

Language variation and change in an Italian community abroad

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AIMS

Sociolinguistic analysis of return migrants, paying particular attention to language variation and change in the use of dialect.
Comparison between the returners and the migrants who are still abroad.

KEY TERM: DIALECT

The term 'dialect' is used here to refer to the many varieties of Italian which, just precisely like the Italian language, originated from spoken Latin.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Do Italian dialects spoken by returners diverge from those of migrants who are still abroad? To what extent?
Do returners adopt more conservative variants?

DATA COLLECTION AND CORPUS

Ethnographic participant observation and data collection by means of audio recordings. Interviews were carried out in Italy from November 2015 to February 2016 and from June 2018 to the present.
- 20 hours of spoken Italian divided between 11 returners living in Montefalcione (AV, Italy) and 8 migrants in Bedford

THE CASE STUDY: Returners in Montefalcione

- Peterborough and Bedford are the two largest Italian communities in the UK, excluding London;
- Migrants originally arrived from the poor Italian regions of Campania, Apulia and Sicily;
- Flows began after WW2 at the beginning of the 50s and returns began in the 70s and 80s; Extremely low levels of education when migrants moved to the UK;
- Main employment was in the local brick factories

SAMPLE

	Returners		Migrants	
	M	F	M	F
I gen	2	2	4	4
II gen	2	2	0	2

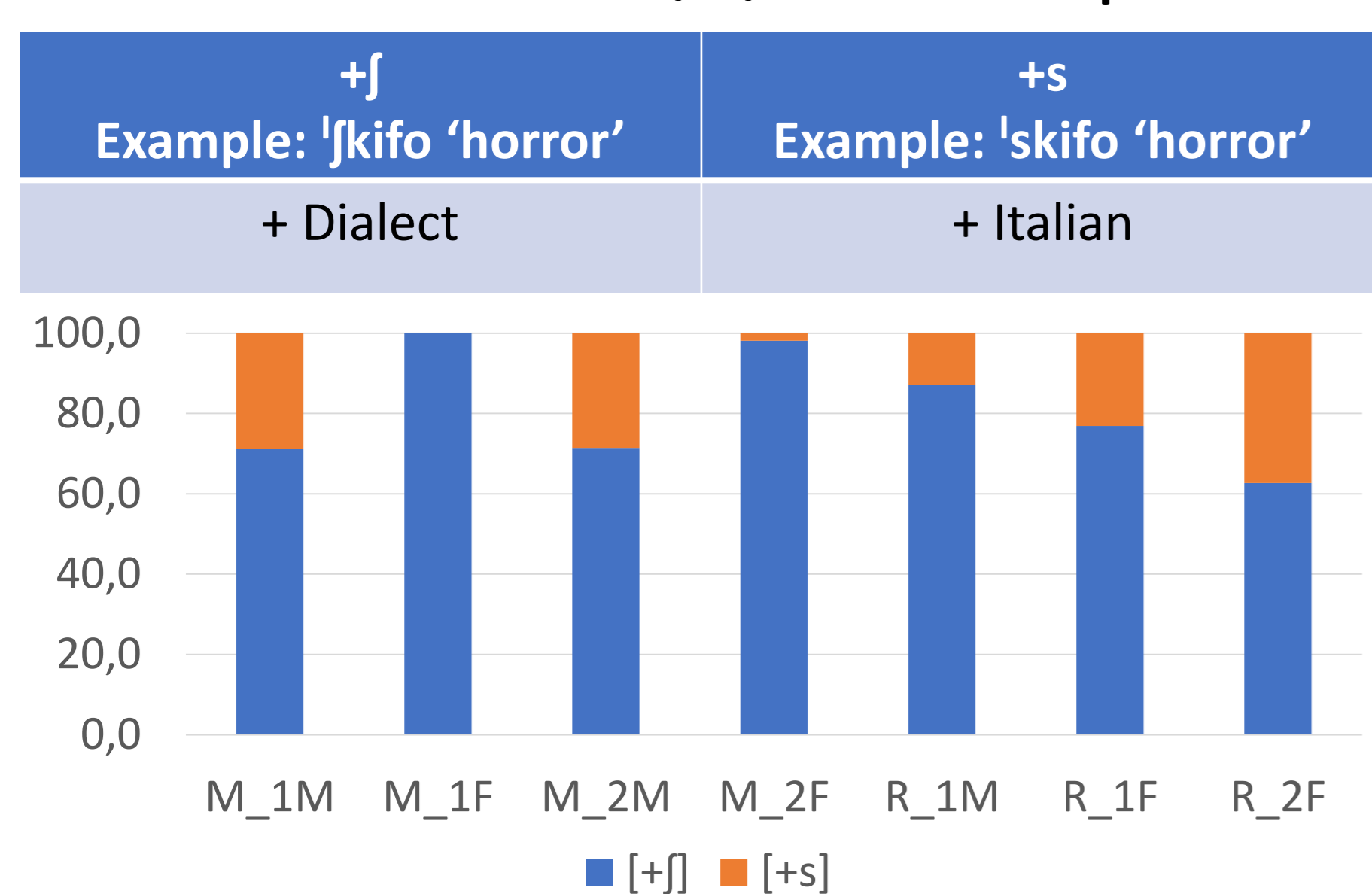
LINGUISTIC VARIABLES

- palatalization of /s/ before -p- and -k-;
- realization as kj of the Latin PL sound in items such as *chiove* 'it rains';
- variation in tonic personal pronouns;
- the syntactic position of the possessive used with family nouns;
- use of the local variants of the demonstrative *quello* 'that'.

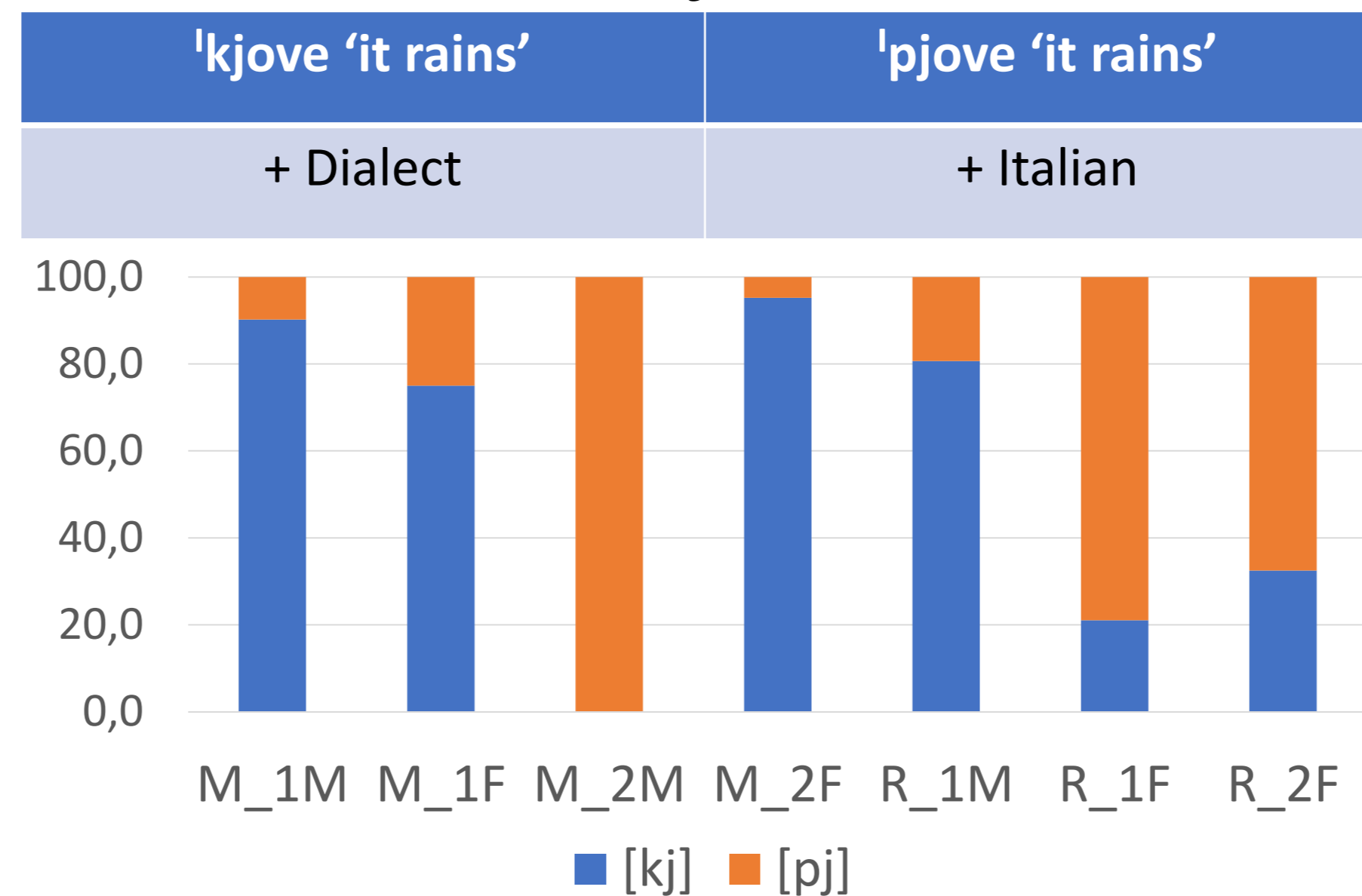
LEGEND:

M_1M = Migrants, I gen, Males;
M_1F = Migrants, I gen, Females;
M_2M = Migrants, II gen, Males;
M_2F = Migrants, II gen, Females;
R_1M = Returners, I gen, Males;
R_1F = Returners, I gen, Females;
R_2F = Returners, II gen, Females.

Palatalization of /s/ before -p- and -k-



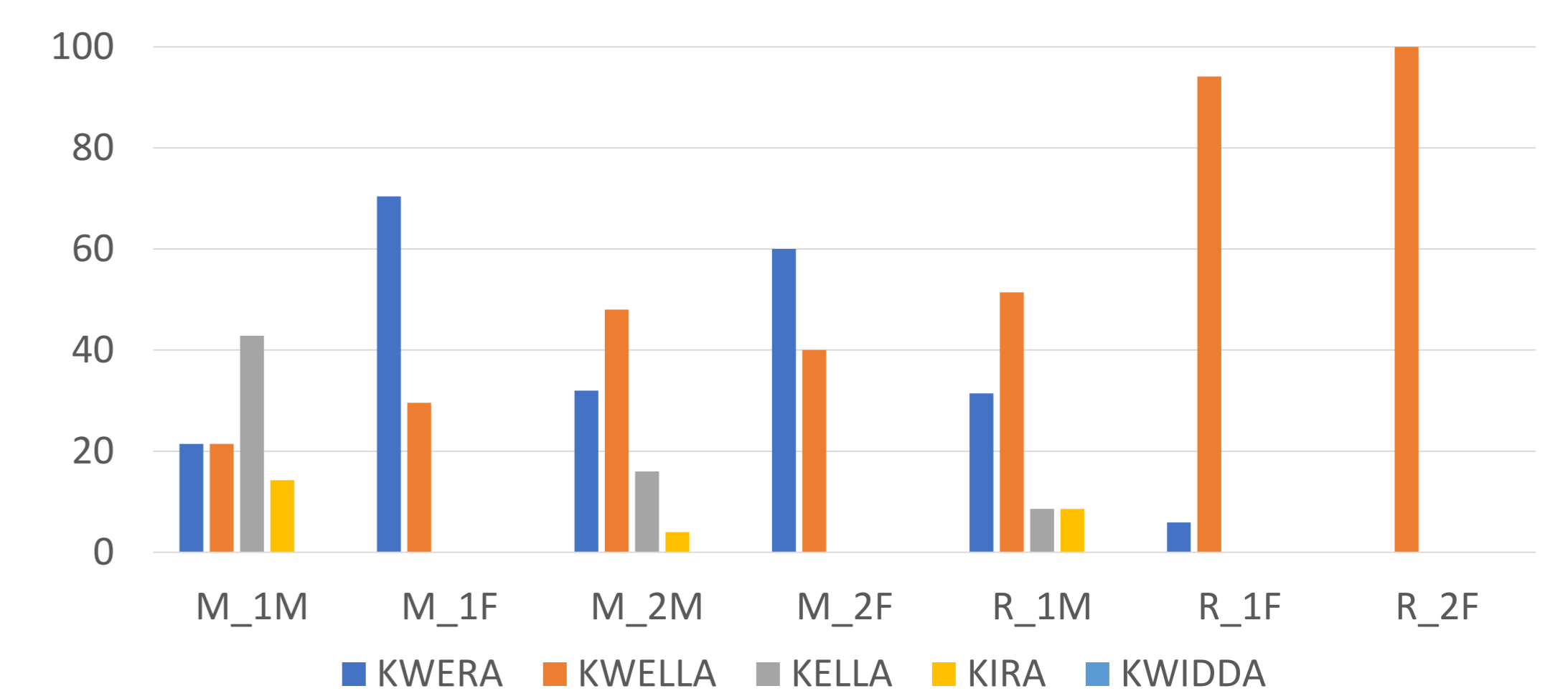
Realization as [kj] of the Latin -PL-



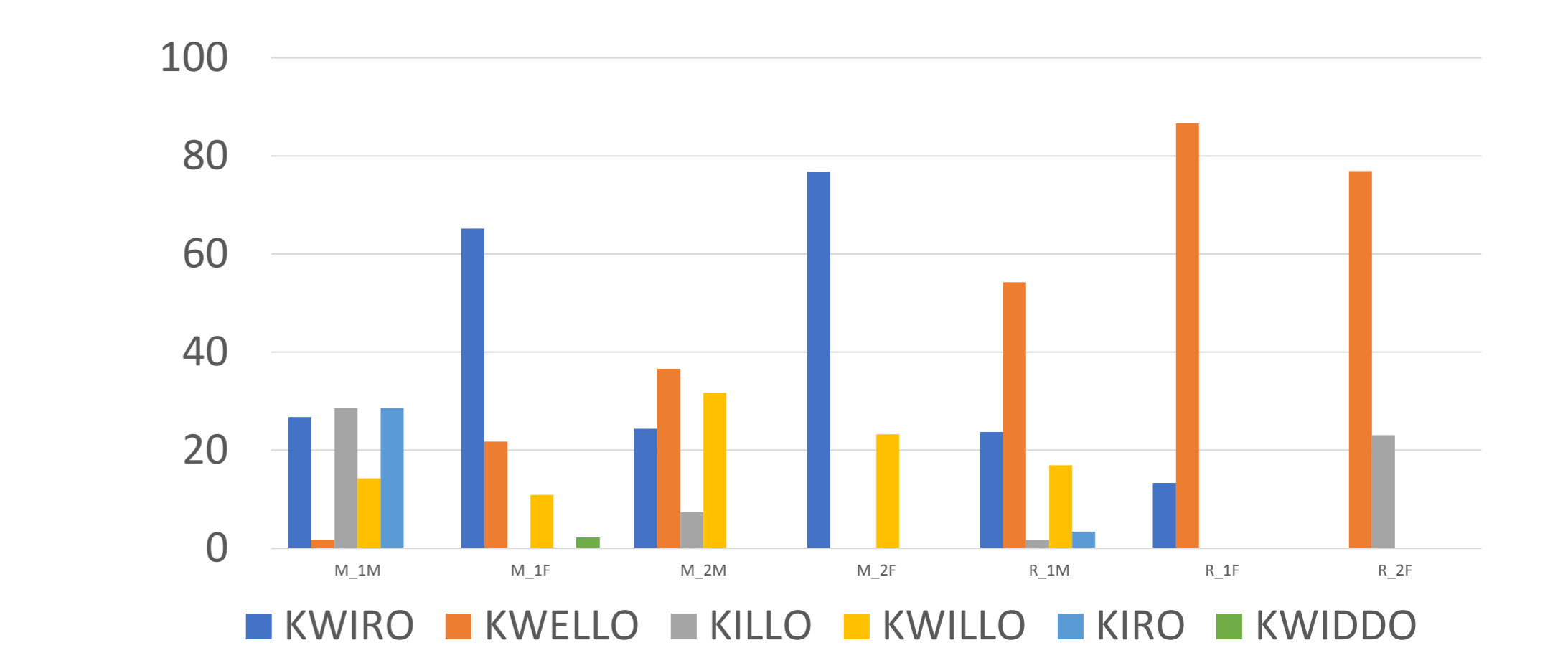
Variants of demonstrative

- In the study of the variation of the demonstrative, two linguistic variables are involved:
1) The maintenance of /w/ in the /kw/ position, which is a typical feature of Montefalcione dialect;
2) The use of [r] instead of [l] (typical of Montefalcione dialect).

	kwella	kella	kera	kwera	kwidda
/-r-/	-	-	+	+	-
/-ll-/	+	+	-	-	-
/kw-/	+	-	-	+	+
/k-/	-	+	+	-	-

