

Introduction

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In today's global society, an increasing number of people speak a very low number of widely spoken languages that enjoy a high level of standardisation, time-dated official recognition and considerable resources. At the same time, minority, local, unofficial, non-standardised, under-resourced languages are gaining interest from specialists, activists and society as a whole.¹ In this respect, diverse labels have been used to describe the countless bi- or multilingual repertoires including at least one minority language. These labels highlight the varying relationships in terms of typological distance between the varieties or languages at issue. Moreover, they highlight the asymmetry in terms of status and power between them. Notable among these terms are 'bidialectalism' (e.g., Chambers, Trudgill 1998; Bright et al. 2018) and 'bilectalism' (Rowe, Grohmann 2013), with the latter better capturing diglossic repertoires, typically characterised by a standardised superposed language as the higher variety and the local 'dialect' as the lower variety. Such special instances of bilingualism have been attracting growing attention in linguistic research. This interest is driven by several factors. One is the richness of data that bilingual contexts with local languages can offer in terms of language documentation, language variation and change, general language theories (see, among the others, De Vogelaer, Selier

¹ See Grinevald, Bert 2011; Lee, Wright 2014; Berruto 2018; Hogan-Brun, O'Rourke 2019; Hodges 2021; Ridanpää 2022; Heinrich 2023, among others.

2012 for a general overview of the matter; Ledgeway 2013 on (micro) syntactic variation in Romance languages and their dialectal varieties). Another factor is the growing evidence of the linguistic and cognitive benefits of any type of bilingualism (e.g. Lauchlan, Parisi, Fadda, 2013; Garraffa, Obregon, Sorace 2017; Garraffa et al. 2020). Additionally, such contexts are particularly interesting for the study of identity and attitudes, as they play a crucial role when it comes to endangered language preservation or revitalisation (e.g. O'Rourke, 2011; Sallabank 2013; Vari, Tamburelli 2023).

Given the multifaceted nature of factors contributing to this growing interest, it is no surprise that issues concerning bilingualism with local languages have been approached from diverse perspectives within the field of linguistics. A primary focus of research consists in the mutual influence of the grammatical systems of languages with varying levels of prestige, together with the phenomena of contact-induced variation that are visible at different linguistic levels (see, for instance, Quartaro this volume). Some studies with a similar focus went beyond simple language description and documentation, since they have approached linguistics systems as a set of abstract rules that generate structured sentences with meaning (see Corrigan, 2010; Coronel-Molina, Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2012; Padovan et al. 2016). From this perspective, non-standard, local or minority languages have informed the field in a meaningful way, since the characteristics of bi- or multilingual grammars are shaped by factors such as prestige, societal attitudes, and the contexts of language use, which determine the quality of input. For instance, non-standardisation has often proven to impact the characteristics of the standard-dialect continuum, generating fuzzy boundaries between varieties, instances of grammatical hybridity, language mixing and/or optionality.² Additionally, investigating linguistically close languages can reveal aspects of micro-variation, since they may share most grammatical properties but display minimal differences in morphosyntactic feature specification and spell-out. Such micro-comparisons of closely related varieties may provide meaningful insights into the limits of variation, the role of intra-speaker variation and, more generally, into how variation can be captured theoretically and thus incorporated in the speakers' mental grammar (see Grohmann et al. this volume). Such variation is extremely meaningful to inform future linguistic theories, since it is devoid of the constraints of standardisation, explicit leveling and conscious codifications. As such, it

² See Cheshire, Stein 1997; Henry 1998, 2005; Milroy 2001; Cornips 2006; Tsiplakou et al. 2006; Papadopoulou, Leivada, Pavlou 2014; Leivada, Papadopoulou, Pavlou 2017; Grohmann et al. 2020; Procentese et al. 2024, among others.

allows us to investigate the natural course of linguistic change and evolution (Romaine 2007; Ihsane, Stark 2020).

