-Romance Dialect seems to disappear but not the Standard Italian. Moreover, the two groups agree that writing in the Italo-Romance Dialect is not common, and that reading it is very unusual. However, speaking and teaching the Italo-Romance Dialect in Italy nowadays is very important in order to maintain traditions and the sense of belonging. The two groups, both first and second generation speakers, agree that the use of Italo-Romance Dialects in San Vito is very marginal. In the case of the second generation, they recognize the existence of it inside the family, and understand some words in most cases, but do not speak it in Costa Rica. It is interesting to note that although they do not speak it, they give a high value to the Italo-Romance Dialect with regards the preservation of cultural identity and wish in some cases Italo-Romance Dialects were preserved. This may be related to the very strong sense of belonging to the group, and a very strong social network as well.

Answers are divided, however, when the two groups are asked about the future of the Italo-Romance Dialect. According to the first generation, it still will continue to be used, but the second generation notes that the older people are dying or dead, and that young people do not speak it in Italy or in Costa Rica. They all agree that

losing the Italo-Romance Dialect will be a great loss for humanity, as stated by Liliana:

**(8)-**

465 Int: Parliamo della perdita del dialetto.

466 SL (F-1-BERG-WAITR): Peccato, io sarei d'accordissimo di metterlo come una lingua in più, lì c'è tutto, le tradizioni, tutto.

467 Int: Parliamo sul futuro del dialetto.

468 SL (F-1-BERG-WAITR): Spero sia buono, impararlo, capirlo, per i giovani.

Again, some of them stated that remembering words or phrases in Italo-Romance Dialect was possible in the family group or when traveling in Italy, but not in an interview. This logically refers to the symbolic value they give to the Italo-Romance Dialect as a language used strictly with very close group identity but not used with outsiders specially those belonging to the Spanish community of the country. When there is a Costa Rican speaking person Spanish is preferred as we will see ahead.

**(9)-**

177 Int: Ricordi di proverbi, detti, canzoni in dialetto.

178 D(F-2-SV-RET): non mi viene.

**(10)-**

125 Io: Parliamo un po' della frequenza dell'uso del dialetto.

126 (F-2-SV-PSYCH): Allora, io penso che noi parliamo più il fiorentino della parte de mia madre non si capiva niente, nulla. Quando sono andata in Italia però ho capito alcune parole.

It is interesting to note that speakers whose parents come from Tuscany reported the absence of an Italo-Romance Dialect in their families. On the other hand, they report the use of a more Standard Italian. This is related to the linguistic situation of Tuscany and the closeness between Standard Italian and the Tuscan variety of dialect. For more examples see Berruto (1995, p. 248) who speaks of “Bidialettismo” for Tuscany and Rome where speakers are proficient in using two different dialects of the same language in the discourse. For example, as with the following speaker, the regional variety of Italian is noticed in the pronunciation of words in the Florence area.

**(11)-**

21 Int: Standard diciamo così? 22 M (M-2-SV-AGRON): Dopo c'è un vantaggio. In Toscana si parla il vero italiano se vai in altre province è molto diverso però, se vai giù al sud, il napoletano, il calabrese dove c'è mia zia, in Basilicata quando ero lì dicevo non capisco nulla parlami in italiano. Ad esempio *Guariagnetto* che vuole dire Bambino rimane proprio nell'aria, un'altra lingua. A Firenze, Toscana parlano con la /h/ *Mihele* la /c/ con viene detta, a Firenze c'è questo /c/ non viene pronunciata.

**2.4 The use of Spanish and Italian in first and second generation**

**First generation**

Spanish is the language used for everything in both the first and second generation groups, and the language they use with other non-Italian groups. They reported that nowadays Spanish

and Italian are the language groups to which they mostly belong. It is important to note that when there is a person who does not belong to the linguistic community, they also switch to Spanish as stated previously. Again Italian and Italo-Romance Dialects function as a mark of identity, although specially second generation speakers recognize themselves as full Costa Ricans and Spanish speakers. This assertion has nothing to do with their sense of belonging to another linguistic community.

