

CVCV meets the Dialects of Italy:
an introduction to CVCV and to the phonology of the Dialects of Italy
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DAY One
The Dialects of Italy

1. Introduction

- The Dialects of Italy are Romance languages which developed from Latin in the Italian territory
- Geographical differences must have existed already in the Latin spoken in the different parts of the Italian peninsula given substrate and superstrate influences. The first documents found in Italy of a language that is not Latin anymore (VIII-IX century) documents show traces of the geographical differentiation.
- The Dialects of Italy, were formerly called vernaculars, It. *Volgari*, as opposed to Latin, until one of these vernaculars, Florentine, for historical, political and cultural reasons, was chosen in the XVI century as the base of Italian, which was meant to be the standard literary language. Those vernaculars, as opposed to the official language, were then called *dialects*.
- It had been since the XIV century however that a panitalian written literary language existed, for voluntary subscription to Tuscan. The XIV century florentine was chosen as the base of Italian in the XVI century although, in the discussion about the language carried out by intellectuals there were also people proposing the contemporary florentine as standard language.
- The linguistic unification of Italy, however, was attained much later than Standard Italian was created. Italian had **no native speakers** at the time of unification (**1861**) and people in the Italian peninsula were native speakers of one of the other vernaculars that, like Florentine, spontaneously evolved from Latin. Italian was a dead language to be learned as dead languages only by studying it.
- Despite it was estimated by many scholars **SLIDE** concerned with the description of Italian and the languages of Europe that at the beginning of the XX century the speakers of Italian largely matched the Italian population, the figures were quite different. The estimated number of people able to speak Italian go from 2,5 % of the population (De Mauro) to 12% (Serianni), including the Tuscany and Rome, where early Italianisation had taken place
- The true linguistic unification of the peninsula was first planned after the political unification in 1861, following the widespread idea according to which nations correspond to languages.
- The dialects of Italy then, have been vital languages in a not very remote past. Up until the political unification they were spoken also in formal situations, by kings, clergymen, aristocracy. **SLIDE** Now many of them are endangered languages. **Slide**
- This situation originates from the language planning that was carried out in Italy that, upon French influence, envisaged the Italianisation of the peninsula as a language substitution.

- The dialects were thus seen as obstacles to the linguistic unification of Italy. The schools, through which such unification was meant to take place, inculcated in people the idea of the dialects a source of social shame.
- As a consequence, many Italians during the 20th century, when it was clear that Italian was needed for social escalation and began to be taught by non native parents to their children, many chose not to raise their children as bilinguals but only as italophones.
- The process of substitution of the dialects with Italian and the death of the dialects is probably irreversible and almost completed. It is perceived by Italians as a positive indicator of progress. However, the reduction of the cultural diversity that has taken place in Italy as in many other parts of the planet and that will shortly lead to a mass extinction of the world's languages represents a huge loss not only from the cultural/ethnologic point of view but also from a scientific viewpoint.
- Italian and the dialects of Italy are (generally) not mutually intelligible.

Italian [ma kkɔ:sa ti vi ɛ:ne immente] What are you thinking of?
Altamuran (Pugliese) [ma tSækkə tə ve:nəŋɛip] (Loporcaro 2009:6)

Italian [i 'twɔj 'ka:ni]
Teraman (Abruzzese) [li 'ki:na'tɔ]

Italian [kosì nnon si può]
Bolognese (Emilian) [akzè ans po:l briza]

- The dialects of Italy are not mutually intelligible unless we consider those spoken in adjacent areas.
- In the dialects of Italy we can find sounds, phonotactics and phonological processes unknown in Italian

1. **Sounds:** front rounded vowels: *Mil.* [lyna] “moon” *Piac.* rɔda “wheel”
 Schwa (also bearing main word stress) *Luc.* [sə:lə] “salt”
 retroflex consonants: *Sic.* [bɛdʒa] “beautiful.F”
2. **Phonotactics:** C#: *Friulian* lat “milk” *Bol.* [sak] “dry”
 #TT, *Bolognese* [fti:r] to dree”, *Piemontese* vzeŋ”close”
 TT# *Bolognese* [paŋdg] “mouse”
3. **Phonological processes:** final devoicing *Friul.* frede “cold F.” fre:t “cold M.”
 vowel/zero alternations *Bol.* pos/psair can 1sg/can.inf
 vowel harmony *Sic.* bi'dunɪ bi'duna “bin S/P”
Marche dialect ['prɛdoko] ‘I preach’/[prediki]
 ‘you preach’ ['prɛdaka] ‘s/he preaches’
 metaphony *Abr.* martɛllə “hammer S.” martillə “hammer PL”

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2. Classification **SLIDE**

2.1 Pellegrini (1977)

- Dialectal boundaries usually drawn according to phonological criteria. The diachronic phonological evolution from Latin is usually assessed and some political and extralinguistic facts (*dachsprache*) are also taken into account.

Northern Italian dialects degemination CATTUM *Ven.* gata, TERRAM > Lig. tae:ra “earth”; distinctive vowel length *Crem.* [tus], “cough” [tu:s] “sheared”; loss of final vowels but /a/ (except for Veneto and Ligure) *Mil.* SEPTEM > sɛt., *Tor.* PILUM > pɛil; assibilation of CE, CI.; lenition, *FRATELLU *Lomb.* fradel, CAPILLU *Piem.* kavei; ROTAM > rɔda “wheel”; /a/ fronting LACUM > *Em.* lɛg “lake”,

- **Gallo-Italian (Piedmontese, Lombard, Ligurian, Emilian dialects)**
- **Venetian**
- **Ladin**
- **Friulian**

Ladin, Friulian, Romansch (so-called Rhaeto-Romance languages)

Shared features of Rhaeto-Romance: No evolution of Lat. C+H *Fr.* kla:f, flo:r, s in nominal and verbal inflection tu tu dwarmis “you, subj.cl sleep2sg, maNs “hands”, paris “fathers”, 1sg and 2sg pronouns from nominative EGO TU. Palatalisation of Lat. CA, GA CANEM > *Fr.* [can] *Fass.* GALLUM > [jal]

- **Ascoli, Merlo Ladin (Rhaeto-Romance) unity**
- **Pellegrini** No common innovations that can hint to a distinctive variety, different from Italo-Romance. All features that were shared also between Northern Italian dialects in the Middle Ages.

