

What Remains of an Atypical ‘Restsprache’: The Mediterranean Lingua Franca

Daniele Baglioni

1 The Mediterranean Lingua Franca: ‘Restsprache’ or ‘Rest-What’?

In a famous page of Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), the protagonist finds himself for the first time before the Emperor of Lilliput, who shows up escorted by several fellow countrymen. In the desperate attempt to address his bizarre counterparts, Gulliver resorts to all languages that must have been part of the ‘portfolio’ of an educated 18th-century British traveler: German and Dutch, indispensable for sailing the North Sea; French and Latin, languages of the European diplomacy; Spanish and Italian, essential for navigation in the Mediterranean. The last language to be mentioned is Lingua Franca (henceforth LF), a name referred by contemporary sources to a very elementary Romance-based—and, more specifically, Italian-based—variety, serving for rudimentary communications between Arabs and Turks, on the one hand, and Westerners, on the other, in their interactions on the shores of North Africa and, to a lesser extent, in other port cities of the Ottoman Empire.¹ Nonetheless, the modern reader is led to wonder what kind of words and sentences Gulliver might have effectively uttered in this language. As a matter of fact, data on LF’s consistency and circulation is so vague and incomplete, and sources so heterogeneous, in regard both to their typology and reliability, that one might reasonably doubt whether this language is at the right place in the list, or whether it would figure better among the fictional languages of the novel, together with Lilliputian, Laputian, Brobdingnagian, and Houyhnhnm.

The issue of the historical plausibility of LF has been raised repeatedly by scholars, who have cautiously introduced their research object by resorting to expressions such as ‘between historical reality and literary fiction’ (Minervini

1 “His Imperial Majesty spoke often to me, and I returned Answers, but neither of us could understand a Syllable. There were several of his Priesters and Lawyers present (as I conjectured by their Habits) who were commanded to address themselves to me, and I spoke to them in as many Languages as I had the least Smattering of, which were *High and Low Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca*; but all to no purpose” (Swift 2008: 26).

1997), “between myth and reality” (Aslanov 2012; 2014), and “Fact and Fiction”, as in the subtitle of Joanna Nolan’s recent book *The Elusive Case of Lingua Franca* (Nolan 2020). Elusiveness, in effect, appears to be LF’s main characteristic, due on one hand to the ambiguity and fragmentariness of the attestations, on the other to their quality, since all testimonies are *on* the language and not *of* the language, given the lack of direct records (see § 2). Hugo Schuchardt, unanimously acknowledged as the pioneer of scientific research on LF, compared it to the ‘Seeschlange’, the legendary sea monster feared by German sailors on the basis of few and uncertain sightings (Schuchardt 1883: 282). More recently, Rachel Selbach (2007a) has proposed for LF the analogous image of Nessie, the Loch Ness monster.

Indeed, the number of sightings, or, plainly speaking, historical sources making reference to LF provides sufficient evidence for its circulation, at least in the Barbary Regencies, especially in Algiers, in the period comprised between the end of the 16th and the 18th century, namely in the Golden Age of Mediterranean privateering. Nevertheless, scholars disagree on both the corpus of sources to be examined and the grammatical and lexical features ascribable to LF. Even the classification of LF as a ‘proper’ language, that is as an organic and autonomous system, is debated. Actually, despite the label of ‘lingua’ (generally in Italian in the sources, as in Swift’s novel and in Modern English), most contemporary travelers assign LF the status of a mere ‘jargon’,² and/or ‘mix of Italian and Spanish’,³ a fact that reveals their perception of this linguistic variety as incomplete, because of its limited lexicon and functions, and not clearly distinguishable from other Romance languages, above all Italian. In a couple of sources concerning Tunis, LF is pictured as nothing but ‘broken Italian’ (“un Italien corrompu, qu’on appelle le petit Franc”, Saint-Gervais 1736: 66) and “Italian of the country” (MacGill 1811: 15).

Such ambiguity has led to different interpretations. Most creolists have uncritically accepted the equation of LF with a pidgin, more precisely “the earliest known recorded pidgin” (Velupillai 2015: 25), from which all other European-based contact languages might have developed by relexification,

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- 2 See Savary de Brèves (1628: 149 “un parler corrompu, ou pour mieux dire un iargon”); Poiron ([1752] 1925: 21 “un jargon italien”); Haedo (1612: 23–24 “casi una gerigonça”); Dan (1637: vol. 2, 102–103 “un bar(r)agouin facile et plaisant”); Chastelet des Bois (1665 after Dakhliya 2008: 71: “un baragouin ou galimatias”).
 - 3 D’Arvieux (1735: vol. 5, 235 “un composé corrompu de l’Espagnol, de l’Italien, du Provençal, et autres qui ont du rapport avec celles-là”); Thédenat ([1785] “un mélange de l’italien et de l’espagnol, qu’on a peine à entendre”, Emerit 1948: 159); Pananti (1817: vol. 2, 231 “un misto d’italiano, di spagnuolo e d’africano”).

according to Keith Whinnom's well-known monogenetic hypothesis (Whinnom 1965).⁴ Romance linguists and philologists have more prudently proposed considering LF 'a rudimental variety of pidginized Italian, mixed with Spanish and, in its latest period, French elements' (Minervini 1996: 278),⁵ something in the middle between a shared interlanguage and an emerging pidgin, which, though displaying a certain degree of fossilization, must have undergone remarkable variation in space and time, within the wider framework of the circulation of Italian in the early modern Mediterranean area. Some Romance scholars, such as Cyril Aslanov (2012; 2014) and Joshua Brown (2022), have even called into doubt the very existence of LF as a "divergent, separate language variety", and considered it instead "a sort of nineteenth-century myth" (Brown 2022: 184).

As can be readily intuited, the "issue of languageness" (Selbach 2007b) is crucial, not so much in regard to the fields of scholarly competence, that is whether the study of LF pertains more to pidgin and creole linguistics or to (Italo-)Romance dialectology, but to establish the possibilities and limits of reconstruction. Indeed, one thing is having to do with a full-fledged language, another thing is confronting a dialect, or better a rather homogeneous group of idiolects set on an interlinguistic continuum. In the first case, scholars might legitimately aim to reconstruct a self-sufficient system, with its own phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon, whose leaks are only to be imputed to the fragmentariness of the documentation. Conversely, in the latter case scholars are forced to renounce any attempt at completeness and organicity, and limit themselves to reconstruct single features, combined in frequent (though not rigid and highly variable) configurations.