**(12)-**

151 Int: Parliamo della lingua usata quando si è a tavola.

152 D (F-2-SV-RET): Lo spagnolo anche il pugliese perché mi sono sposata con un Costaricense. Adesso con lui si parla lo spagnolo. Quando ci sono altri è meglio parlare come loro.

**(13)-**

421 Int: Quando si è a tavola

422 SL (F-1-BERG-WAITR): Adesso le spiego una cosa. Io ho avuto sette figli, uno l'ho perso, dopo un altro. Ho avuto undici nipoti. Quasi tutti sono a San Jose perché tutti studiano. Si parlano tutte e tre le lingue a volte si comincia in italiano e se finisce in spagnolo. La tendenza dopo tanti anni in Costa Rica noi, e che si tratta di più la gente Costaricensi, soltanto la domenica si usa l'italiano.

**(14)-**

151 Int: Parliamo della lingua usata quando si è a tavola.

152 D (F-2-SV-RET): Lo spagnolo anche il pugliese perché mi sono sposata con un Costaricense. Adesso con lui si parla lo spagnolo. Quando ci sono altri è meglio parlare come loro.

**(15)-**

421 Int: Quando si è a tavola

422 SL (F-1-BERG-WAITR): Adesso le spiego una cosa. Io ho avuto sette figli, uno l'ho perso, dopo un altro. Ho avuto undici nipoti. Quasi tutti sono a San Jose perché tutti studiano. Si parlano tutte e tre le lingue a volte si comincia in italiano e se finisce in spagnolo. La tendenza dopo tanti anni in Costa Rica noi, e che si tratta di più la gente Costaricensi, soltanto la domenica si usa l'italiano.

28 M (M-2-SV-AGRON): Ti ripeto a casa sempre l'italiano. Fuori, al lavoro, in giro, in altri posti lo spagnolo, la mia moglie è Costaricense e lei parla italiano un settanta per cento, l'ha imparato a San Vito perché c'è la Dante Alighieri dove danno corsi di italiano. Lei avrà, fatto dieci, undici corsi. Mia moglie non parlava l'italiano; l'ha imparato dopo di essersi sposata.

**(16)-**

489 Int: Anna parliamo della lingua usata prima di sposarsi.

490 AM (M-2-RO-WAITR): Parlavo lo spagnolo e anche l'italiano. Sono sposata con Costaricense. Mio marito parla l'italiano. Se la devo mandare a quel paese lo faccio e lui mi risponde andiamo insieme.

Marrying a Spanish speaking person; therefore, means that this non speaking Italian spouse has to learn Italian to teach children this language. In San Vito, the tendency is towards preserving Italian for everybody inside the family. The fact that Italian is still preserved in the second generation, taught to children or to the non Italian speaking spouse seems to contradict data from other places

like Australia where language shift or change in their repertoire increased among second generation speakers in endogamic marriages in the 1990s (Rubino, 2000, p. 5).

The studies regarding language shift and language loss among Italo-Australians continued well into the 1990s. A comparison between the 1991 and 1996 census data showed that the number of Italian speakers decreased by 10.3%, from 418,804 to 375,752 (Clyne & Kipp, 1997). The rates of shift also continued to increase: from 11.2% to 14.7% among the first generation and from 49.8% to 57.9% among the second generation taken as a whole (or 42.6% for the children of intraethnic marriages only).

In other words, while Italian seems to decrease in endogamic marriages in Australia, the tendency in Costa Rica among Italo-Costa Rican unions is preserving Italian in the second generation, spouses and offspring.