A more recent perspective concerns the psycholinguistics field, which has begun to engage with variable linguistic data, embracing investigations that were traditionally of sociolinguistic interest alone. In fact, the field has progressively been trying to shift away from the monolingual prototype of language user and move towards the inclusion of within-individual and between-individual sources of variation, including instances of bi- and multilingualism (see Boland et al. 2016; Bülow, Pfenninger 2020 for a broad discussion on this matter). A recent debate in this field deals with the cognitive advantages of bi(dia)lectalism compared to more prototypical instances of bi- or multilingualism. Interestingly, previous literature on bilingualism with minority languages provides an inconsistent picture concerning its cognitive advantages. On the one hand, some studies found no bilingual advantage in terms of executive functions (see Gathercole et al. 2014 on Welsh-English bilinguals; Duñabeitia et al. 2014 on Basque-Spanish bilinguals). On the other hand, a group of studies did show an advantage for similar populations compared to their monolingual peers.³ This line of research is particularly relevant as far as the impact on society is concerned. In fact, it contributes to overturn the misconception that such instances of bilingualism (and especially those including non-standardised varieties commonly referred to as ‘dialects’) should be discouraged in family and educational settings. Despite the above-mentioned progressive shift within the field, it is important to note that an impressively small number of languages is still overrepresented in psycholinguistic research. As reported by Kirk (2022, 1), “it is estimated that only around 0.6% of the world’s languages have featured in sentence production research [...] with areas such as child language acquisition not being much higher at around 1.5%”. Moreover, “only ten languages account for 85% of the abstracts featured in 4000 leading psycholinguistic conferences and journal articles”. As the reader will note, the psycholinguistic perspective is underrepresented in our volume too. This provides further proof of the big gap existing in the literature so far, and perhaps of the barriers that can exist in accessing minority, local and non-standardised varieties. Without doubts, there is still a lot of work to be done to account for non-standard bi- and multilingual repertoires in current psycholinguistic models of language processing and production.

3 See Lauchlan, Parisi, Fadda 2013; Antoniou et al. 2014; Garraffa, Beveridge, Sorace 2015; Garraffa, Obregon, Sorace 2017; Garraffa et al. 2020; Leivada, Papadopoulou, Pavlou 2017; Poarch, Vanhove, Berthele 2019 for investigations on cognitive control, problem solving ability, metalinguistic abilities, and working memory in both adult and child populations.

A perspective that, instead, is well represented in our volume concerns the social, attitudinal, identity and political situation of bi(dia)lectal speech communities. In areas of language contact between a local language and a national one, both become symbols. Traditionally, the local language, which is weaker from a socio-economic viewpoint, becomes a symbol of poorness, scarcity of work opportunities, backwardness. Conversely, the majority language tends to symbolise social mobility, wealth, modernity (Austin, Sallabank 2011; Campbell, Rehg 2018). Such opposite attitudes often lead to an increasing use of the national language and a simultaneous progressive abandonment of the local language. In many cases, this results in the local language not being transmitted to future generations (Brezinger, de Graaf 2009; Austin, Sallabank 2011; Thomason 2015; Campbell, Rehg 2018). However, recent years have witnessed a shift in the way local languages are perceived. In Italy, Berruto (2006) talked of *risorgenze dialettali* 'dialectal resurgences' to highlight a renewed interest in the local varieties and their use in domains that traditionally pertained to national languages. Similar phenomena have been observed in different parts of the world. Globalisation plays a central role in this trend inversion, as its uniformising forces have provoked a reclamation of what is local (Niño-Murcia, Rothman 2008). This tension between global, national and local leads to the presence of multiple identities in bilingual and multilingual societies (see at least Joseph 2004; Niño-Murcia, Rothman 2008). Such identities might emerge at different times, leading to different linguistic behaviours according to contexts and interlocutors (see Tabouret-Keller 1997; Noels, Yashima, Zhang 2020 for overviews on the topic; see also Baruzzo this volume).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that favourable attitudes and a strong identity link with a language do not always correlate with actual proficiency or usage, especially with local languages. In Italy, for instance, while the national language keeps increasing its speakers and domains of use, the use of the so-called 'dialects', despite growing positive sentiment, is often limited to merely tokenistic practices (Dal Negro, Vietti 2011; Berruto 2018). In some areas, it seems that especially those who know and use less the local language hold more positive attitudes towards it (see Besler et al. this volume). In such regard, it should be highlighted that positive language attitudes are one of the first fundamental steps to revitalise or maintain minority languages whose life is in jeopardy (Bradley 2002; Sallabank 2013), but they are not capable of inverting trends of language behaviour alone (Ajzen 1985; Garrett 2010). Indeed, the integrative and instrumental value of a minority language are also important to encourage people to actually use or learn it (see, for example, Gardner, MacIntyre 1991; Lasagabaster, Hugué 2007; Belmar, van Boven, Pinho 2019). As a matter of fact, especially the lower instrumental value of