This inescapable ambiguity is no doubt the main anomaly of LF, as equated to a 'Restsprache'. It has consequences on both the delimitation of the documentary corpus and the interpretation of the data, and influences the way data is used to reconstruct grammatical structures. Accordingly, this chapter will first deal with the documentation of LF and the difficulty of selecting a corpus of sufficiently reliable sources (§ 2). It will then consider the data witnessed by the sources and its usability for reconstruction of LF's grammar (§ 3). In the final remarks (§ 4), some general considerations on the relationship

4 Operstein (2018b) locates LF on the pidgin/koine continuum, as the effect of "a continuum of ways of speaking LF that ranged from more basilectal to more acrolectal", which might account for the "simultaneous presence of different degrees of restructuring in the formation of LF" (Operstein 2018b: 353).

5 "una varietà rudimentale di italiano pidginizzato commisto di elementi ispanici e, nell'ultimo periodo, francesi".

between 'internal' and 'external' reconstruction will be made, by showing how, in the case of LF, borders between the two are extremely permeable and, consequently, a thorough assessment of the historical and sociolinguistic context necessarily precedes any attempt at reconstructing linguistic structures.

2 Sources

If one considers the amount of records collected by Dakhliya (2008) and Cifoletti (2011), two of the most cited references on LF, the documentation of this linguistic variety might seem surprisingly broad, nearer to the one of a corpus language than of a 'Restsprache'.⁶ Nevertheless, the impression is misleading, for the reasons summed up in the following lines.

First, it is worth observing that all attestations of LF are secondary, in the sense that no original text written in this variety is available. As a result, scholars mostly rely on single words, expressions, and sentences reported in memories of former slaves in Algiers and Tunis, travelers sailing the Mediterranean, and diplomats sent to the Ottoman provinces of North Africa and the Levant, who profess to have heard them from their Moorish and Turkish counterparts. A further typology is represented by literary imitations, that is highly stereotyped reproductions of LF occurring in comedies, poems, librettos and novels, as a means for characterizing (and ridiculing) exotic characters, such as the well-known cases of the Grand Mufti in Molière's *Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) and the opera manager Ali in Goldoni's *L'impresario delle Smirne* (1759). All in all, the entire documentation consists of metalinguistic and/or second-hand information that, in the case of literary attestations, is highly suspect of hyper-characterization for parodic effects.

A further anomaly is that all sources available are European, whereas neither Arabic nor Turkish texts ever mention LF. It is actually more complicated than this, because expressions akin to LF (Arabic *lisān al-faranġ* / *faranġiyya*, Turkish *firankçe*, Greek τὰ φραγκικά/φράγκικα) are frequently attested in the non-Romance languages of the Mediterranean, from the Middle Ages onwards, but generically refer to the languages of the 'Franks', a common denomination for 'Western Europeans' since the Crusader epoch (Tagliavini 1933: 373–383; Kahane/Kahane 1976). As a result, according to the contexts, they may designate French, Italian vernaculars, even Latin, but apparently never apply to a

6 Cifoletti (2011) gathers more than 60 testimonies, ranging from single words to whole sentences and even dialogues. A case apart is represented by the *Dictionnaire de la langue franque*, on which see below.

variety other than the main (mostly Romance) languages of the Westerners. Curiously, the term LF chronologically precedes its records, and is first attested in the Eastern Mediterranean, but its applications to what is now meant by LF are not prior to the diffusion of this label in early modern Western Europe.

The semantic ambiguity of the term has misled many modern scholars, who have located the origin of LF in the Crusader Levant, from where the language would have later migrated towards Africa.⁷ Despite its historical inconsistency, repeatedly shown, among others, by Bruno Camus Bergareche (1993) and Laura Minervini (1996; 1997),⁸ the Medieval origin of LF is still presented as an incontrovertible truth in most scientific literature on language contact, even in reference handbooks such as Thomason (2001: 162–163) and Matras (2020: 284). Indeed, such a remote prehistory is no doubt to be excluded, although it is not easy to precisely define the extremes within which LF developed, spread, and went out of use. As for the initial phase, the circulation of LF, in the modern ‘Western’ sense of the word, is first attested in Diego de Haedo’s *Topographia e historia general de Argel* (1612),⁹ but literary parodies of LF by European authors date at least from the second half of the 15th century.¹⁰ As for its obsolescence,

7 Robert Hall, in his influential book *Pidgin and Creole Languages*, asserts that LF “was used during the Middle Ages by European crusaders and traders in the eastern end of the Mediterranean” (Hall 1966: 3). The imaginativeness of Hall’s description emerges as well from the bizarre statement that “the Lingua Franca was a pidginized variety of Romance speech, based on the language of the Riviera between Marseilles and Genoa” (Hall 1966: 4).

8 For a more recent balance see also Baglioni (2018).

9 “La tercera lengua que en Argel se usa, es la que los moros y turcos llaman franca, o hablar franco, llamando así a la lengua y modo de hablar christiano, [...] porqué mediante este modo de hablar que está entre ellos en uso, se entienden co(n) los christianos” [“The third language spoken in Algiers is what the Moors and Turks call *Franca*, or *hablar franco*, calling thus the language and way of speaking of the Christians [...] because with this language they can communicate with the Christians”] (Haedo 1612: 24 recto; the English translation is taken from Nolan 2015: 106). It is worth noting that, although Diego de Haedo’s *Topographia* was published in 1612, the treatise was written decades earlier and describes to the situation in Algiers in the late 1570s (on the genesis of this work and the issue of its original authorship, likely to be attributed to the Augustinian friar Antonio de Sosa, who was a slave in Algiers from 1577 to 1581, see Garcés 2011).

10 The earliest poem parodying the Mediterranean LF is probably a sonetto written by Luigi Pulci, after 1463, in which a foreign prostitute speaks a rudimental Italian with many features typical of LF (infinitives and past participles instead of the inflected forms of the verbs, article deletion, first-person pronoun *mi*, etc.; see Decaria & Parenti 2012). A few decades later, in the years 1519–1520, the Spanish poet Juan del Encina, in his villancico “contrahaziendo a los mócaros que sienpre van inportunando a los peregrinos con demandas” (Harvey, Jones & Whinnom 1969), makes fun of the way donkey- and camel-boys plagued Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land with their sales-talk, by reproducing a very elementary Italian mixed with Spanish, which is similar to the later records of the North-African LF.

the use of LF must have been already decaying in the 1750s, as can be inferred from the gradual decrease of its attestations, but records of LF do occur until the French conquest of Algiers in 1830 and even later.

