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Dialects and linguistic identity of Italian speakers in Bozen*

Chiara Meluzzi, Free University of Bozen

Abstract: This paper focuses on the role played by Italo-Romance dialects in shaping the linguistic identity of Italian speakers in Bozen (South Tyrol, Italy). Due to the peculiar multilingual situation of South Tyrol, Italian speakers are concentrated in the big towns of this area (e.g., Bozen), whereas the overall majority of Tyrolean people speak German or German dialects. Setting aside the political tensions between the two linguistic groups, this work focuses on the Italian community living in Bozen by emphasizing the composition of their linguistic repertoire and the differences among the districts of the town in terms of linguistic identity. For this purpose, the few data actually available on this linguistic variety will be analyzed, in order to highlight the presence and use of Italo-Romance dialects by Italian speakers. Fieldwork on this variety has never been carried out before, and, thus, all previous statements were based only on aprioristic assumptions (i.e., they were not data-driven). Without data of any sort, scholars assumed an absence of spoken Italo-Romance dialects in the variety of Italian spoken in Bozen, based on the belief that Italian speakers settled in this area from other parts of Italy. Arguing against those previous assumptions, this paper will show how dialects constitute a central part of Italian linguistic identity in the multilingual setting of South Tyrol, as it emerges from a collection of expressions collected in the book *Lo slang di Bolzano* ("The Slang of Bozen"), and from speakers' linguistic perceptions recorded during face-to-face interviews. The results of this study point out that a large number of dialects are used within the family context, and sometimes also for informal communication, whereas some words and expressions are more largely used as part of a "we-code" characteristic of the Italians of Bozen.

Keywords: Italian, Italo-Romance dialects, linguistic perception, multilingualism, sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

The aim of this contribution is to offer a first insight on the linguistic repertoire of the Italian community in the multilingual town of Bozen by emphasizing how Italo-Romance dialects define speakers' linguistic identity. In this respect, the literature is really ambiguous since no study has been specifically devoted to the investigation of the Italian community (cf. Meluzzi 2012). Thus, this contribution is meant to be a first contribution for a history of the Italian spoken in Bozen by paying particular attention to the presence of Italo-Romance dialects in this variety and to their role in the characterization of the linguistic identity of the Italian community.

Firstly, a terminological note: in this contribution the word 'dialects' is intended in the Italian sense of the term, not in the English sense, which may be the more common usage. For the Anglophone situation, Edwards (2009: 63) wrote about dialects and linguistic identity, by specifying that

a dialect is a variety of a language that differs from others along three dimensions: vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (accent). Because they are forms of the same language, however, dialects are mutually intelligible.

In the Italian situation, however, varieties of the national language are usually called 'regional varieties', whereas the so-called 'dialects' are Romance languages directly derived from Latin, thus being sister languages of Italian. Cerruti (2011) explains this situation by adopting the Coseriu distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary dialects (cf. Coseriu 1980): in Italy, regional

* I would like to thank all Bozen speakers who patiently agreed to being recorded and were willing to share their histories and perceptions with me. A special thanks also to Courtney and Gloria, whose comments were very useful in the preparation of the first draft of this paper.

varieties are tertiary dialects, whereas Italo-Romance dialects represent primary dialects. Additionally, Romance dialects are essential for the full understanding the linguistic situation in Italy. As pointed out in De Mauro (1960), Italian started being spoken by the majority of the population only very recently compared to other countries (e.g., England, France). Consequently, dialects are in many cases the first language (L1) of many speakers. In this paper, the definition of Italo-Romance dialects provided by Cerruti (2011) will be adopted.

The paper is organized as follows. To give the readers a better understanding of the sociolinguistic situation in South Tyrol, a first brief contextualization of this study will be provided in section 2. The research questions and the data collected for this study will be fully discussed in section 3, whereas section 4 will be devoted to the analysis of the data in order to answer the previously stated research questions. The discussion (section 5) aims to integrate the findings with previous research in this field. Finally, the conclusions (section 6) will sum up the main results achieved in this paper in order to suggest possible further research on this topic.

2. Italian community in South Tyrol: a short history

The presence of a large Italian community in South Tyrol is a very recent occurrence, dating back to the end of World War I. Before that date, South Tyrol was part of the Tyrolean and the Hapsburg kingdom and was a German (Bavarian) speaking area. In 1918, South Tyrol became part of the Italian kingdom,¹ and in the following years a process of 'Italianisation' was carried out by the Fascist regime: the German language was banned from public offices and schools, and German people were invited to move to German-speaking countries while Italian speakers from different parts of Italy were settled in South Tyrol. In order to host the new inhabitants, many new districts were built in the main towns. For instance, in Bozen the district of Don Bosco was built during the 1940s, and the original town has become the city center (Centro).²