local languages compared to that of majority languages often leads speakers to underuse or confine the former to private spheres, exacerbating the hierarchies within communities (see, for example, Mura this volume; Simoniello, Ganfi this volume).

In this respect, language policy – both at the macro, institutional level, and at the micro, grass-roots level – can play a pivotal role, as it may aim either to consolidate the current sociolinguistic situation of a community or bring about profound changes to the *status quo*. The latter aim might be an attempt to promote more prestigious uses of a local language, standardising it and introducing it in the public and educational spheres (see Baldauf 2006; Spolsky 2009; Wei, Kelly-Holmes 2022, among others, for a broad discussion on issues pertaining to language policies at different levels of society; but see also the observations by Mura this volume; Simoniello, Ganfi this volume; Tamburelli this volume). When positive attitudes merge with integrative and instrumental reasons for learning and using a minority language, language preservation seems a feasible achievement, leading to an increase in the number of people who know the language and the creation of ‘new speakers’ (O’Rourke, Ramallo 2013; O’Rourke, Walsh 2020).

Such dynamics generate language practices that are particularly interesting from the viewpoint of contact linguistics. These practices are often characterised by strong intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation – amplified by the presence of both ‘semi-speakers’ and ‘new speakers’ of the minority language –, frequent language shifts and code alternations. At the same time, also puristic behaviours and tensions for the legitimacy of the status of speaker of a local language are often present (O’Rourke, Ramallo 2013; Sallabank 2013). Indeed, on the one hand, purism may prevent most of the code-switching from the minority to the majority language from happening. On the other hand, instances of code-switching may frequently occur by virtue of the limited competencies of the speakers (Dal Negro 2005; Mereu, Vietti 2020). More in general, shifts in both directions offer a fertile area of research, for example adopting a socio-functional approach (Auer 1984), which is able to identify the communicative and pragmatic functions of plurilingual practices (see Cerruti, Regis 2005; Dal Negro 2005; Mereu, Vietti 2020; Simoniello, Ganfi this volume, among others).

Plurilingual practices are often carried out in school too. Although stigmatisation against them is still visible in different parts of the world (e.g. Murillo, Smith 2011; Nguyen 2022), the attention of educational linguistics to the advantages of being able to resort to more languages has been recently growing (see Gafaranga 2007; Davies 2020, for overviews on the topic). Notably, accepting the presence in school activities of minority languages, which are often the L1s of students, seems to bring along linguistic and social benefits. Firstly,

acknowledging different linguistic and cultural realities means embracing and not segregating different identities, which can be fundamental for students' attitudes towards their local languages and for their own self-esteem (Davies 2020). It might be argued that this is more likely to happen if the local varieties mastered by students are fully recognised as 'languages' rather than declassify them to 'dialects' or to other terms that may be seen as derogatory (see Tamburelli this volume). Secondly, a plurilingual pedagogy involving minority languages, other than the aforementioned psycho-sociological advantages, appears to be beneficial for learning in general terms and for linguistic learning in particular. By resorting to their bi- / multilingual repertoire, students are able to make positive inferences about language patterns, making them capable to learn key linguistic structures and, with time, even take part in full communicative activities, especially when the starting and the target languages are typologically related (see Davies 2020; Llompart et al. 2020; Varcasia, Atz this volume). Including local (or immigrant) languages in educational practices and teaching materials also strengthens the metalinguistic awareness of students, especially if structured work on language variation is carried out. For this to happen, a thorough study of the characteristics of those languages is necessary, especially as far as school-related elements are concerned (see Cignetti et al. in this volume).