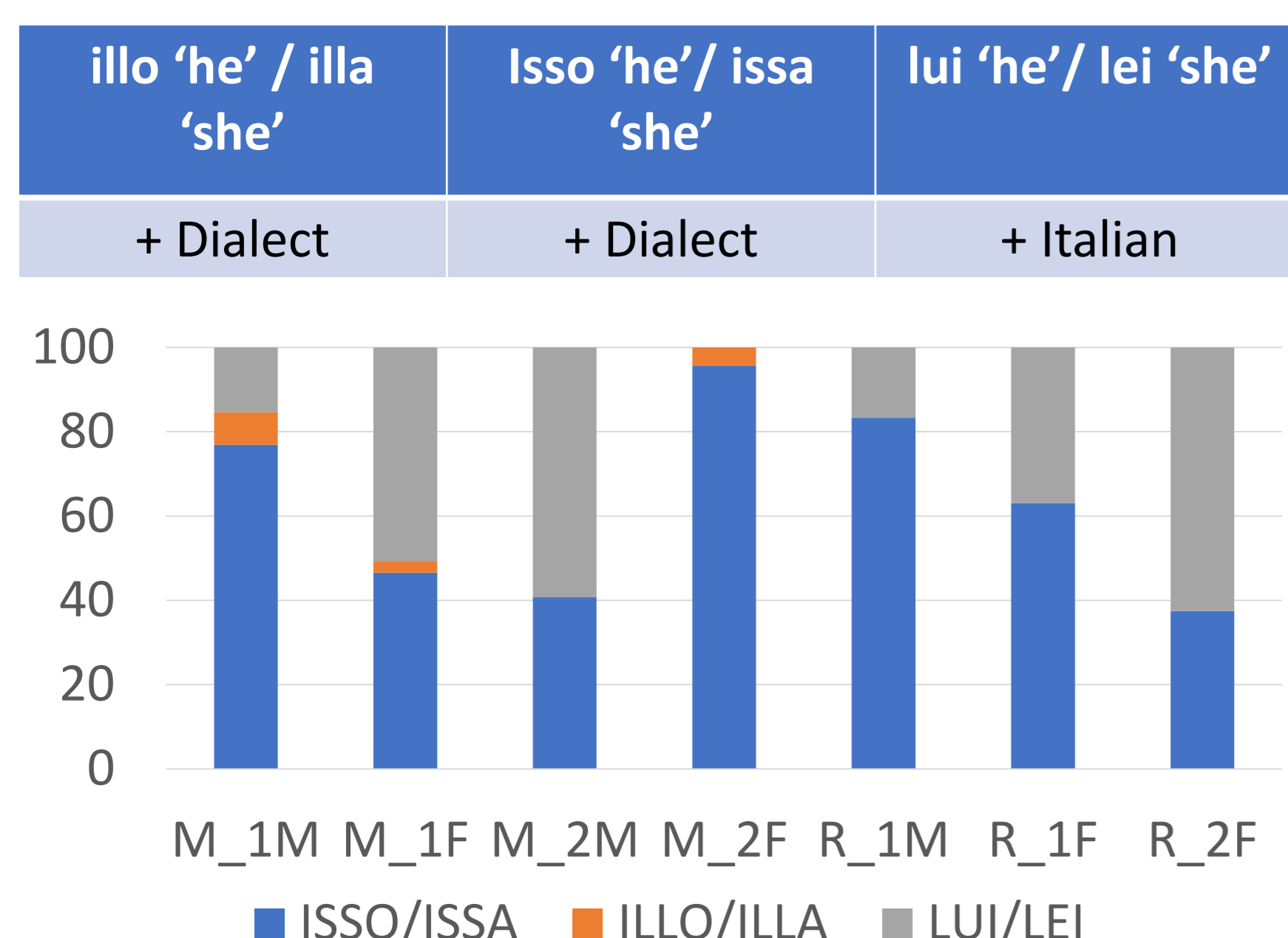


	kwello	kwillo	killo	kiro	kwiro
/i/	-	+	+	+	+
/-r-/	-	-	-	+	+
/-ll-/	+	+	+	-	-
/kw-/	+	+	-	-	+
/k-/	-	-	+	+	-