The year 1830 marks the last and most striking anomaly in the documentation, since in 1830 the first and only dictionary of LF was published, containing more than 2000 entries, a grammatical outline in the first pages, and even an appendix of dialogues for everyday conversation. The *Dictionnaire de la langue franque ou petit mauresque*, published anonymously in Marseilles, in few copies for the French soldiers sent to Algiers, alone provides more data than those that can be drawn from all previous sources.¹¹ Due to the large amount of information and its organization in a grammatical preface and a dictionary, most linguists have based all their reasoning on this work, using it as a sort of reference grammar of LF and ignoring Schuchardt's severe judgement, according to which the *Dictionnaire* is nothing other than "a rather a poor piece of work, riddled with all sort of imperfections".¹² In effect, the issue at stake concerns not quantity, but quality, or, in other words, the trustworthiness of this source. As has already been noted, the *Dictionnaire* is a late record, describing a linguistic variety whose circulation was at its peak two centuries earlier, 'when corsairs from Tunis and Algiers used to bring lots of Christian slaves from their expeditions', as explicitly stated by the anonymous author.¹³ On these premises, one would expect the record of a dialect in its terminal state, rapidly decaying, along with the political and socio-economic system that had favoured its origin and diffusion. Conversely, the word list and the dialogues of the *Dictionnaire* show a surprising expansion of the domains of use, with the addition of numerous first-attested terms for mundane referents and entertainments, such as *ballo* 'ball, dance', *café* 'coffee', *chocolata* 'chocolate', *gouarda sol* 'parasol', *spassegjar* 'to stroll', and even examples of gallant conversations over a cup of tea, hardly compatible with the fragments of LF reported in 17th- and 18th-century sources and totally unlikely in the asymmetric situation of master-slave communica-

11 The text of the *Dictionnaire*, published by the editor Feissat & Demonchy, is now available in the commented edition provided by Cifoletti (2011: 25–136).

12 "ein recht armseliges, mit allen möglichen Makeln behaftetes Werk" (Schuchardt 1909: 454 [the English translation is taken from Nolan 2020: 44]).

13 "La langue franque ou petit mauresque, très-répandue dans les états Barbaresques, lorsque les corsaires de Tunis et d'Alger rapportaient de leurs courses un grand nombre d'esclaves Chrétiens, est encore employée par les habitants des villes maritimes, dans leurs rapports avec les Européens" ['Lingua franca or *petit mauresque*, that was widespread in the Barbary Regencies when corsairs from Tunis and Algiers used to bring lots of Christian slaves from their expeditions, is still used by the dwellers of the coast cities in their interactions with Europeans'] (Cifoletti 2011: 33–34).

tion. Evident contradictions are also to be found in the grammatical preface, that attributes LF a regularity which lacks correspondence to what is observed not only in previous sources, but even in the dialogues following the entries of the *Dictionnaire* (§ 3).

New light has recently been shed on this bizarre book by Natalie Operstein, with significant findings. Operstein (2019) has convincingly attributed a first draft of the work to the American consular officer William Brown Hodgson, who spent three years in Algiers, from 1826 to 1829, within the framework of his State Department mission, and professed, already by 1827, to have compiled a vocabulary and some dialogues in LF and Arabic. According to Operstein's reconstruction, Hodgson's manuscript, after being donated or sold to French officers, would have been intensively worked over by an unknown French editor, apparently much less familiar with LF (as shown by the several inconsistencies in the orthography, as well as the high number of Gallicisms among the entries), and published in great haste in 1830, when it was presented as a means for 'facilitating the communications of the French with the inhabitants of the country where they are going to fight'.¹⁴ Again Operstein (2018b) has succeeded in identifying the models for the *Dictionnaire's* preface and dialogues, whose structural outline was based on two popular Italian grammars of the epoch, Giovanni Veneroni's *Maître italien* (in its 1800 revision) and Angelo Vergani's *Grammaire italienne* (in its 1823 augmented edition). This latter work contains a section entitled *Phrases familières, à l'usage des commençans* ['Familiar sentences for beginners'], whose dialogues coincide, often word for word, with the French parts of the *Dictionnaire's* dialogues, including conversations on weather and tea-time, unexpected with regard to LF, but perfectly normal in the Italian conversation guidebooks of the early 19th century. Both Vergani (1823) and Veneroni (1800) serve as a model for the *Dictionnaire's* preface, as revealed by the rigid classification of the parts of speech, which follows the order of the two grammar models, starting from the article and moving on to the noun, the adjective, and the verb.

Operstein's reconstruction of the genesis and editorial history of the *Dictionnaire* represents a major achievement for LF research, and is no doubt the most innovative part of her latest book-length essay *The Lingua Franca: Contact-Induced Language Change in the Mediterranean* (Operstein 2022). More questionable is her full trust in what she repeatedly dubs "the key publication on Lingua Franca" (Operstein 2022: 15, 36), based on the observations "that the

14 "Notre recueil facilitera les communications des Français avec les habitans du pays sur lequel ils vont combattre" (Cifoletti 2011: 38).

Dictionnaire relies on solid language teaching tools; that the terse grammatical description and a self-explanatory, from a French speaker's point of view, orthography have been tailored for the practical needs of its users; and that the learner's dialogues in, and the vocabulary of, LF are adapted to its communicative environment in their content, and its expressive possibilities in their complexity" (Operstein 2022: 105). Accordingly, all other sources are branded by Operstein (2022: 16–17) as "a highly inadequate patchwork of literary imitations and stylized fragments in traveler's accounts and narratives of Barbary captivity", supplied by authors with "no serious intention to document LF", resulting in "a small and geographically and chronologically scattered collection of words, phrases, sentences, and items of poetry whose linguistic side defeats a coherent interpretation if tackled as a whole".

Operstein does not even seem to consider the possibility that a "coherent interpretation" of LF "as a whole" might be impeded by the intrinsically unsystematic nature of this linguistic object, a characteristic unanimously asserted by all testimonies but the *Dictionnaire*, and therefore that it might be this latter source to suffer from (at least partial) inadequateness, due to the author's attempt to cast the natural oscillation of non-native, exclusively oral varieties into the rigid descriptive scheme developed for a highly standardized, mostly written language such as 19th-century Italian. Her detailed description of the *Dictionnaire's* lexicon and dialogues, distinguishing between a "Total Vocabulary" and a "Core Vocabulary" (Operstein 2022: 134–142) and devoting a 20-page paragraph to the Noun Phrase (Operstein 2022: 247–266), conveys an image of LF far from a 'Restsprache' and more similar to a language like Italian and Spanish, with which the word and sentence samples taken from the *Dictionnaire* are regularly compared.