Ladin-Friulian, Romansch dialects represent an archaic cisalpine dialect

2. **Tuscan dialects** very conservative, close to Latin,

- AR > ER margherita < MARGARITAM
- rj > j ARIUM > ajo
- *Florentine* anafonesi (high vowels instead of expected high-mid vowels before)
 1. lateral palatal *famiglia* “family”, *consiglio* “suggestion”
 2. palatal nasal *vigna* “vineyard”, *spugna* “sponge”
 3. nasal+velar *C lingua* “tongue”, *fungo* “mushroom” *unghia* “nail”

No metaphony/ open syllable diphthongisation of low-mid vowels (from short I and U) PEDEM > pjɛde, FOCUM > fwɔko.

3. **Middle Italian Dialects (Northern Marche, Umbria, Northern Lazio, Romanesco, Aquilan-Reatino dialects)** No final vowel reduction to ə, Sabine metaphony

4. **Southern Italian Dialects** (final vowel reduction, Neapolitan metaphony)

- **Intermediate (Eastern and Western Abruzzese, Southern Lazio, Molisan, Apulian, Campanian, Lucan, Northern Calabrese dialects)**
- **Extreme (Salentino, Calabrese, Sicilian)** Less intense action of metaphony/final vowel reduction, assimilation, presostantival possessive, retroflexion, vocalism

5. **Sardinian dialects** Latin final consonants not deleted, velar consonants not palatalised before I, E, retroflexion of /ll/, vocalism.

2.2 Rohlphs (1937, 1967)

Classification based only on geolinguistic criteria: two Lines where isoglosses concentrate
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“Linea La Spezia-Rimini”

Degemination, lenition, loss of final vowels but /a/

“Linea Roma-Ancona”

Assimilation *mondo* > *monno* “world”

Postnasal voicing *tanto* > *tando* “much”

Postsonorant affrication *penso* > *pentso* “I think”, *borsa* > *bortsa* “bag” *salsa* > *saltsa* “sauce”

Romance neuter = morphological difference between countable and mass among masculine nouns

<i>Masch.</i>	<i>Neuter</i>
lu peʃʃu	lo peʃʃo <i>Marche</i>
lu ferru	lo ferro <i>Abruzzo/Umbria</i>
lu cane	lo latte <i>Lazio</i>
u panə	uppanə <i>Puglia</i>

Typically the distinction is in the final vowel of the article. If the article is the same the neuter is a RS trigger.

Betacismo: Merger of latin B /b/ and V /w/ in a phoneme with the weak allophone β or v occurring in intervocalic position, word-initially and following /r/ whereas the strong allophone b: occurs post coda and in RS position.

Campanian

a voce “the voice” a < ILLAM

a bboce “orally” a < AD

- The confusion of the two phonemes was already present in Late Latin and it is attested in one of the most ancient inscriptions in Central-Southern vernaculars.

non dicere ille secreta a bboce sec. IX Inscription Catacomba di Commodilla

“do not say those secret prayers orally”

- The bilabial stop and fricative were allophones of the same phoneme. Both b and v intervocally had the same pronunciation of a bilabial fricative β both within and across boundaries.
- In the majority of the Romance Languages restitution of the original phoneme in word-initial position > opposition b/v
- In the Central-Southern and Sardinian dialects (and later on in Spanish) stop and fricative became positional variants (geminate stop strong position/ fricative weak position)

- However the opposition of v and b is now restored (we find traces of the process having already started in the Middle Ages. Neapolitan texts of XIV-XV sec. varva “chin” barba “beard”
- In central southern dialects a phase where v and b were in a allophonic relationship has evolved in different ways, further complicated by the interference of the Standard Language and by rephonologisations and restructurings of the underlying forms.

Es. *Neapolitan*

-RS v +RS bb

! v and b are NOT positional variants

> some words never show alternations *bbannera*, *bbanana*, *bbuonə*, *bbellə*

Alternations in Neapolitan (Andalò and Bafile 1991)

##_	V#_V	+RS#V	
<i>vjentə</i>	<i>o vjentə</i>	<i>kkçu bbjentə</i>	<i>kkçu vvientə</i>
<i>varka</i> (<i>bbarka</i>)	<i>a varka</i> (<i>a bbarka</i>)	<i>kkçu bbarkə</i>	<i>kkçu vvarkə</i>
<i>bbwonə</i>	<i>va bbwonə</i>	<i>kkçu bbwonə</i>	

- In the Italian peninsula there is also a considerable number of Romance and non Romance minority languages:
 - Romance: Francoprovenzali (Val D’Aosta, Piedmont and Apulia), Occitan (Piedmont, Calabria), French, Catalan (Sardinian)
 - Non Romance: Walser (Piedmonte, Val D’Aosta), Cymbric (Veneto), Mocheni (Trentino), Sudtirol German (Alto Adige), Austrian (Trentino, Alto Adige), Carinzian (Friuli, Veneto), Slovene (Friuli), Croat (Molise), Albanian (in the central-southern regions and in Sicily), Greek (Salento and Calabria), Sinti, Rom, Giudeo-Italian (common language based on Hebrew differentiated according to the influence of the dialects of Italy).

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