Both groups mentioned, however, that when talking to friends in Costa Rica, in most cases Spanish is the language used unless they encounter someone whose language is Italian. If children are of Italian parents, the situation is the same, and well as for neighbors. It happens among groups of Italian-speaking friends when they organize parties for their families, or to commemorate special Italian days like the unification of Italy. Meetings among Italian speakers also take place when the National Italian soccer team plays, as reported by Mauro:

**(17)-**

347 Int: Parliamo un po' della lingua o lingue usate quando lei è arrabbiato.

348 Mau (M-2-SV-AGRIC): A volte qualche parola in italiano. Anche quando gioca l'Italia viene fuori l'italiano. Noi sentiamo l'Italia di più. Noi che siamo all'estero.

Again here in this example the value second generation speakers give to Italian and to Italian symbols reveals a special respect and a need for preserving their language.

Both groups report that sometimes in moments of anger or emotion, they express themselves in Italian if they are surrounded by other Italian speakers. Otherwise, Spanish is usually preferred. The same can be said when telling jokes. When all the people present speak Italian, then that is the language mainly used, but if there is one person who does not understand, they prefer to use the national language. It is important to note that sometimes the Costa Rican people ask them to speak in Italian because they have homework at school or because it sounds "nice" to speak in Italian, as reported by Caterina:

**(18)-**

123 Int: Parliamo dell'uso dell'italiano in contesti spagnoli.

124 C (F-2-SV-PSYCH): Non c'è problema. Loro i Costaricensi si sentono bene.

**(19)-**

99 Int: Lingua usata con vicini, amici, bambini a San Vito.

100 C (F-2-SV-PSYCH): Molto interessante. Adesso io ho compagni di Liceo che sanno che io parlo l'italiano e mi domandano come si dice quello

o questo. Loro sempre dicono pratica con noi per imparare di più... bellino.

Here we can see again the high value they give to Italian and Italian culture and how this high value helps preserving language the more standard possible.

**(20)-**

103 Int: Parliamo della lingua o lingue usate con gli insegnanti, sacerdoti, medico.

104 C (F-2-SV-PSYCH): Con mia sorella medico parlo in italiano così nessuno lo capisce, anche con un sacerdote italiano il quale veniva molto spesso. Dipende della persona.

**(21)-**

425 Int: Lingua usata con gli amici.

426 SL (F-1-BERG-WAITR): Parliamo in italiano, tutte italiane. Se giochiamo *Uno* con i Costaricensi si parla lo spagnolo per educazione così lo capiscono tutti.

Regarding mental calculations, both groups reported Spanish in most cases as the language used for such purposes.

**(22)-**

201 Int: Signor Fausto parliamo un po' della lingua usata per i calcoli mentali.

202 F (M-1-BOLOG-RET): Il sistema di qua per stare a livello.

The only two speakers reporting Italian in this instance were Caterina and Martino:

**(23)-**

105 Int: Caterina mi piacerebbe se parlassimo della lingua usata per fare calcoli mentali.

106 C (F-2-SV-PSYCH): Per la matematica? Lo posso fare in italiano e spagnolo. Noi Italiani abbiamo più facilità.

**(24)-**

47 Int: Per fare calcoli mentali.

48 M (M-2-SV-AGRON): Uso di più l'italiano.

However, Italian is also used to pray at home or when the priest performing a church service is Italian. The use of Italian for writing is reduced now that they have the technology to talk to friends in Italy via Skype, for example. Communication with relatives in Italy is very common. Nowadays and thanks to new technology, communication plays an important role not only with regards to the social network but also with regards to the competence and performance in Standard Italian which will also explain why they give Standard a special high value among the same community of speakers.

For reading, they stated that there is little chance to read in Italian because all the locally published newspapers and books are written in Spanish. The situation changes when they were asked about the language preferred for watching TV. They mention in many cases that they watch RAI. Listening to Italian on the radio was not mentioned by anyone except Caterina, who stated that she likes to listen to Italian singers like Zucchero on YouTube:

**(25)-**

111 Int: Possiamo a parlare della lingua usata per sentire la radio, guardare la TV.

112 C (F-2-SV-PSYCH): In italiano. Mi piace molto le canzoni di Zucchero, Marco Masini... Li vedo per internet.

Consequently, listening to Standard Italian on TV or internet as stated previously may contribute enormously to the choice of a variety over another.