At the end of World War II, both Italian and German speakers wished to preserve their own languages and traditions. After years of tension between the two linguistic groups (cf. Berloff 2004), the 'Second Statute of Autonomy', also known as 'Pacchetto', was approved in 1972. South Tyrol was officially recognized as trilingual, that is to say that German, Italian, and Ladin³ could be equally used in public offices and institutions. Moreover, the languages of the other linguistic groups must be taught in schools beginning in primary school. Every 10 years, during the National Census, people living in South Tyrol have to sign a paper in which they declare themselves as being part of one of the three ethno-linguistic groups, i.e. German, Italian, or Ladin. This is important not only to evaluate the number of speakers of each of the three official languages, but also because jobs in the public sphere are divided according to the number of people belonging to each linguistic group. This means that, for a particular job, a number of positions are reserved for people belonging to the German-speaking group, other positions are for members of the Italian-speaking group, and other positions are for the Ladin-speaking group (cf. Baur et al. 2008).

The data from the last National Census in 2011 (cf. ASTAT 2012a) state that in South Tyrol, people who self-declare themselves as belonging to the German-speaking community are the 69,41% of the whole South Tyrolean population, whereas the Italian-speaking community represents 26,06%, and the remaining 4,53% is made up of the Ladin speakers. However, it must be stressed that the Italian community is concentrated in the main towns of Bozen, Brixen and Meran. In Bozen, in particular, Italian speakers constitute 73% of the population of the town, whereas the German-speaking community represents just 26,29% of the population. This makes Bozen the main

1 Italy has been a republic since 1946.

2 In this respect, cf. Romeo (2006) who specifically addressed this historical period.

3 Ladin is a linguistic minority also recognized by Italian law (law 482/1999). Ladin is a rho-to-romance language directly derived from Latin. Nowadays it is spoken in 5 valleys between Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto (i.e. Fassa, Badia, Gardena, Fodom and Ampezzo).

'Italian' town in South Tyrol. Moreover, Bozen is still divided into German and Italian districts (see Figure 1); in fact, the city center and Gries have around 50% of the population belonging to the German-speaking group, whereas in the other districts (Europa Novacella, Don Bosco, and Oltrisarco) speakers mainly belong to the Italian-speaking group, as shown by data from the 1981 National Census (see Table 1):⁴

Figure 1: The districts of Bozen (ASTAT 2012b)



Table 1: Linguistic groups in Bozen districts in 1981 (Petri 1989: 251)

DISTRICTS	TOTAL	ITALIAN	GERMAN	LADIN
Centre	18.348 (17%)	49%	50%	1%
Gries-S. Quirino	32.848 (31%)	67%	32%	1%
Oltrisarco, Europa, Don Bosco	53.732 (51%)	85%	14%	1%
Homeless	252 (1%)	-	-	-
Total	105.180	73%	26%	1%

The Italian community of Bozen is concentrated in specific districts, which were built during the massive process of the 'Italianisation' of South Tyrol ordered by the Fascist regime.⁵ However, the Italian speakers who moved to Bozen did not originate from the same areas of Italy, and that means that, when they were moved to Bozen, they spoke different Italo-Romance dialects and different varieties of Italian (cf. section 1). It is possible to recognize three different waves in the Italian migration to Bozen.⁶ The first wave dates back to the 1920s and 1930s and basically involved speakers from Veneto, Lombardy (mostly from Milan), Emilia-Romagna, and Lazio (mainly from the city of Rome). These people were officers, high school teachers, or employees for public offices

4 These are the last data available for each district. After 1981, no division among districts has been provided by the Tyrolean statistical institute (ASTAT), so it is impossible to quantify the amount of people belonging to the different linguistic groups in the different districts. However, for information on the differences between the different districts of the town one may consult the recent Riccioni's (2012) book.

5 See also Kramer (1983) and Petri (1989) for a historical reconstruction of this process.

6 This reconstruction is based on the comments and notes in both Petri (1989) and Baur et al. (2008), in which, however, the three waves of Italian migration are not very clearly exposed.

and were thus people with a middle-high degree of education. These people moved to Bozen because of the vacancies left after the removal of German speakers in those positions and due to the need of the Fascist regime to improve the Italian in the schools. Then, during the 1940s, many other Italian speakers were moved to Bozen, especially from Trentino and Veneto. They were generally farmers who were employed in the new factories and settled in the new district of Don Bosco. It is worth noting that many of the Italian migrants of that period did not have a high degree of education, and it is possible that they only spoke their own Italo-Romance dialect and not Italian (see De Mauro 1960). The last migration wave dates to after World War II and involves people of different backgrounds and levels of education from all over Italy, but mostly from the South (e.g., Naples, Calabria).