3 Structures

This chapter adopts a different perspective, aiming to retain the fragmentary and polyphonic dimension of LF's documentation. This implies denying the *Dictionnaire* a superordinate position and, consequently, verifying the data contained in the *Dictionnaire* through a systematic comparison with those that can be drawn from the numerous—though highly repetitive—LF insertions scattered in 17th- and 18th-century sources. The final picture will be less uniform but, as will be argued, more consistent with both Romance-based contact languages and early interlanguages of L2 Italian learners. In particular, the analysis will focus on two aspects of LF's grammar: articles and noun inflection (§ 3.1), and the verbal system (§ 3.2). The lexicon will not be commented upon,

since it faces different problems that cannot be adequately presented within the limits of this chapter.¹⁵

3.1 *Articles and Noun Inflection*

In the very first lines of the grammatical outline of the preface, the author of the *Dictionnaire* states that ‘nouns are inflected by the apposition of the article, like in French and Italian’.¹⁶ The reported examples show that, by ‘article’, only the definite article is meant, whose singular forms coincide with the ones of the two above-mentioned Romance languages, that is *l’* before a masculine noun beginning with a vowel (*l’amigo* ‘the male friend’) and *la* before a feminine noun starting with a consonant (*la casa* ‘the house’). No plural forms are given, due to the fact that ‘Nouns have no plural’.¹⁷ Consequently, singular articles and nouns are used for the corresponding plurals, as shown by the translation of French *les amis* ‘the male friends’ by *l’amigo*, and by the sample sentence *Questi Signor star amigo di mi*, glossed by French *Ces Messieurs sont mes amis* ‘These gentlemen are my friends’. Plural does not seem to be marked either on adjectives, since the only forms that are given are the ones of the masculine and feminine singular (*bono* = French *bon*, *bona* = French *bonne*, *prudénté* = French *prudent* and *prudente*). The nominal inflection of LF, as presented in the preface, is summarized in Table 10.1.

This description is largely contradicted by the dialogue samples following the word list. As a matter of fact, the data attested in the dialogues, on which most of Operstein’s observations are based (Operstein 2022: 215–228), bears witness to a higher degree of complexity and variation. First, along with the definite articles (*la* for the feminine, *il* and *l’* for the masculine, depending on the initial segment of the following word, as in Italian), also the indefinite articles *oun* (m.) and *(o)una* (f.) occur (*oun amigo* ‘a friend’, *una cadiéra* ‘a chair’, Cifoletti 2011: 123). Second, although in a couple of ethnonyms the singular form is used to express a semantic plural, according to the rule enunciated in the preface (*il Francis* ‘the French’, *l’Algérino* ‘the Algerians’), in other cases the article does not appear at all (*Con Francis* ‘with the French’).¹⁸ The definite article is omitted also before the collective feminine noun *genti* ‘people’, whose form might be interpreted as a morphological (at least etymologically)

15 For a first approach on LF vocabulary as attested by the Algerian documentation, see Baglioni (2018).

16 “Les noms se déclinent par l’apposition de l’article comme dans le français et l’italien” (Cifoletti 2011: 35).

17 “Les noms n’ont pas de pluriel” (Cifoletti 2011: 35).

18 Cifoletti (2011: 126).

TABLE 10.1 Nominal inflection of LF as presented in the preface of the *Dictionnaire*

Nouns:	
masculine singular/plural	<i>amigo</i>
feminine singular/plural	<i>casa</i>
Adjectives:	
masculine singular/plural	<i>bono, prudenté</i>
feminine singular/plural	<i>bona, prudenté</i>
Articles (definite):	
masculine singular/plural	<i>l' (l'amigo)</i>
feminine singular/plural	<i>la (la casa)</i>

plural because of the final *-i* (if compared with Italian *gente*).¹⁹ Analogous cases of plural marking show up in the word list, either through *-i* and *-e*, like in Italian (*denti* = Fr. *dent* 'tooth', *scarpé* = Fr. *soulier* 'shoe'), or through *-s*, like in Spanish (*douros* = Fr. *piastre* 'plate', *tapétos* = Fr. *tapis* 'carpet').²⁰ As noted by Operstein (2022: 227), the glossing of these forms as singulars "argues for the nonproductivity of the category of number in the *Dictionnaire*'s LF". Nevertheless, other correspondences, such as *mouchous* = Fr. *plusieurs* 'many' (Cifoletti 2011: 88) and the demonstrative *Questi* in the already mentioned sentence *Questi Signor star amigo di mi* given in the preface, reveal a certain vitality of the Italian and Spanish marking with the function of morphological plurals. Therefore, Operstein (2022: 227–228) concludes that, "in contrast with the clear evidence regarding the productivity of the category of gender, the data contained in the *Dictionnaire* is inconclusive as to whether the category of nominal number was productive in LF". The more variegated system evincible from the dialogues and the lexical entries of the *Dictionnaire* is represented in Table 10.2.

A rather different picture emerges from the LF insertions contained in other sources. These texts do not generally display either indefinite or definite articles (see, for instance, *Si cane dezir dole cabeça* 'if a dog [= slave] says that his head

19 See *genti hablar tenir gouerra* 'people say there will be war' (Cifoletti 2011: 126), where not only *genti*, but also *gouerra* is used as a bare noun. In this latter case the lack of the article might be imputable to the existential use of *tenir*, as in the Brazilian Portuguese *tem guerra* lit. '(it) has war'.