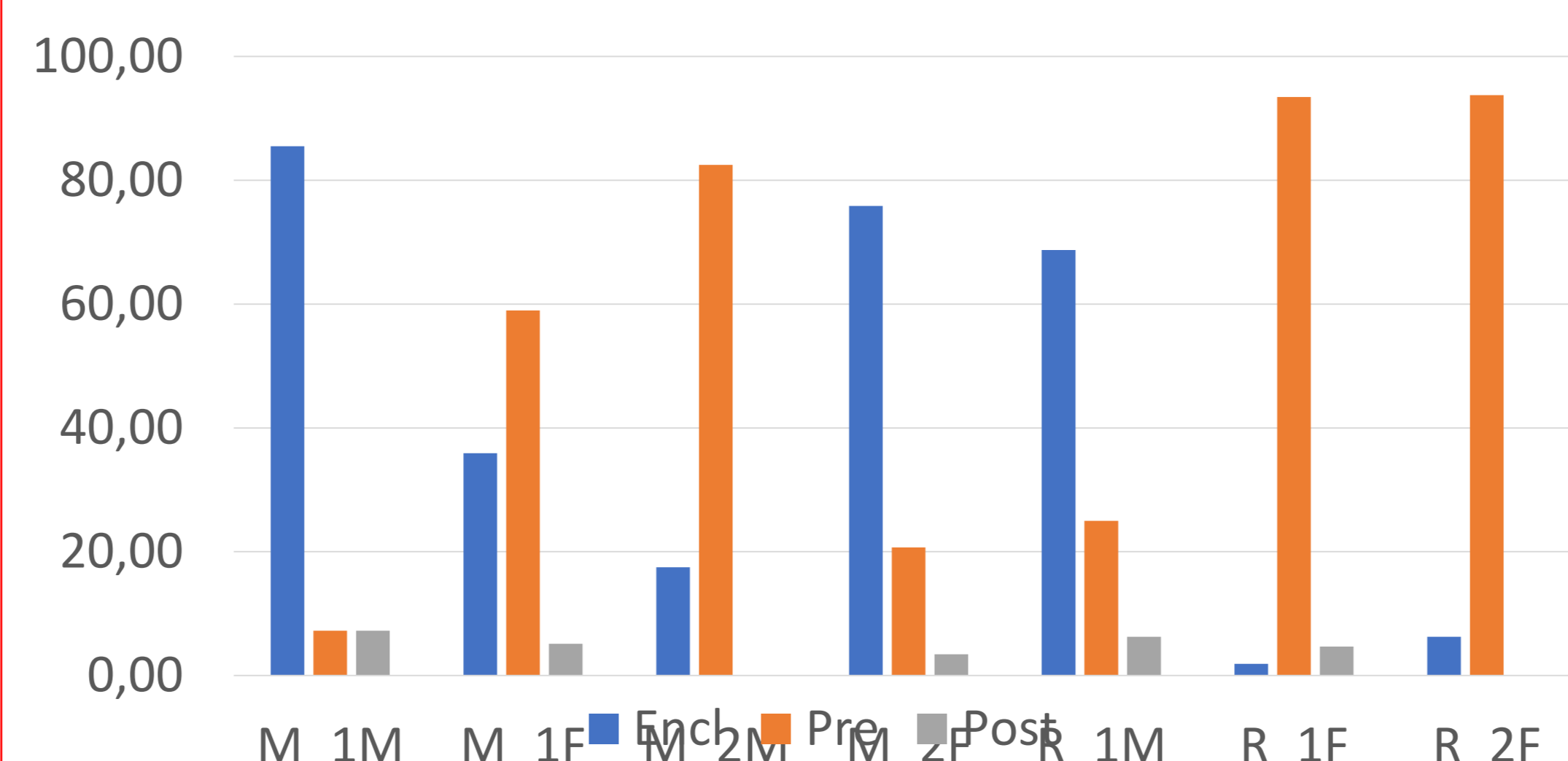
Tonic personal pronouns

- illo 'he' / illa 'she' is the form in the Montefalcione dialect;
- isso 'he' / issa 'she' is the form in Neapolitan dialect which is now alternating with illo 'he' / illa 'she' in the Montefalcione area as an effect of the diffusion of Neapolitan dialect (which is the prestige variety)



Syntactic position of possessive adjectives with family nouns

Enclitic variant	Post-Name position	Before N position
Mamma-ta	Mamma tua	Tua mamma
N PossAdj	N PossAdj	PossAdj N
mum your	mum your	Your mum
'your mum'	'your mum'	'your mum'
+ dialetto	+ Regional Italian	+ Italian



RESULTS

- There is **variation between returners and migrants**: the first group (returners) adopt Italian variants more often than migrants; Qualitative studies are showing that the adoption of more Italianized variants is due to returners' desire to distinguish themselves from the local people, since they consider those with no migration experience to be culturally deprived. Thus, identity should be taken into account to understand quantitative variation.
- There is also **gender variation**, both among returners and among the migrants still in England:
 - among returners: female speakers use Italian variants more often;
 - among I gen migrants: male speakers adopt more dialectal variants;
 - among II gen migrants: females adopt more dialectal variants.
- In **intergenerational transmission**, variation has to do with the different percentages of local vs Italian variants in male and female speakers, since males are more Italianized than females. Further studies on returners are necessary in order to verify the importance of intergenerational variation.