To sum up, what characterizes the history of the Italian community in South Tyrol, and in particular in Bozen, is that these people were not originally settled in the area prior to the end of World War I, and their migration created a multilingual setting. Additionally, the political tensions between the two linguistic groups have characterized the social life of every citizen since South Tyrol first became part of the Italian kingdom. As for the Italian community, speakers have different sociolinguistic and dialectological backgrounds, and it makes it quite difficult to state whether or not they constitute an homogeneous community.

2.1. *The Italian of Bozen: an undefined variety*

As previously stated, the Italian variety spoken in Bozen presents many sociolinguistic peculiarities. However, no study has been specifically dedicated to the investigation of this linguistic community and its language. Many scholars have indeed dealt with the sociolinguistic situation of South Tyrol, and thus they have offered a definition of the variety of Italian spoken there. It is worth noting that not one of these definitions is based on spoken data, but only on impressions or aprioristic arguments.⁷

In the literature, three main definitions of the variety of Italian spoken in Bozen may be found. Some scholars (e.g., Kühebacher 1976) see the Italian of Bozen as a standard variety of Italian, since it would have been impossible for speakers from the various regions of Italy to communicate with each other in any other language other than Standard Italian (SI). A second group of scholars, however, think that the Italian of Bozen is an 'atypical' variety of Italian. For instance, Francescato (1975) underlines how the lack of a dialectal basis makes the Italian of Bozen a poor variety, a sort of pidgin among different dialects and regional varieties. Finally, scholars like Kramer (1983) and Coletti et al. (1992) define the Italian of Bozen as the result of a process of koineization between the dialects and regional varieties spoken by Italian speakers who migrated to Bozen from a variety of linguistic regions in Italy.⁸

Thus, it is evident how the definition of the Italian of Bozen is very contradictory, and also lacks fieldwork and spoken data. Scholars, however, agree in considering this variety an extraordinary case in Italian sociolinguistics. Since it lacks a common dialectal basis, dialects could not be used in everyday interactions due to different regional origins of the speakers, and this is the only attested case in Italy where Italo-Romance dialects are commonly used in spoken communication, at least at informal levels (Berruto 1995).

Regarding perception and linguistic identity, these issues have been randomly addressed by scholars working on language acquisition (Paladino et al. 2009) and on linguistic biographies (Veronesi 2008). Again, it is worth noting that the problem of the linguistic identity of Italian speakers in Bozen has only been poorly addressed in the literature.

⁷ See also Meluzzi (2012).

⁸ This last hypothesis seems also to be confirmed, even with differences, by a first analysis of spoken data carried on in Meluzzi (2013).

3. The research setting

As has been shown in the previous section, the literature concerning the linguistic situation of the Italian of Bozen is very contradictory; additionally, no previous study investigates the presence of Italo-Romance dialects in this area or how this peculiar situation may affect the linguistic identity of Italian speakers in Bozen. The present work is, indeed, an attempt to clarify if and to what extent Italo-Romance dialects play a role in defining the identity of these speakers, and which (if any) symbolic value (see Edwards 2009) is associated with these dialects in this context. More precisely, the research questions concern, firstly, the possibility of finding instances of such Italo-Romance dialects in the repertoire of Italian speakers. Secondly, due to the ambiguous literature in this respect, it will be interesting to investigate how speakers define their own spoken Italian and if they perceive any dialectal influences in their speech. Finally, the main issue concerns the actual use of Italo-Romance dialects in spoken communication, and the different usage of Italian and dialects in this complex community.

3.1. The data

In order to answer these questions, two different kinds of materials were used. It is worth stressing that these data are very heterogeneous and they come from very different sources and approaches, more specifically from Cagnan's (2011) book and from sociolinguistic interviews. However, as far as can be confirmed, these data represent the only available source of information concerning the Italian variety spoken in Bozen, and for this reason they are both taken into account in the present contribution.

On the one side, there is a non-linguistic book published in 2011, and again in 2012, by the Bozen journalist Paolo Cagnan, called *Lo slang di Bolzano* ("The Slang of Bozen"), henceforth referred to as simply *Slang*. The book contains a list of words and expressions thought to be typical of Bozen Italian, which were collected by Cagnan on the popular social network Facebook. In the online group *Slang di Bolzano*, Cagnan asked people living or born in Bozen to post words, sentences or expressions typical of the Italian spoken in the town. Nowadays, the group consists of 1856 members.⁹ Cagnan collected some of the most popular expressions and published them in the aforementioned book along with their definitions given by the speakers themselves. In the preface, he specifies that the expressions seem to be part of a shared knowledge of Italians who are older than 30; he also adds that the slang has basically been created in the Italian districts of Bozen, and in particular in Don Bosco.