For two of the interviewees, having bilingual Spanish-Italian employees for public services such as banking is necessary especially for the elderly. For the rest, Spanish is preferred. This also confirms one more time that standard Italian works for very specific situations among other Italian speakers as an "in group" language.

**(26)-**

115 Int: Lingua preferita per i servizi pubblici.

116 C (F-2-SV-PSYCH): A San Vito lo spagnolo. A scuola loro danno l'italiano, in generale lo spagnolo. Ma sarebbe importante avere gente che parli l'italiano. Alla banca anche perché ci sono tanti Italiani grandi.

**(27)-**

167 Int: Adesso possiamo parlare sulla lingua preferita per i servizi pubblici.

168 D (F-2-SV-RET): Mi sembra che siccome è un paese con persone di origine italiana dovrebbero esserci più servizi in italiano. Più persone che parlassero l'italiano.

**(28)-**

447 Int: Adesso parliamo delle lingue preferite per i servizi pubblici.

448 SL (F-1-BERG-RET): Bisogna parlare solo lo spagnolo perché anche mica tutti parliamo l'italiano. Gli Italiani rimasti a San Vito sono molti pochi, forse quattordici famiglie.

In general terms, the use of Spanish in both the first and second generation groups is very similar. Being bilingual represents an advantage and reinforces their sense of belonging, social network, and identity to both Italy and Costa Rica. Speaking Italian means prestige and respect for the language of the parents.

## 2.5 The teaching of Italian in San Vito

Another variable that plays a very important role in this community is education in Italian from elementary to university level. All informants from both first and second-generation groups agree that the teaching of Italian, especially for third generation speakers in elementary and high school, is very important, since they were youngsters, in some cases this type of bilingual education did not exist and now with education, language, and culture are reinforced at home and school.

### (29)-

271 Int: Importanza dell'insegnamento dell'italiano a San Vito. Nell'elementare, media, Liceo.

272 DC (M-2-SV-DOC): Lo sforzo è stato grandioso basta pensare che al fatto di insegnare l'italiano nelle scuole riesce a parificare molte cose. Quando noi eravamo alle elementari noi eravamo visti come stranieri, saltava fuori questo fatto. Adesso l'insegnamento parifica, equalizza. Il fatto di insegnare l'italiano significa

che la lingua non è un sistema chiuso, tutt'altro ti apri a altri mondi. Colui che parla italiano lavora meglio la lingua; è creare il senso di cultura.

### (30)-

449 Int: Parliamo dell'importanza dell'insegnamento dell'italiano a San Vito.

450 SL (F-1-BERG-WAITR): Adesso c'è la scuola Italiana quando c'aveva i figli più piccoli non c'era niente. Io ho cinquanta cinque anni in Costa Rica la situazione è molto diversa ormai.

According to all of them, young people do not speak Italian fluently because they speak only Spanish. This idea correlates to the answers given by third generation speakers to the quantitative research where they admitted using Italian mostly for very specific academic purposes.

### (31)-

61 Int: Modo in cui giovani parlano l'italiano.

62 M (M-2-SAN VITO-AGRON):Già. I figli nostri? Non lo parlano molto bene lo capiscono però.

Even though Cesare's children are trilingual, the rest agree that third generation Italo-Costa Rican speakers' use of the Italian language has decreased considerably.