This volume is based on the topics of the international conference 'Language Attitudes and Bi(dia)lectal Competence (LABiC)', which was held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in September 2022 and it includes the work of some of the conference presenters. We are deeply grateful to all the researchers who contributed to the conference, both those who presented a chapter in this book and those who could not do so for all sorts of reasons. Each single presentation was an enrichment to us and to the whole field of study concerned with bilingualism with local languages. We are particularly thankful to the keynote speakers, Antonella Sorace, Bernadette O'Rourke, Kleantes Grohmann and Marco Tamburelli for their inspiring talks. Antonella Sorace showed the connection between people's perception of minority languages and cognitive advantages related to bilingual repertoires. Moreover, she stressed the importance of appropriately communicating notions pertaining to bilingualism, in order to allow policy-makers and speakers to make informed decisions about the future of minority languages and their intergenerational transmission. Bernadette O'Rourke proposed new ways of understanding minority language revitalisation, by also re-thinking long-established concepts such as that of language as a stable community of speakers and the notion of 'speaker-hood' itself. The contributions by Kleantes Grohmann and Marco Tamburelli, which bring different but very fascinating perspectives to the field, can be found in the opening and

closing chapters of this book, respectively. We believe they provide a perfect framework, as the volume brings together research that explores the topic of bi- / multilingualism with local languages from multiple intertwined perspectives, which range from language contact and its effect on grammatical traits, to language attitudes, language policies and educational implications.

The volume has not been divided into sections. This choice was made to reflect the main idea behind the conference and the volume: issues pertaining to bi- / multilingualism with local languages should be addressed in a comprehensive way, with different approaches working together rather than in sealed compartments that do not look at each other. The special characteristics of this type of bi- / multilingual repertoires emphasise the connections between formal linguistic aspects and social ones. On the one hand, language variation and language contact phenomena detectable in such contexts are deeply influenced by identity and attitudinal issues, but also make up an invaluable source of investigation for formal and theoretical linguistics. On the other hand, sociolinguistic phenomena and those related to the social psychology of languages have tight links with matters of language proficiency, language competence and actual language use, with which they should be investigated. Even studies related to teaching multiple languages in school should both comprehend motivation and grammatical aspects, as such elements go hand in hand in creating metalinguistic awareness and tolerance for language variation. This multi-perspective, interdisciplinary approach is obtained both by looking at this volume as a whole and at the single contributions. Clearly, this way of addressing issues in this discipline is not new, but with this volume we want to further encourage this intertwining of approaches and perspectives, which, we believe, is a virtuous direction for the future of this discipline.

Having stressed that, it is also important to clarify that the volume is divided in 9 chapters ordered in a thematic logical progression. The first contributions present instances of contact between a standardised national and a non-standardised language and their implications for grammatical structures or phonetic traits (Grohmann; Quartararo; Baruzzo). Then, the topic of language contact is linked with language attitudes by delving into their role in defining the direction of convergence between varieties with a different social status (Baruzzo, Besler et al; Mura; Simoniello, Ganfi). Afterwards, the issue of language policies is addressed and the educational context is explored as the locus of multilingual interactions and didactic activities that may involve local languages, with interesting implications for today's society (Simoniello, Ganfi; Varcasia, Atz; Cignetti et al.). Finally, the last chapter concludes our inquiry by addressing definitory issues of 'language' in the field of Linguistics, especially when dealing with minority languages (Tamburelli). For the reasons

explained above, we encourage the readers not to feel constrained by this order and feel free to jump around and dig into the chapters in the way that better resonates with their interests or current needs.

Chapter 1, “Bilectal Investigations of Grammar: A Clitic Placement. View from Cyprus”, by Kleanthes K. Grohmann, Evelina Levada, Natalia Pavlou, and Constantina Fotiou, presents an in-depth analysis of clitic placement among bilectal speakers of Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and Cypriot Greek (CG), the non-standardised variety spoken in everyday communication. The chapter meticulously reviews and discusses previous research conducted by the Cyprus Acquisition Lab’s team, focusing on both language acquisition and adult grammar. Moreover, it contributes to both linguistic theory and language practices. From a theoretical perspective, it engages in the critical debate on how generativist theories can account for the observed variation between and within speakers. Rather than adopting a strictly parametric approach, the work adopts a ‘Universal Grammar from below’ approach and considers the different ‘lects’ of local language speakers as part of a unified, mixed grammar.