The 2011 edition of the book consists of 978 words and expressions, and in the 2012 second edition the number increases to 1279 entries. The formal organization of the two books is identical (see Figure 2 on page 6): on the right, in bold, there is the entry, sometimes also with an indication of variants (e.g., *zève/seve* "bye", Cagnan 2011: 82), followed by a translation in SI and/or an explanation of the expression. The entry is sometimes followed by a specification in brackets, distinguishing four parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, verbs, and a more general category called 'expressions' (Cagnan 2011: 17), which includes both idiomatic expressions, such as swear words, and groups of two or more words that could be used as nouns or adjectives as well (e.g., *man de bianco* explained as *botte* "whacks", Cagnan 2011: 47).¹⁰ Additionally, the origin of the word is sometimes added in brackets as well, distinguishing, however, only among South Tyrolean (st), Trentino (tn), and Venetian (ven). Interestingly, the Trentino tag was only added in the second edition in 2012, whereas, in the previous, edition only Venetian and South Tyrolean were used as dialectal tags. Moreover, not every word is presented with this dialectal tag, even when the dialectal origin is unquestionable. For instance, one may find the verb *bronzare* (Cagnan 2011: 25, cf. also

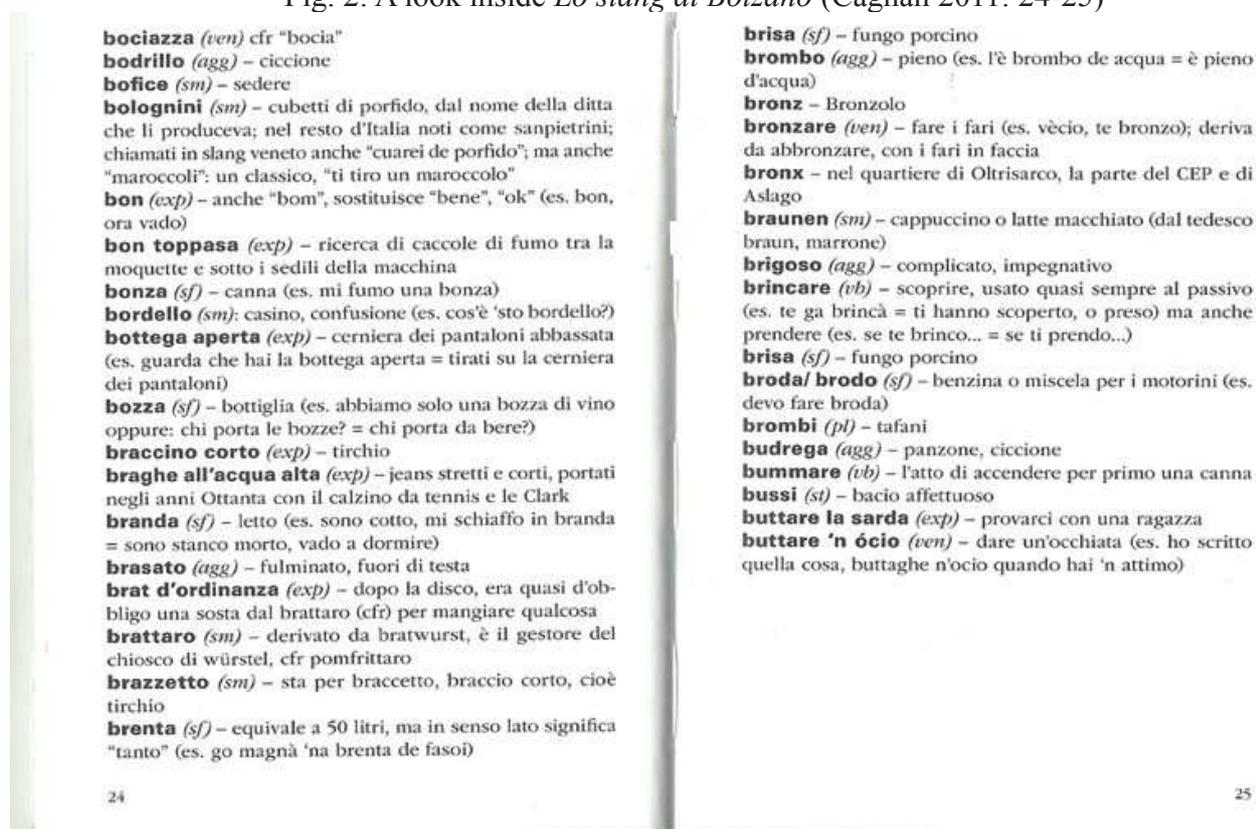
9 <https://www.facebook.com/messages/1192877550#!/groups/slangdibolzano/>, last accessed August 11, 2014.

10 One may note that only the first expression is translated, whereas no translation in SI is provided for the following example.

Figure 2 below) which is marked as Venetian, whereas for the word *bodrillo* "fat guy" presents only the identification of the part of speech (i.e., adjective), even if it is not SI.