### (32)-

265 Int: Adesso lei si considera bilingue.

266 DC (M-1-SV-DOC): Io sono stato dal momento che sono nato bilingue nel senso che io ho imparato l'italiano a casa e ho imparato lo spagnolo a scuola. Io quando mi sono sposato con una Costaricense prima di

avere i figli le ho detto devi imparare l'italiano perché i miei figli devono imparare l'italiano. Per fortuna loro sono trilingui, italiano, spagnolo, inglese. Questo è un vantaggio se c'è un lavoro. Noi abbiamo grazie alla famiglia Sansonetti e grazie anche al governo dell'Italia la Dante Alighieri perché c'è un progetto qua unico delle Americhe, Soprattutto l'America Latina, Costa Rica, dove i maestri vengono stipendiati in un cinquanta per cento dal governo di Costa Rica e l'altro cinquanta per cento pagato dal governo Italiano.

**(33)**

- 273 Int: Parliamo della perdita della lingua italiana.

274 DC (M-1-SV-DOC): Succede questo ormai l'umanità ha un concetto molto pragmatico, materialista solo quello che mi serve, non per il piacere di farlo. Le lingue latine di fronte all'inglese non hanno nulla di fare. Con l'inglese al meno mangi in un CALL CENTER però te la cavi. Adesso con l'italiano che cosa faccio? Allora noi dobbiamo entrare non da quella finestra. Non possiamo competere. Dobbiamo creare quel aperitivo, quel sapore, la dolcezza per creare una mentalità dell'Italianità che va dal gioco, alla moda, all'industria.

**2.6 Other lexical, morphosyntactic, and phonological issues**

**2.6.1 Examples of codeswitching**

The analysis of the local repertoire, especially among the first and second generation informants, shows some occurrences of some other important aspects at the lexical, morpho-syntactic,

and phonological levels transferred from Spanish into Italian and in some cases from spoken Italian as well. Below are some examples. It is important to mention that this particular linguistic analysis would require more time, and it is not part of the aims of the present research.

Examples of codeswitching:

**In the second generation:**

**(34)-**

479 Int: Anna Maria cominciamo a parlare dell'Origine della parola *Tutiles*.

480 AM (F-2-ROM-WAITR): *Tutiles?* Guarda te lo spiego io perché la gente si confonde. Gli Italiani c'è hanno una maniera di parlare. Andiamo tutti lì. *Quiere decir vamos todos ahí. Entonces a la gente tica se le ha pegado la palabra Tútiles.* Questa parola vuole dire Tutti lì.

**2.6.2 Additional examples at the morphosyntactic and phonological levels**

In this section, some linguistic features found in the population under study will be analysed. While these characteristics may constitute themselves real objects of investigation that give researchers material for further study, they do not constitute part of the aims or objectives of this research. By the same token, as explained above, it is also interesting to observe that although some of them may be transfers from Spanish, one could also theorize about the influence of regional Italian, the influence of Italo-Romance Dialects, or even the influence from some low spoken forms currently in usage on the Italian peninsula.

Moreover, in some cases references to other studies are provided in order to facilitate further understanding of the linguistic behavior of migrants in different contexts around the world.

Examples:

**1-Redundant pronouns, typical of Spanish and also of some varieties of informal spoken Italian.**

*A me me l'hanno detto però io non lo so se è vero; Gli dicono agli italiani*

**2-Excessive use of *ci*, typical of some varieties of low spoken Italian** (Berretta, 1993, p. 229):

*mia mamma c'aveva un piccolo negozio; papà c'aveva l'acqua calda; c'aveva le scale*

**3-Impersonal pronoun *se* instead of *si*** (Spanish interference? or loanword?) (Vietti, 2005, pp. 145-165):

*se pensa che è successo*

**4-Use of the Spanish preposition *de* instead of *di* (Italian)** (Spanish interference?) (Vietti, 2005, pp. 145-165):

*questi de qui; c'era un gruppo come de italiani; nella finca de mio padre; quasi era ora de andare a scuola*

**5-Use of Spanish article *el* instead of Italian *il*** (Spanish interference?):

*y el secondo* (vs. it. *e il secondo*); *me sa* (vs. It. *mi sa*); *faceva li maiali* (vs. It. *faceva i maiali*)