20 Cifoletti (2011: respectively 54, 108, 86, 112).

TABLE 10.2 Nominal inflection of LF as evincible from the dialogues and the lexical entries of the *Dictionnaire*

Nouns:	
masculine singular/plural	<i>Francis, Algérino, denti, tapétos</i>
feminine singular/plural	<i>ora, genti, scarpé</i>
Adjectives:	
masculine singular/plural	<i>mouchou/mouchous, qouesto/questi</i>
feminine singular	<i>bouona, grandi</i>
[no examples available for plural]	
Articles (definite):	
masculine singular/plural	<i>il, l' (il fratello, l'Algérino), Ø (con Francis)</i>
feminine singular	<i>la (la parté), Ø (genti hablar tenir gouerra)</i>
[no examples available for plural]	
Articles (indefinite):	
masculine singular	<i>oun (oun amigo)</i>
feminine singular	<i>(o)una (una cadiéra)</i>

is aching', Haedo 1612: 120 verso; *ma ti no star Muger ti star hombre* 'but you are not a woman, you are a man' Broughton 1839: 210). As for the definite article, it is omitted not only before nouns referring to a whole class, as in *papasos de vos outros* 'your priests' (Rehbinder 1798–1800: vol. 1, 283),²¹ but also before nouns indicating individual referents, both animate and inanimate (see respectively *y anchora parlar Papaz dessa manera?* '(how) dare the/that priest still speak like that?', Haedo 1612: 200 verso, and *porta falaca* 'carry the/that stick!', Aranda 1662: 328). In a handful of records, all from the 17th century, a common gender definite article shows up. This is, in most cases, *la (la Papaz Christiano* 'the Christian priest' and *a la campaña* 'to the countryside', Haedo 1612: 200 verso; *la cane* 'the dog', Aranda 1662: 327),²² whereas the use of *il* before a feminine

21 "si e vero que star inferno, seguro papasos de vos outros non poter chappar de venir dentro" ['if hell exists, your priests surely cannot escape from falling into it'], as said by a Turk to Christian slaves.

22 In this occurrence the article apparently precedes a vocative, a context where it is not used either in Italian or in Spanish ("la cane ty far gaziva", glossed by Aranda as "voire, chien, vous faites l'entendu" ['you, dog, take too much upon yourself']).

noun is seldom (see *all fede de Dio* 'in God's faith', employed as an interjection by Turks addressing the Dutch ambassador in Algiers Cornelis Pijnacker).²³ In later sources, distinct forms sporadically occur, according not only to gender (*Il Signor Console* and *La Signora Madama*, referred to the British consul and his wife, in Broughton 1839: 369), but also to number (see the Spanish plural article *los* in *mugeros de los Moros* 'women of the Moors', Reh binder 1798–1800: vol. 3, 269).

This latter example, along with the above-cited *papasos* and other scattered records, is also evidence of the availability in LF of the plural marking *-os* for masculine and even feminine nouns (like *mugeros* vs. Sp. *mujeres*). The 'Italian' alternative *-i* is equally frequent (*più regali* 'more gifts' in Broughton 1839: 210), and also occurs in contexts of non-full agreement, such as *ben venito signori Flamenci* 'welcome (sg.), Flemish gentlemen!', reported by Pijnacker (after Cifoletti 2011: 152).²⁴ As for adjectives, they generally agree with the noun both in gender and in number (*barbero bono* 'a good doctor' and *bona bastonada* 'a good beating', Haedo 1612: 120 verso and 201 verso; *belli figliuoli* 'beautiful children', Caronni 1805: vol. 1, 92), though at least in one case the masculine singular replaces the expected feminine form (*multo phantasia* 'much audacity', Reh binder 1798–1800: vol. 3, 269). The data presented above has been summarized in Table 10.3.

The coexistence of two and even three different options for single features might appear chaotic and contradictory, in contrast to the orderly description of the *Dictionnaire's* preface. Nonetheless, the data gathered in Table 10.3 is, by far, the most coherent with the grammar of both Romance-based pidgins and early interlanguages of Italoophone learners. As observed, among others, by Romaine (2017: 11), "in all Germanic and Romance-based pidgins categorical or variable deletion of articles is almost universal". Again Romaine (2017: 11) remarks that, in the process of decreolization, "the definite article may come to appear categorically in syntactic slots corresponding to usage in standard language, but without markings for gender, number and case", a statement that readily accounts for the overextension of the common gender form *la* in some 17th-century records. An analogous process, from article deletion to the development of an unmarked form of the definite article, has been observed in the acquisition of the determiner phrase by L2 Italian learners (Chini 1995; Chini & Ferraris 2003; Chiapedi 2010; Mammuccari & Nuzzo 2019). In the very initial phase of the acquisition, the article is systematically omitted, and each

23 Cited after Cifoletti (2011: 152).

24 The same source attests the singular *Fiamenco* (*Ben venito ben venito Signore Ambasciator Flamenco* 'Welcome, welcome, Mister Ambassador of Flanders', Cifoletti 2011: 152).

TABLE 10.3 Nominal inflection of LF according to other sources

Nouns:	
masculine singular/plural	<i>Papaz/papasos, Fiamenco/Flamenci</i>
feminine singular/plural	<i>Muger/mugeros</i>
Adjectives:	
masculine singular/plural	<i>bono (barbero bono)/belli (belli figliuoli)</i>
feminine singular	<i>bona (bona bastonada), multo (multo phantasia)</i>
[no examples available for plural]	
Articles (definite):	
masculine singular/plural	∅ (<i>Papaz</i> ‘the/that priest’), <i>la (la Papaz)</i> , <i>il/los (de los Moros)</i>
feminine singular	∅ (<i>falaca</i> ‘the/that stick’), <i>la (a la campaña)</i> , <i>il (all fede de</i>
[no examples available for plural]	<i>Dio</i>)
Articles (indefinite):	
masculine singular	∅ (<i>cane</i> ‘a dog’)
feminine singular	∅ (<i>Muger</i> ‘a woman’)

phrase is made up of bare nouns (for instance, *cane cercato rana* [literally ‘dog searched frog’] ‘the dog has searched for the frog’, Mammuccari & Nuzzo 2019: 112). The definite article emerges quite early and is realized by most learners as *la* before both feminine and masculine nouns (see *la badlone* [It. *padrone*] ‘the master’, Valentini 1990: 339; *la pranzo* ‘the lunch’, *la signore* ‘the gentleman’, *la padre* ‘the father’, Chini 1995: 229), also plural (*la patatinë* ‘the French fries’, Bernini 2010). In this phase plural markings on nouns become increasingly common, whereas gender marking is rarer. As a result, feminine nouns may display masculine plural endings, as in *donni* ‘women’ (instead of Standard It. *donne*), reported by Chini (1995: 222), which is structurally comparable with *mugeros* attested by Reh binder. Regular agreement between nouns and determiners/quantifiers (and adjectives in the noun phrase) only shows up later, in the so-called ‘morphological phase’, but number and gender marking do not emerge simultaneously, in that, ‘in most informants, number inflection and agreement appear earlier and clearer than gender marking’ (Chini 1995: 286).²⁵

25 “La flessione e l’accordo di numero pare più precoce e più sicuro di quello di G[enere] in gran parte degli informanti”.