Thus, Cagnan's book reflects speakers' perception of their own Italian variety. However, it must be emphasized that the absence of a linguistic tagging deeply affects the work, since, for instance, there are no dialectal words other than Venetian and Trentino. Though a new tagging of these data has to be done by a linguist, at the current state of knowledge, this rough material may tell something about the speakers' perceptions as well. The recognized limits of these books must be taken into account, but it is worth noting that such limits are due to the nature of *Slang* itself, since it has been created by non-linguists and for non-scientific purposes (cf. Cagnan 2011: 7-8). This way, this book gives an interesting first impression of the actual use of language, since it testifies to how speakers perceive their own variety of Italian and for which words or expressions they use the dialectal labels:

Fig. 2: A look inside *Lo slang di Bolzano* (Cagnan 2011: 24-25)



In addition to the book *Lo slang di Bolzano*, the spoken data recorded for the author's PhD thesis were also used for the current study. These data consist in face-to-face interviews with Italian speakers of Bozen;¹¹ these recordings represent the first spoken corpus of this Italian variety. Speakers were involved in two very formal tasks, consisting of first reading a long word-list, and then participating in a more spontaneous conversation (cf. Labov 1994) with the researcher. During these interviews, some questions were devoted to the investigation of speakers' perceptions of their own linguistic variety, with particular emphasis on the presence and use of Italo-Romance dialects in their everyday lives. For instance, speakers were directly asked what they think about the Italian

11 The interviews were recorded at Free University of Bozen between October 2011 and March 2012, using a ZOOM H2 recorder with a microphone placed in front of the speaker. Each speaker was thus fully aware of being recorded, and no secret recordings have been carried out; speakers also signed a disclaimer that allows to use these data, in an anonymous form, for scientific purposes.

spoken in Bozen,¹² and whether they use Italo-Romance dialects when talking to their parents from their areas of origin. The corpus consists of 42 hours and 41 minutes of face-to-face interviews with 42 Italian speakers of Bozen, both male and female, aged between 19 and 97 years old, with differing degrees of education, and from various dialectal backgrounds.¹³ The interviews were orthographically transcribed with the software ELAN 4.6.

Theoretically speaking, a Folk-Linguistic approach was adopted. As Niedzielski & Preston (2003) point out, nowadays Folk Linguistics has extended to a wide range of approaches and methods, with the main aim being to investigate speakers' perceptions. People's opinions may indeed be used in applied linguistic research, especially in the fields of language policy and language teaching. The importance of non-linguists' attitudes and beliefs towards language has been stressed by Wilton & Stegu (2011: 12): "Linguists need to know what non-linguists think of the issues at hand, how their knowledge is generated, and how it can be enriched in order to help them solve language-related problems or change negative attitudes".

For the purpose of the present work, speakers' perceptions and attitudes towards Italian will be important in order to identify the presence and the role played by Romance dialects in the Italian community.

4. Analysis

In this section, the data will be analyzed separately for the two aforementioned sets, that is to say the data emerging from *Slang* (4.1), and then the data collected in the interviews (4.2). This operation is necessary since the data are of very different natures. In the conclusions, the results of the two sub-sections will then be combined in order to completely answer to the research questions.

4.1. Dialectal words in Lo slang di Bolzano

As previously stated, many Italian speakers in Bozen have different dialectal backgrounds. It is thus somewhat surprising to find only two Italo-Romance dialects (i.e., Venetian and Trentino) in *Slang*. In Cagnan (2011), only 100 of 978 entries are explicitly tagged as Venetian, even if this tag is not always assigned to words with an undoubtedly Venetian origin, as has previously been illustrated. Among the 100 words explicitly recognized as Venetian, 65 of them are the so-called expressions, 17 are nouns, whereas only six are verbs, and seven are adjectives. Finally, five entries could be both adjectives and nouns depending on the sentence, as in the case of *sbruin* (and its variant *sbroin*) which means "very cold" (SI *freddo intenso*).

Interestingly, in the second edition of the book (Cagnan 2012), out of a total of 1279 entries, 124 are tagged as Venetian, and 31 as Trentino, whereas other seven words and expressions were simultaneously tagged as both Venetian and Trentino.¹⁴ Even if it were possible that the same expressions could be found in the dialectal continuum from Venetian to Trentino,¹⁵ it appears extremely interesting that the same seven words and expressions were marked only as Venetian in the first edition of the book. Among the 31 entries marked as being from Trentino, 19 are again emphatic and often dysphemistic expressions (e.g., *stoneza in val culera* "continuous farting", Cagnan 2012: 79), while there also are eight nouns, three verbs and one adjective. Even if limited only to these entries, it is important to note how, in this second edition of *Slang*, Trentino is also

12 See also Meluzzi (fc).

13 For more details about the corpus composition and stratification, cf. Meluzzi (2013).

14 This is not surprising since the two dialects (i.e. Venetian and Trentino) are very close to each other also from a geographic point of view; it is possible that, in these cases, a non-linguist writer was not able to explicitly associate each form with one dialect or another since they may show a frequency of use in both the variants.