**6-Preposition *di* instead of *tra*:**

*noi siamo stati dei primi figli nati in Costa Rica* vs. It. standard *noi siamo stati tra i primi...*

**7-Substandard subject-verb agreement:**

*mamma è stato dei prima...dei prime donne che sono venute* (vs. it. standard *mamma è stata una delle prime donne che sono venute*)

**8-Substandard syntactical constructions:**

*è stato dei prima... vs. It. standard è stata una delle prime;*

*c'era un gruppo come de italiani vs. It. standard c'era un gruppo di italiani;*

*tutti lì in posto vs. It. standard tutti lì in un posto;*

*noi siamo cambiato di casa vs. It. standard noi abbiamo cambiato casa* (different auxiliary)

*alle tre mattina vs. It. standard alle tre di mattina \del mattino;*

*era una casa di alto vs. It. standard era una casa alta?;*

*dopo de la farmacia vs. It. standard dopo la farmacia;*

*in mia casa vs. It. standard a casa mia \nella mia casa*

**9-Use of non-standard lexemes** (Again, Spanish interference?):

*carniceria; attendere la carniceria; ha schiavato la casa* (then immediately corrected) **It. standard** *ha schiodato le tavole*)

**10-Voicing of some voiceless consonants in intervocalic position.**

*pabà vs. papà; berò vs. però; poteva vs. poteva; propriedà vs. proprietà*

**11-Fricativization of dental voiceless:**

*Differensa vs. differenza; distansa vs. distanza*

### 12-Nonstandard presentative form:

*Dove adesso è la farmacia* vs. **It. standard** *dove adesso c'è la farmacia*  
 non-standard accent: [far'ma:tʃja] vs. it. standard [farma'tʃi:a] (then corrected immediately)

### Conclusions

The primary goal of the present research has been to investigate the different linguistic varieties of the Italo-Costa Rican ethnic minority group in the town of San Vito de Coto Brus in Costa Rica, Central America, with the purpose of illustrating the use of Spanish, Italian and Italo-Romance Dialect by three different generations. This topic was chosen because most of the studies of the Italian varieties in the American continent have concentrated on the areas of major emigration, that is, North and South America. Moreover, only a single publication refers to the linguistic repertoire of this colony back in 1970 (Franceschi, 1970).

This choice of a mixed methodology was done because third generation speakers did not desire to be video or audio recorded. For first and second-

generation speakers, on the other hand, being video recorded was not a problem.

The results of the quantitative research show that Spanish constitutes the main language used for almost all everyday interactions. Standard Italian is basically employed only for academic purposes, given the fact that it is taught from elementary school to college level. Understanding of the word Dialect is related to those forms corresponding to the different varieties of Costa Rican Spanish. Consequently, neither Italian nor Italo-Romance Dialects constitute part of their verbal repertoire. This ideological answer may also be understood because of the format itself of the research because they had only four choices when asked about uses of Italian.

### How is the linguistic variety distributed among three different generations of Italo-Costa Rican speakers?

In brief, using the diglossic position of languages proposed by Bettoni as cited in Sobrero (1993), Spanish is the high variety, and Costa Rican Spanish Dialects are low high varieties (pp. 415-416).

High Varieties	High Variety -- Spanish from Costa Rica
	Low variety -- Dialect(s) of Costa Rican Spanish

Low Varieties	High Variety --
	Low variety --

On the other hand, first and second-generation speakers reveal very different perspectives. First generation speakers, for example, recognize Italo-Romance Dialect as the first language learned at home. Standard Italian was learned later when they went to school in Italy, and Spanish was learned last as a result of their colonization of the valley of San Vito in southern Costa Rica. Nowadays, however, the use of Italo-Romance Dialect is very restricted, mainly limited to talking to people when they travel back to their home towns in Italy, and when speaking to elderly siblings and other relatives still living in San Vito. It is important to mention that Italo-Romance Dialect was not transmitted to their children, although all of the informants recognize the importance that speaking Italo-Romance Dialects has in order to preserve local culture in Italy and