Chapter 2, “Object Marking in Aymara. A Case of Linguistic Contact-Induced Phenomenon from Spanish”, by Geraldine Quartararo, focuses on the impact of linguistic interaction on the system of marking objects in the Aymara language, centering on the verbal expression of Direct Objects (DO) by Aymara-Spanish bilinguals. It delves into the oral use of DO in two regional Aymara varieties, one from La Paz, Bolivia, and the other from Muylaque, Peru. The La Paz data were collected through spontaneous narratives and two structured tasks, namely the Family Problems Picture task and The Pear Story. Meanwhile, the Muylaque data comprised recorded narratives and dialogues. In a departure from earlier studies, which predominantly highlighted the accusative case as the DO marker in Aymara, this research reveals that bilingual speakers employ a combination of three markers in their speech: accusative, nominative, and dative/allative cases. This diversification in marking, particularly the adoption of nominative and dative cases, is thought to arise from the influence of Spanish, a language known for its specific marking of animate and definite DOs and the absence of markers for other DOs. The quantitative findings of this study lend support to the idea that bilingual speakers of Aymara and Spanish are integrating new, contact-influenced methods for marking DOs in Aymara.

Chapter 3, “Varieties of Spanish in Contact. Overt Sociolinguistic Views Among Young Western-Andalusians”, by Valeria Baruzzo, examines the linguistic interaction between Andalusian and Madrilenian Spanish, particularly among highly-educated young Western-Andalusians in Madrid. The study focuses on whether this contact leads to a linguistic shift towards the Madrilenian variety and away from Andalusian features, specifically the ‘ceceo/seseo’ variant. It

also explores how participants' perceptions and attitudes might influence this linguistic adaptation. Findings indicate that while these individuals retain a strong connection to their Andalusian roots, they also adapt to Madrid's dialect, undergoing a significant shift in their linguistic identity.

Chapter 4, "On the Relation Between Attitudes and Dialect Maintenance (Sicilian and Venetan) in Italy", by Alexandra Besler, Maria Ferin, Ilaria Venagli and Tanja Kupisch, is the first of a series of three papers dedicated to the Italian situation. Here, a comparison is made between the attitudes held by Venetans (northern Italy) and Sicilians (southern Italy) towards their local languages (or 'dialects'). This study confirms that a general revalorisation of local languages has been taking place in Italy. However, only in the Venetan area the appreciation of the local language seems to go hand in hand with actual language use, while in the Sicilian area the local language seems to be more favourably evaluated by those who do not actively use it. Following a multi-perspective approach, in addition to connecting attitudes with use, the authors explored participants' proficiency in both the national and local language. Results show that the latter does not hinder the former, and if anything, within the Sicilian participants, being proficient in the local language turned out to be positively correlated with a higher proficiency in Italian.

In Chapter 5, "students' Attitudes and Opinions in a Context of Bilingualism with a Minority Language. Italian and Sardinian Compared", Piergiorgio Mura presents the results of his attitudinal investigation conducted with schools in another Italian context, Sardinia. On a general level, both the majority and the minority language received very positive ratings by students. Participants' affective bond with both Italian and Sardinian was shown, as well as the willingness of the students - especially the youngest ones in early adolescence - to see both languages included in school activities. However, the perceived instrumental utility of Sardinian turned out to be particularly low, and the author invites policy-makers to reflect on the potential meaning of this result for the long-term vitality of the minority language. In this study, the level of competence and use of the local language by participants positively interacted with their degree of favourableness towards that language.

With Chapter 6, "Effects of National Language Policies on Local Varieties: Campanian and Sicilian Case Studies", by Maria Simonello and Vittorio Ganfi, southern Italian contexts were examined, namely Campania and, once again, Sicily. A multi-perspective approach is offered to readers, as both participants' linguistic practices and language prestige were studied, also in the light of national and regional language policies. In both contexts, the local language seems to be still quite active in private domains, much less in the public sphere. Moreover, the boundaries between Italian and the local

language often turned out to be not clear-cut, as many instances of code-switching were detected. The authors, then, listed a series of communicative and pragmatic functions fulfilled by the numerous shifts between languages. As far as language prestige is concerned, this study confirms once more that the local languages are generally perceived as valuable nowadays, but especially in terms of cultural heritage. A real change of the sociolinguistic status quo, where Italian is used both in high and low domains and the local languages only in the latter, does not seem to be looked for. This disposition is arguably fostered by the fact that top-down national and regional policies addressing Campanian and Sicilian do not appear focused on such a matter and show little commitment to modify the current roles languages have in people's repertoires and today's society.