15 It is worth remembering that the variety of Venetian we are mostly dealing with in this context is the so-called Central Venetian, which includes the varieties from Rovigo, Padova, the Polesine and Vicenza (cf. Zamboni 1974, Loporcaro 2009).

recognized as a dialectal variety of importance in the linguistic characterization of the Italian of Bozen.

The very rough material collected in *Slang* and the aforementioned lack of consistent linguistic tagging do not allow one to draw any scientifically grounded conclusions. However, these data testify to how the speakers perceive their speech as characterized by the presence of at least two main Romance dialects, that is to say Trentino and, most of all, Venetian. Moreover, the large predominance of Venetian expressions could mean that this dialect is actually used by Italian speakers to give more emphasis to their statements, especially since the largest presence of the phrases marked as Venetian tend to be swear words and emphatic expressions in *Slang*. In this respect, it is also possible to argue that the dialectal expressions characterize a more informal and spontaneous speech, whereas they disappear in more formal and controlled conversation, as in the case of face-to-face interviews (see 4.2).

4.2. *Dialects and linguistic identity of Italian speakers*

As pointed out previously, the corpus of spoken Italian contains only face-to-face interviews between the speaker and the researcher, thus constituting a very formal situation that may affect the linguistic style adopted by certain speakers. However, during the interviews, the conversations became gradually more spontaneous, and speakers' utterances were less controlled especially when the discussion shifted to topics involving languages. This is related to the peculiar history and sociolinguistic situation of South Tyrol: since the risk of social bias concerning languages is very high, speakers were more concerned with conveying the message accurately than with controlling their speech style, thus resulting in a more spontaneous speech (see Labov 1994). This can be attested by the emphasis audible in the recordings, but also by the presence of emphatic expressions, more than discourse markers and, sometimes, also swear words.

One of the most intriguing topics involves a speaker's knowledge of one or more Italo-Romance dialects and the use of these dialects in everyday conversation. In this respect, I have previously noted (Meluzzi 2013) how speakers from more mixed or German districts (e.g., Centro) frequently state that they neither use nor do they perceive Italo-Romance dialects in Bozen. On the other hand, however, speakers from the more Italian districts (e.g., Don Bosco) state not only that they perceive dialects in their everyday life, and have since they were children, but also that they are able to understand and sometimes also speak some of them.

This is supported by statements like the one quoted in (1) in which speaker MP, a 53-year old woman from Don Bosco, clearly states that she can understand at least five different Italo-Romance dialects, and that she can perceive many dialectal influences in the Italian spoken in Bozen:

- (1) 230 MP Beh capisco il Romano, Siciliano, Calabrese, Pugliese, Trentino, Veneto.
Well I understand Romano, Sicilian, Calabrese, Pugliese, Trentino, Venetian.
- [...]
- 248 CM Uhm. E cioè secondo te ci sono ancora adesso delle influenze dialettali?
Uhm. And in your opinion, nowadays do you also hear many dialectal influences?
- 249 MP Sì. Beh, Romane, dovute al mio compagno. Venete.
Yes. Well, Roman, thanks to my boyfriend. Venetian.
- 250 MP E Calabresi, perché mia sorella è sposata con un calabrese per cui...
And Calabrese 'cause my sister is married to a man from Calabria so...
- 251 MP E tanti modi di dire sono soprattutto romano, perché essendo sposata con un romano bene o male.
And lots of phraseologisms from Roman, since I'm married to a man from Rome.
- 252 MP Però sì, sì sì. Io non parlo un Italiano Italiano.
But yeah yeah. Well I don't speak Italian Italian.

- 253 MP Diciamo, se devo essere formale, è un Italiano. Se sono tra amici, se sono in compagnia no. Tante inflessioni, tanti modi di dire e tante inflessioni. Sì.
I mean, if I have to be formal, mine is a proper Italian. If I am among friends, if we are hanging out, (I have) many inflections, many phraseologisms, inflections. Yeah.

The role of dialects in everyday conversation is emphasized also by a young speaker, LT, a 27-year old man from Don Bosco, whose father is from Calabria. In his interview, he often addresses linguistic issues, especially concerning the role of languages in defining the identity of speakers of both the German and Italian groups. In one passage, he also states that he knows and actually uses Calabrese when talking to his father and other relatives. However, when he discusses the presence of spoken dialects in Bozen, he emphasizes the role played in particular by Venetian:

- (2) 21 LT Si- beh sicuramente qui dialetto calabrese non se ne parla
We- well here the Calabrese dialect is not spoken for sure
- 22 LT però <SP>
but
- 23 LT secondo me <SP>
in my opinion
- 24 LT uhm <SP>
Uhm
- 25 LT tanti bolzanini la maggior parte
lots of people in Bozen the main part
- 26 LT almeno quelli di madrelingua italiana <SP>
at least Italian native speakers
- 27 LT hanno un sacco di <SP>
they have lots of
- 28 LT eh <SP>
eh
- 29 LT inflessioni dialettali si dice così? <SP>
dialect inflections it says so?
- 30 LT di natura veneta
similar to Venetian
- <LP>
- 31 LT questo è
this is it
- 32 CM Lei ne sente tanti?
Do you hear many?
- 33 LT Sì la maggior parte che
Yeah most of all that
- 34 LT cioè che sento anche tra amici <SP>
I mean that I listen to also among friends
- 35 LT si parla
we speak
- 36 LT non in dialetto però capita di dire <SP>
not dialect but it happens to say
- 37 LT ocio gua- var ti che insomma <SP>
[in Venetian] 'look! look that!' that I mean
- 38 LT tutto questo genere di
all these kinds of

- <LP>
 39 LT inflessioni di natura dialettale
inflections from dialect
 40 LT tipicamente venete sicuramente non si parla <LP>
typically from Venetian for sure we don't speak
 41 LT cioè <SP>
I mean
 42 LT milanese o o altro
Milanese or or other (dialects)

In this example, the speaker is introducing, almost unconsciously, a difference between language use at home and language use inside the Italian community. Another interesting statement in this respect is offered by speaker CU, a 43-years old woman from Oltrisarco, another mainly Italian district (see section 2 above), quoted in example (3):

- (3) 401 CU Noi non abbiamo dialetto noi a Bolzano parliamo un italiano che secondo me
We don't have a dialect we in Bozen talk an Italian that in my opinion
 402 CU non è corretto nel senso che è un italiano sì pulito <SP>
it's not correct in the sense that it's a clean Italian yeah
 403 CU però uhm <SP>
but uhm
 404 CU boh <SP>
dunno
 405 CU non ha un dialetto <SP>
it doesn't have a dialect
 406 CU assolutamente noi parliamo l'italiano <SP>
we absolutely speak Italian
 [...]
 485 CU no noi italiani parliamo l'italiano
no we as Italians speak Italian
 486 CU poi c'è da dire una cosa
then, there's a thing to say
 <LP>
 487 CU ad esempio io mia madre era trentina
for instance my mother was from Trento
 488 CU sei figli quindi ho le zie
six children thus I've got aunts
 489 CU eh i fratelli cioè
eh the brothers I mean
 <LP>
 490 CU loro parlavano trentino <SP>
they spoke Trentino
 491 CU quindi la mamma quando veniva a casa qualcuno dei suoi fratelli parlavano
 trentino <SP>
so did my mum when one of her brothers came home they spoke Trentino
 492 CU quindi anche noi
so we did too
 493 CU magari ci capitava di dire quelle tre o quattro parole in trentino <SP>
maybe it happened to us to say three or four words in Trentino

- 494 CU in dialetto <SP>
in dialect
- 495 CU però la nostra d- lingua è a Bolzano è l'italiano cioè noi anche quando andiamo a scuola da bambini
but our l- the language in Bozen is Italian, I mean even when we go to school as children
- 496 CU parliamo l'italiano
we speak Italian
- 497 CU non è che ci devono poi correggere perché abbiamo
they don't have to correct us 'cause we have
- 498 CU anche il dialetto oltre va beh
also the dialect and the well
- 499 CU chiaramente la la conoscenza ci manca
clearly we lack the knowledge
- 500 CU e devi impararla a scuola
and you have to learn it at school
- 501 CU però a Bolzano non c'è un dialetto <SP>
but in Bozen there is no dialect
- 502 CU per la parte tedesca sì c'è lo quello schifosissimo tedesco che parlano loro <SP>
for the German part yes there's that disgusting German they speak
- 503 CU per gli italiani no
for the Italians (there's) not

Three main points of discussion emerge from this example. Firstly, there is the speaker's determination to stress that there is no dialect of Bozen, a concept twice repeated (in lines 420 and 501), where she also emphasizes how Italian speakers mainly speak a 'clear' Italian (in lines 406 and in 485). The lack of dialect indirectly conveys two other statements: the Italian spoken in Bozen is more 'clean' (line 402) and also more 'correct' (line 497) than the Italian spoken elsewhere in Italy. This reflects an ideology that has been particularly strong in Italy until very recent times, which is that dialects cause trouble for children at school, and that they must be avoided in order to reach complete competence in Italian, without any influence from one's regional (i.e. dialectal) background (cf. De Mauro 1960). Secondly, speaker CU introduces a difference in language use, by reporting how Trentino is sometimes spoken in her family (lines 487-494). In these lines, however, it is interesting to note how personal pronouns differentiate between "they" (i.e., CU's mothers and old relatives) and "we" (evidently CU herself and her brothers). Only the old relatives spoke the dialect among themselves, whereas the youngest generation represented by CU sometimes uses only "three or four words in Trentino" (line 493). Thus, the use of dialect is relegated to a familial usage and to old generations, differently from what we saw in LT's speech in (2), in which that young speaker said that he commonly uses dialect while talking to his father. Other speakers also testify that dialects are more commonly spoken among members of the older generations, while the youngest speakers will still use some fixed words or expressions, but they are unable (or, maybe, unwilling) to produce full sentences in dialect.¹⁶ Finally, CU's example also introduces an interesting difference between the two linguistic communities in Bozen: only the German group has a dialect, which is judged poorly by this speaker,¹⁷ while the Italian group is characterized precisely by the lack of a dialect.