All in all, the acquisition sequence of articles and noun inflection is faithfully reflected in Haedo, Reh binder, Broughton, and other sources previous to the *Dictionnaire*.²⁶ As has been seen above, in these records articles are generally omitted and, when they occur, they are usually not inflected by number and gender. Unlike articles, nouns and adjectives display a basic inflection, in which the marking of number is prior to the marking of gender (*mugeros*) and agreement is not always realized (*multo phantasia*). Conversely, the system described in the *Dictionnaire* is inconsistent, in that the expression of the article, both definite and indefinite, is almost regular, and gender inflection and agreement are systematic, whereas number marking is extremely limited. The development of a full-fledged set of articles and gender marks might be interpreted as a later phase of process towards 'linguageness', thus as an internal evolution of LF, but the absence of plural morphology, except for few scattered items, is problematic.

3.2 Verbal System

More than any other aspect of the grammar, the simplified verbal system of LF, characterized by the overextension of the infinitive, is unanimously considered its main and most recognizable feature, from the early modern sources to contemporary studies. No wonder, then, that this characteristic is explicitly stressed in the preface of the *Dictionnaire*, where it is stated that 'verbs are not inflected', by specifying that 'they only have two tenses: The infinitive, always ending with *ir* or *ar*, and the past participle in *ito* or *ato*, feminine *-ita*, *-ata*'.²⁷ The lacking tenses and modes are said to be expressed 'by a sort of trick of the language'.²⁸ This 'trick' is exemplified by the inflection of *andar* 'to go', from which it can be inferred that a) personal pronouns supply the lack of markings on the verb (see *mi andar* = Fr. *je vais* 'I go', *ti andar* = Fr. *tu vais* 'you (sg.) go', etc.), and b) the infinitive is used not only for the present, but also for the imperfect (*mi andar* corresponds both to Fr. *je vais* and *j'allais*) and for the imperative (*andar*, unpreceded by the personal pronoun, is the equivalent of Fr. *vas* 'go!' and *allons* 'let's go!'). Therefore, the infinitive is interpretable as "the unmarked form of the verb" (Operstein 2022: 228), whereas the function of the past participle remains unclear.²⁹ Furthermore, the sample paradigm attests

26 Broughton's memoirs were published later, in 1839, but the events reported are mostly drawn from her mother's diary, along with personal remembrances of the author's childhood in Algiers in the years 1806–1812 (Cifoletti 2011: 193).

27 "Les verbes ne se conjuguent pas, il n'ont que deux temps : l'infinitif qui est toujours terminé en *ir* ou en *ar*, et le participe passé en *ito* ou *ato*, fém. *ita*, *ata*" (Cifoletti 2011: 36).

28 "On supplée aux autres temps par une sorte d'artifice de langage" (Cifoletti 2011: 36).

29 The past participle occurs in only one form of the sample paradigm, *mi star andato*, liter-

an analytic construction *bisogno mi andar* (literally glossed as *besoin moi aller* ‘need me go’), covering the functions of both the future indicative (*j’irais*) and the present subjunctive (*que j’aille*). The verbal inflection as described in the preface can be represented as follows:

TABLE 10.4 Verbal inflection of LF as presented in the preface of the *Dictionnaire*

Indicative (all tenses and persons)	<i>mi andar, ti andar, etc.</i>
Imperative (all persons)	<i>andar</i>
Future/Subjunctive	<i>bisogno + infinitive (bisogno mi andar)</i>
Past Conditional	<i>mi star andato</i>

The dialogues of the *Dictionnaire* confirm the pervasiveness of the infinitive, which covers all the functions of the present indicative (*commé ti star?* ‘how are you?’) and the imperative (*spétar oun poco* ‘wait a moment!’), and even shows up in a hypothetical period, both in the conditional and in the main clause (*sé mi star al logo di ti, mi counchar/fazir* ‘if I were in your place, I would do it’).³⁰ Nevertheless, in the sentences *non bisogna* ‘it is not necessary’ and *il café basta* ‘the coffee is enough’ (Cifoletti 2011: 94, 97) the inflected forms *bisogna* and *basta* occur instead of the expected infinitives, evidently because the 3rd person singular of these two verbs is frequently used in Italian in impersonal constructions, a fact that suggests that “in the *Dictionnaire* LF the inflected forms may be functioning as unanalyzed expressions” (Operstein 2022: 230).³¹

Unlike in the preface, in the dialogues past participles are widely attested, and regularly glossed with French present perfects (*passés simples*), as in the cases of *ti fato colatzioné?* = Fr. *Avez-vous déjeuné?* ‘have you had breakfast?’, and *mi venouto aposto per far mangiaria con ti* = Fr. *Je suis venu exprès pour déjeuner avec vous* ‘I have come specially to have lunch with you’ (Cifoletti 2011: 124–125). Consequently, an aspectual opposition between an imperfective infinitive and a perfective past participle can be deduced, as has been under-

ally glossed *moi être allé* ‘me be gone’ but erroneously translated *J’aurais été* ‘I would have been’, instead of *Je serais allé* ‘I would have gone’.

30 Cifoletti (2011: 121, 123).

31 This hypothesis may also account for the entry *pivó* in the word list, which corresponds to Fr. *pluie* ‘rain’, thus revealing the ambiguous status of the term, etymologically to be interpreted as an inflected verb (It. *piove* ‘it rains’), but apparently used with the function of a noun (Operstein 2022: 230).

lined by several scholars (Fronzaroli 1955: 239–241; Cifoletti 2011: 299; Operstein 2022: 228–229). The construction with *bisogn(i)o* is frequent, but in most of its occurrences conveys a merely deontic value, regardless of the temporal reference (*cosa bisognio counchiar?* = Fr. *Que faut-il faire* 'what needs to be done?'; *dounqué bisognio il Bacha quérir paché* = Fr. *Le Pacha sera donc obligé de demander la paix* 'the pasha will therefore be forced to ask for peace'). In non-deontic contexts, future events are normally expressed by the infinitive (*mi pensar l'Algérino non combatir* = Fr. *Je pense que les Algériens ne se batrons pas* 'I think that the Algerians will not fight'), also when the verb codes an epistemic nuance (*qué servir touto qouesto* = Fr. *A quoi servira tout ça?* 'what will all this be for?').