abroad. The situation with Standard Italian is a little different. Italian is used within the family group, that is, when talking to their children or with other Italians at special gatherings, when the Italian national team plays and at some other ceremonies when all of the people in the group speak Italian. On the other hand, if there is a Costa Rican Spanish speaking person in the group, everybody will switch to Spanish. Spanish again constitutes the number one language used for almost everything else. First generation speakers have several different codes in their repertoire. As a matter of fact, using again the diglossic position of languages proposed by Bettoni as cited in Sobrero (1993), these languages are Spanish and Dialects of Costa Rica as the high variety, with Italian and Italo-Romance Dialect as high low varieties (pp. 415-416).

High Varieties	High Variety -- Spanish from Costa Rica
	Low variety -- Dialect(s) of Costa Rican Spanish

Low Varieties	High Variety – Standard Italian
	Low variety – Italo Romance Dialect(s)

The situation of the second generation seems to be the most complex of the three. As their mother tongue, they all identify Italian as being the first language learned at home, and to having learned Spanish at school or with

friends other than Italians in town. Finally, although they all know some words of the family's Italo-Romance Dialect, they all recognize that they do not speak it.

However, they state that they are equally fluent in all the different varieties of Costa Rican Spanish dialect spoken in the area, as well as in Standard Spanish and Italian. That is, the local Spanish dialect or dialects have emerged as a marked endogenous code, a code also spoken with high degrees of proficiency. On the other hand, with administrative and institutional authorities, Standard Spanish is used. It is important to mention that English and Italian are also regarded as high varieties in terms of mediums for education and international contacts. However, Italian and Spanish are the only varieties used in both written and spoken form.

This of course has to do with the fact that in recent years, bilingual education was introduced in the whole public system in this part of the country. As a consequence, competence in both Italian and Spanish is common in members of the second generation. It

is important to note that some of them went to college either in Costa Rica or in Italy. A much improved socioeconomic situation also made it possible for these speakers to have a better education than the previous generation. As a result, a very high form of standard Italian is used with family members and friends in both Costa Rica and Italy. Teaching Standard Italian to their children is very important for them, although they also recognize that the situation of their offspring, the third-generation speakers, is very different, and that while these children understand Italian, they do not speak it.

Second generation speakers exhibit several different codes in their repertoire. Again, using the diglossic position of languages proposed by Bettoni in Sobrero (1993), Standard Spanish and dialects of Costa Rica act as the high varieties, with and Italian as a high low variety (pp. 415-416).

High Varieties	High Variety -- Spanish from Costa Rica
	Low variety -- Dialect(s) of Costa Rican Spanish

Low Varieties	High Variety – Standard Italian
Low Varieties	Low variety –

As a matter of fact, during the interviews, most informants used very high forms of Italian with very little or no interference from Italo-Romance Dialects or Spanish.

A similar conclusion was reached by Franceschi (1970), who noted that “even though the population that arrived in San Vito spoke Italo-Romance Dialect and regional Italian with influence from

Costa Rican Spanish, a high form of Italian was the most important language used inside the community” (p. 359).

It is very important to point out that according to Franceschi, the second generation spoke more Spanish than the first generation due to the prestige of the national language as well as the education they had received. Italian was disappearing from their repertoire because of the use of the official language (1970). However, in 2012 the same population was studied, and 42 years later the analysis shows very different results. Not are only these people fully proficient Spanish speakers, but they also show high proficiency and performance levels in the Italian language, which is contrary to what Franceschi stated. That is to say that Italian at San Vito nowadays is similar to the conclusion reached by Franceschi 40 years ago with regards to the second generation, that is, Italian is in the process of erosion in young people in the present day. Perceptions, however, are not enough in order to obtain reliable information. Future scientific studies of the third-generation speakers in San Vito, or at least qualitative studies, are necessary.