In Chapter 7, "How Is the Usage of the Swiss Variety of Italian Perceived in the Educational Context?", Luca Cignetti, Laura Baranzini, Simone Fornara and Elisa Désirée Manetti present the first results of their study on the Swiss variety of Italian, focusing in particular on school-related lexicon. After a thorough overview of the current sociolinguistic situation concerning the Italian language in Switzerland, examples of 'Italian helvetisms' particularly relevant in the school context are presented, and their differences with 'Italiano d'Italia' are described. The authors stress the importance of creating a glossary of lexical entries typical of the Swiss variety of Italian, in order to develop teaching materials and, more generally, a strong metalinguistic awareness of students, with informed reflections on language variation.

Chapter 8, "Multilingual Literacy and Metalinguistic Reflection in Primary School", by Cecilia Varcasia and Emanuela Atz, explores multilingual classrooms in South Tyrol, an area characterised by both native and immigrant multilingualism. Inspired by the 'Éveil aux langues' approach, the study was conducted in primary school and aimed at fostering metalinguistic awareness. Results indicated that regardless of their school system, children use their shared linguistic repertoire to aid and challenge their language learning. For instance, Dutch comprehension was often enhanced by German skills, while Ladin was only partly assisted by Italian. Children's existing language knowledge helped them learn new languages, demonstrating high metalinguistic awareness. This approach, integrating home languages in the classroom, not only improved school language learning but also equipped students to handle unfamiliar languages, highlighting the value of leveraging students' native linguistic resources in education.

The volume ends with Chapter 9, "Attitudes Reversed. How Ausbau-centric Approaches Hinder the Maintenance of Linguistic Diversity and Why We Must Rediscover the Role of Abstand Relations", by Marco Tamburelli. This final chapter addresses the issue of how to

classify languages, which is of particular importance for 'small' and local varieties. The author claims that considering 'languages' just those that already have official recognition or socio-political power is not a fair practice and it conceals the real multilingualism present in speaking communities. Moreover, denying local varieties the status of 'language' can create both communicative and educational problems for the speakers of those varieties. Consequently, speakers are likely to develop negative attitudes towards their own L1s, which in turn seriously hinder their vitality. The author proposes to classify languages not on socio-political criteria (Ausbau approach), but on purely linguistically structural and formal criteria (Abstand approach). This way, linguistic systems that have their own grammar and are not intelligible to speakers of an already established standard language cease to be called 'dialects' and start to be called 'languages', which in turn helps improve speakers' attitudes towards such languages. As a support to his theses, the author presents previous research findings on two different standardisation processes followed by two different communities in Belgium and Luxembourg where varieties of Moselle Franconian are spoken. Opting for an internal variety of the minority language as the standard variety (as happened in Luxembourg) seems to improve speakers' attitudes towards the minority language more than choosing an established majority language (which might be quite distant from an Abstand perspective, as it happens for Moselle Franconian and German).

In conclusion, the notions presented in this book allow scholars, language experts and policy-makers to reflect on their future actions and their impact on language preservation and maintenance. Furthermore, we believe that this volume emphasises two pivotal issues in the study of bilingualism with local, non-standardised or minority languages. Firstly, it advocates for a critical shift towards multidisciplinary approaches. Secondly, it implicitly issues a strong call to linguists worldwide, urging them to step out of their comfort zone and expand their research beyond well-documented national languages, predominantly English. This redirection is imperative not just for academic diversity but also for the preservation of linguistic heritage and a comprehensive understanding of human language in its entirety. The role of linguists is thus reframed not only as researchers but also as guardians of linguistic diversity in this rapidly globalising world. In order to fulfil this role, we should all make small efforts and ensure that languages with fewer resources receive the attention and support they deserve.

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