The predominance of the infinitive in the dialogues, basically covering all tenses and modes except for marked uses, emerges clearly from the data summarized in Table 10.5:

TABLE 10.5 Verbal inflection of LF as evincible from the dialogues of the *Dictionnaire*

Indicative (all imperfective tenses, all persons)	<i>mi star, ti star, etc.</i> (also <i>bisogna, basta</i>)
Present Subjunctive & Conditional (all persons)	<i>sé mi star ... mi counchar</i>
Imperative (all persons)	<i>spétar, andar, etc.</i>
Indicative (past perfect, all persons)	<i>mi venouto, ti fato, etc.</i>
Deontic Periphrasis	<i>bisognio andar</i>

Analogously to what has been observed for articles and nouns, the verb inflection of the *Dictionnaire* coincides only partially with the data found in the rest of the records. Despite the extensive use of the infinitive in all texts, including literary sources, inflected forms are not rare and freely alternate with their counterparts in *-ar* and *-ir*. This is particularly true for the present indicative, occasionally juxtaposed to the infinitive in a same text, even in a same sentence, as in the conditional clauses *Si cane dezir dole cabeça* 'If a dog [i.e. slave] says "my head aches"' and *si e vero que star inferno* 'if it is true that hell exists', respectively in Haedo (1612: 120 verso) and Rehbinder (1798–1800: vol. 1, 283).³² For future reference the infinitive oscillates with the future indicative,

32 In the latter sentence the inflected *e* (It. *è*) and the infinitive *star* both correspond to the verb 'to be', although the former serves as a copula, whereas the latter expresses an existential meaning.

as emerges from the comparison between the proverbial sentence *si venir ventura andar a casa tuya* 'if fortune comes, you will go home', reported by Haedo (1612: 18 verso), and its variant *si venira ventura ira à casa tua*, occurring in Dan (1637: vol. 5, 373) and Fercourt (after Cifoletti 2011: 169).³³ The periphrasis with *bisogno* is never attested. Past participles, though seldom, provide sufficient evidence for their perfective connotation, as shown by the sequence *porque tener aqui tortuga? qui por tato de campaña?* 'why is there a turtle here? who has brought it from the field?' (Haedo 1612: 201 verso), in which the imperfective present *tener* is opposed to the perfective past *portato* (erroneously spelled *por tato*). In the sentence immediately following, the same perfective function is covered by an inflected past perfect (*gran vellaco estar, qui ha por tato* 'He who has brought it [= the turtle] is a big scoundrel', Haedo 1612: 201 verso).

As for the imperative, the majority of the texts display a dedicated form for the 2nd person singular, corresponding to the Italian or Spanish equivalents. In some records, the inflected form coexists with the infinitive in jussive expressions. Thus, Haedo (1612) attests three different options for the command 'look!', *mirar*, *mira* and *guarda*.³⁴ Analogously, Caronni (1805) reports both *anda* and *andare* for 'go!'.³⁵ In other sources, the imperative is the only form employed for affirmative commands.³⁶ This is the case of Aranda (1662), in which the infinitive occurs in assertions and threats (*ty tener fantasia* 'you are deluding yourself', *my congar bueno per ti* 'I will fix you properly', Aranda 1662: 327), but not in orders (*Pilla esse cani* 'Pick it up, dog!', *Pilla Basso* 'Put it down!', *Pila baso cane, porta falaca* 'Put it down, dog, and carry the stick!', Aranda 1662: 22, 98, 328). The same configuration is attested by Rehbinder (1798–1800), where *guarda* 'beware!' and *mirar* 'to look' show up in the same insertion (*Guarda per ti, et non andar mirar mugeros de los Moros* 'Watch out for yourself, and don't go looking at the women of the Moors!', Rehbinder 1798–1800: vol. 3, p. 269).

33 The interpretation of *venira* and *ira* as future indicatives (and not as infinitives) is confirmed by the French translation given by Fercourt: *il viendra une occasion qui te fera retourner en ta maison* (after Cifoletti 2011: 169).

34 *mirar como mi estar barbero bono* 'see what a good surger I am!', *mira cane como hazer malato* 'look, dog, how you are pretending to be ill!', *guarda diablo* 'look, devil!' (Haedo 1612: 120 verso, 200 verso, 201 verso).

35 *anda, anda, canaglia* 'go, go, you scoundrel!', *Anda, anda a palazzo* 'Go, go to the palace!', *andare, andare giù in casa mia* 'Go, go down to my house!' (Caronni 1805: 54, 66, 70).

36 In all texts, the negative imperative is formed by the negation followed by the infinitive, as in Italian (see, for instance, *non pillar fantasia* 'do not delude yourself!', Haedo 1612: 128 recto).

TABLE 10.6 Verbal inflection of LF according to other sources

Indicative (all imperfective tenses)	<i>dezir, (e)star, venir Fut. (dole, e, venira Fut.)</i>
Imperative 2nd person singular	<i>mira, guarda, pilla, anda, porta (mirar, pillar, andar(e))</i>
Indicative (past perfect)	<i>(ha) portato</i>

In Table 10.6 the above-reported data is provided (for each tense and mode the less frequent option is given in brackets).

By comparing the verbal system of the *Dictionnaire* with LF fragments in Haedo's *Topographia*, Operstein (2022: 230–232) remarks that, in the latter source, “the inflected forms constitute a minority” and “the majority of the inflected forms [...] are used only once each, and no form is used more than twice”. What is more, inflected forms tend to occur in fixed expressions (mostly insults and threats), such as *mira cane* and *guarda diablo*, whereas “the verbs with the largest number of tokens, *estar* (10) and *parlar* (5), appear only in the Romance infinitive form” (Operstein 2022: 232). However, since “the Romance verb forms reflected in Haedo's LF—the infinitive, the third person singular present indicative, and the second person imperative—make a recurrent appearance, either individually or in combination, as the default (unmarked) forms in contact situations involving Romance languages”, Operstein concludes that, “given this typological support, the presence of a mixture of uninflected and inflected Romance verb forms in Haedo's LF is likely to reflect actual variation in this area” (Operstein 2022: 232).