It is important to note that the migration into Australia took place at the same time the Valley of San Vito was colonized. Therefore, the choice for Standard Italian over other varieties can also be observed from a historical perspective. In this regard, Rubino (2000, p.1) states that: “Mass migration from Italy to Australia took place from the early 1950’s until the end of the 1960’s. The peak was reached in the decade of 1951-1961, when an average of almost 18,000 new migrants arrived every year” (Castles, 1992). If we

take into account Italy’s sociolinguistic situation in those decades, we can assume that the hundreds of thousands of migrants who arrived here, mainly from small rural centers and the most depressed regions of Italy at the time (Sicily, Calabria, Veneto, Campania) spoke Dialect as their first language and Italian the second.

However, the dialectphone nature of Italian migrants as monolinguals has at times been overstated and their knowledge of Italian underestimated. In fact, the number of dialect monolinguals who arrived into Australia can be estimated to have been low, for at least two reasons: firstly, migrants are generally up wardly mobile people, and hence highly sensitive to the prestige of Italian (Bettoni, 1993), and secondly, migration generally promotes a process of italianisation, since it brings people from different regions into contact with each other (De Mauro, 1963).

**May low concentrations of Italian emigrants in relatively small countries such as Costa Rica show similar or different results in comparison to large countries with high concentrations of migrants and nationals such as Brazil, USA or Argentina?**

The demographic variable plays an important role here as well because the study of Italian abroad has not been concentrated on small countries like Costa Rica with lower populations in comparison to USA, or Brazil. Data found in San Vito show a very different situation with regards to language shift or change, language attrition, repertoire, and other sociolinguistic issues.

With this data in mind one may argue that when all these socio-demographic variables are present like in Costa Rica, the use of high form of Italian seems to increase mainly in the second generation. On the contrary, language attrition, and language shift, tend to decrease in countries with these characteristics, that is, low density of population, small territory and low flows of European or Italian migration. Italian migration took place in many other different Latin American countries that also show similar socio-demographic features. It would be interesting to see if there is a correlation between data found in Costa Rica and in neighboring Central America or the Caribbean countries with similar characteristics.

### **How does a language of origin coexist with new language(s) in a different land?**

In the same line of thought, another important conclusion is that the data found do not support the thesis of a new ethnic variety of Costa Rican Italian as opposed to other varieties of Italian around the world. In other words, with this data it is impossible to either say that Italians are changing Spanish in Costa Rica, or vice versa. With this assertion I can well answer question number three mentioned in the methodology. The language of origin in this case Italian co-exists, with Spanish as a high-high variety and Italian as low-high one, and no new “third language” or “ethnic variety” has emerged like in other parts of the continent like Brazil or Argentina. It is clear though that speakers show different level of interference from Costa Rican Spanish. Language attrition in the second generation as commented by

most authors in different parts of the world is visible neither in the first nor in the second generations in San Vito de Coto Brus, at least with this data. On the contrary, the evidence shows that at least in the second generation knowing and using standard forms is common. Moreover, it is interesting to note that in Costa Rica the assimilation process has also permitted Italians to preserve the languages of their forefathers without losing their national identity as Costa Ricans. Again, education in Italian plays a key role in avoiding language change or attrition, and contributing, on the other hand, to create a sense of inclusion in the national culture and those of their ancestors.

New approaches, though, are needed to explain the complex situation in the second generation. Research into the sociolinguistic and sociocultural processes taking place among younger generations is indicated. Taking the examples in Rubino (2000, p. 12) for the Australian situation, the following list of topics is presented for further research in the Costa Rican environment:

1. The role of language in the negotiation of an Italian identity by Italo-Costa Ricans.
2. The extent to which they are exposed to and use Italian, not only within the Costa Rican context but outside the country, through new means of communication such as e-mail and chat rooms.
3. The impact on language proficiency of increased access to Italian media.
4. The elements that may trigger processes of shift or change and language revitalization.

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