In fact, a system akin to the one attested by Haedo and other 17th- and 18th-century sources has been repeatedly observed both in Romance-based contact varieties and in early interlanguages of Italian learners. As for contact dialects, in ‘Fremdarbeiteritalienisch’, the simplified variety of Italian used in 1990s German-speaking Switzerland by non-Italian immigrants for interethnic communication, the infinitive and the 3rd person singular present indicative (often overextended to all persons) freely alternate in imperfective contexts, whereas the past participle is used to express perfectivity (Berruto 1991). Fluctuation between the infinitive and the present indicative, along with the use of past participle for all perfective tenses, is also characteristic of the very initial phases of spontaneous language acquisition of Italian, as demonstrated by Banfi & Bernini (2003) in their seminal study on verbal morphology in L2 Italian. As a result, a two-verb form system (infinitive vs. past participle), such as the one described in the *Dictionnaire*, appears less likely than the three-verb form combination (infinitive/3rd person present indicative vs. past participle) witnessed by all other records.

The plausibility of a morphologically distinct form for the 2nd person imperative deserves deeper discussion. As has been noted by Berretta (1995: 339), in foreign learners of Italian ‘the acquisition of the imperative as a whole is very slow’.³⁷ More exactly, ‘the first forms appear early, along with other highly frequent verb forms (present indicatives, past participles and infinitives), but it is not certain whether their morphological value is perceived by the learner—or, better said, it is sometimes clear that these forms retain in the interlanguage only the lexical value of the verb’ (Berretta 1995: 339).³⁸ Consequently, such an abundance of imperatives in LF, in some cases in oscillation with the corresponding infinitives (thus in paradigmatic relation to them), might seem unexpected.

However, the impression of exceptionality vanishes as soon as the comparison is extended to other contact varieties that originated in contexts of slavery. In these varieties, imperatives frequently occur as base forms of the verbs, not only in the case when lexifiers lack infinitives, as in Arabic-based pidgins (Versteegh 2014), but also in Romance-based creoles. In particular, Quint (2015: 211) has shown “the crucial role played by Portuguese imperative forms in the creation of new lexical verbal roots in the incipient Upper Guinea Creoles”, as reflected in Santiago Capeverdean *bai* ‘go’, *ben* ‘come’, *poi* ‘put’, *(s)pera* ‘wait’, *ten* ‘have’, deriving from 2nd person imperatives (Portuguese *vai*, *vem*, *põe*, *espera*, *tem*), and not from infinitives, like all other Capeverdean verbs. Quint’s account of the origin of these forms is that, since “the language probably appeared through incomplete acquisition of Portuguese by speakers of West African languages [...], many of whom were slaves and servants and had to comply with the orders they received from their Portuguese-speaking masters [...], the first users of Capeverdean would hear [...] often verbs such as ‘go’ and ‘come’ in their 2PS imperative forms (in sentences such as ‘go fetch some water’, ‘come here’ and the like)” (Quint 2015: 199). In the case of LF, the situation is inverted, in that slaves were mostly native speakers of Romance languages, whereas masters, whether Arabs or Turks, possessed a very basic competence in Italian (and Spanish). This probably explains why, in LF, imperatival forms are never overextended to the whole paradigm and infinitives occur also in jussive expressions, since masters must have acquired infinitives as the base forms of the verbs, and resorted to imperatives only for fixed, highly repetitive commands. Nev-

37 “L’apprendimento dell’imperativo nel suo insieme è molto lento”.

38 “le prime forme compaiono presto, assieme ad altre forme verbali ad alta frequenza (presenti indicativi, participi passati e infiniti), ma non è sicuro che il loro valore sia colto dall’apprendente—anzi, talvolta è chiaro che le forme mantengono nell’interlingua solo il valore lessicale del verbo”.

ertheless, the pragmatic reasons accounting for the spread of imperatives are readily comparable, as well as the commands involved ('go!', 'come!', 'carry!' etc.).

4 What Can Be Reconstructed?

The comparison between the *Dictionnaire* and other LF sources has revealed that the latter, despite their fragmentariness, reflect more faithfully what can be expected from a non-native oral variety of Italian, acquired spontaneously and used as an elementary means of communication. The paradoxical result is that, for such an unusual linguistic object, reconstruction implies deconstruction. According to what has been argued in § 3, deconstruction applies to the *Dictionnaire's* preface, whose grammatical outline appears as a gross simplification of the highly variable morphology and syntax of this variety, probably biased by the attempt of its author to provide LF with a regularity akin to the one of the standardized language of his grammar models.³⁹ But deconstruction applies as well to the idea of LF as an autonomous, full-fledged language conveyed by the *Dictionnaire's* dialogues, usable in all domains and for all functions, from greetings to invitations, from weather talk to comments on public events, whereas the rest of the documentation consists almost exclusively of orders, insults, threats, and mockeries, mixed with a limited set of brief proverbial sentences and other similar fixed expressions.

What is left then to reconstruct? So far, scholars' interest has been directed primarily to LF's grammar and lexicon, with the aim of classifying this variety as a pidgin, a koine or a fossilized interlanguage on the basis of its internal structures. Less attention has been paid to its domains and functions, hastily comprised under generic labels such as "a trading language" (Nolan 2020: 3), and 'a form of no man's land of communication'.⁴⁰ These labels do not correspond to what is found in the records, as recently demonstrated by Selbach (2017) with regard to the 'myth' of LF as a vehicular language for commerce. Indeed, all sources, from Haedo (1612) to the *Dictionnaire*, agree in present-

39 As suggested by one of the anonymous reviewers, such an attempt can be compared with the transmission of the Standard Language Ideology (SLI) to regional and minority languages observed in contemporary societies, motivated "by a desire to improve the status of these language varieties in order to ensure their vitality and continued existence", but mostly leading to new varieties "not truly 'authentic' compared to native speakers" (Walsh 2021: 776).

40 "une forme de *no man's land* de la communication" (Dakhli 2008: 9).

ing LF as “a language used in fixed slave settlements, not a pan-Mediterranean trade pidgin” (Selbach 2017: 263). This has obvious consequences on the communicative contexts and functions that can be reconstructed. In asymmetric interactions, such as the ones between masters and slaves, communication is usually unidirectional, from the former to the latter, and replies of the subordinates are not expected. Coherently with this scenario, Haedo (1612: 24 recto) asserts that LF is the language of the Turks and Moors when they address Christian slaves, and that slaves, whenever they are obliged to reply, limit themselves to ‘adapting their way of speaking to the one of their masters’ (*se acomodan a aquel modo de hablar*). If this is the main sociolinguistic framework in which LF was used, its fragmentariness is not surprising, and must be interpreted as a characteristic not only of the data, but of the object itself, shunning any attempt at systematic descriptions.

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