The familial usage of dialects is reported in other speakers' recordings, in which it emerges

16 A similar opinion is shown by AC, a 60-years old man, fully quoted in Meluzzi (fc).

17 In this respect, see Meluzzi (2013).

how specific words or expressions may characterize a single speaker or small groups of speakers, due to their family background. For instance, FR, a 47-year old woman from Europa Novacella, states that her mother (CFS) always speaks Venetian, and more precisely the Venetian variety of Rovigo, while her father often speaks Friulano. This occasionally led to misunderstandings concerning precise objects, as FR exemplifies by telling the story of the *sgumarell* "ladle" (SI *mestolo*), quoted in example 4:

- (4)¹⁸ 427 FR Una sera, eravamo in approntamento cena, e mia madre mi fa, aveva fretta e: <Dai dai dai! Prendi il sgumarell>.
One evening, we were preparing dinner, and my mother was in a hurry and asked me: <Quick! Give me the sgumarell>.
- [laugh]
- 428 FR E io...
And I...
- 429 CFS Aspetta. Adesso arriva la domanda: che cos'è?
Wait. Now comes the question: what is it?
- 430 FR E io: <Sì. Adesso lo prendo>.
And I: <Yes. Now I'll take it>.
- 431 FR E non sapevo cosa ma non volevo chiederle cosa fosse.
And I didn't know what it was but I didn't want to ask her what it was.
- 432 FR Panico! E lui: <Ma sì! Il pajič!>.
Panic! And him [her father]: <Yeah! The pajič!¹⁹>.
- [everybody laughs]
- 432 FR <E' fantastico!> ho detto io. <Datemi una traduzione!>.
<Oh great> I said. <Give me a translation!>.
- 433 FR Alla fine è venuto fuori che era un mestolo. E ce l'abbiamo fatta.
In the end it turned out that it was a sort of ladle. And we did it.
- 432 CFS Mi ricordo.
I remember it.

Additionally, in her interview, FR adds that, in Bozen, although there is not a dialect in the narrowest sense of the term, there is a slang that is part of the linguistic repertoire of every Italian speaker. She also points out that this slang is not limited to her generation, but it may pass on to the youngest speakers. She exemplifies this statement by saying that her 10-year old daughter says *pačeca* "mud" (SI *fango*).

In sum, the perceptions of the speakers collected in the interviews demonstrate how the speakers perceive that in Bozen there are dialects which are spoken, but in a different way than in other parts of Italy. In particular, the presence of Italo-Romance dialects seems to characterize the various Italian districts, but the use of these dialects is also limited to informal speech, and to words or peculiar expressions, with some specific words possibly having entered the lexicon of certain speakers due to their peculiar familial history. At a general level, an important difference lies between old and young usage; in speakers' perception, only older people commonly use dialects in everyday conversations, whereas the younger generations use single words or expressions but

18 Although FR was previously recorded alone, she was in the room when her mother (CFS) and her father (DR) were recorded a few weeks later, and she randomly added something to her parents' speech. FR's daughter, a 10-years old girl, was also in the room but she almost never spoke, although she sometimes nodded at her grand-mother's stories. When this interview was recorded, CFS and DR were aged 81 and 82 respectively.

19 Since no standard transcription has been found for this word, an orthography near the pronunciation has been adopted.

apparently only in informal contexts and in casual speech.

5. Discussion

As stated at the beginning of this paper, no previous study has specifically addressed the presence of Italo-Romance dialects in the variety of Italian spoken in Bozen. Moreover, the data available for the investigation of this topic are very rare, and in many cases produced by non-linguists. Only very recently, an attempt to collect a corpus of spoken Italian from Bozen has been carried out, but the work in this respect is still in progress (see Meluzzi 2013). For these reasons, the data used in this paper are very different and to some extent also rough, but they are nevertheless useful, as they demonstrate the linguistic perception of the speakers, even at a merely impressionistic level.

In this sense, a sort of contradiction seems to emerge from the new kind of material actually at disposal: whereas, in the interviews, speakers declare that they perceive and sometimes also use many Italo-Romance dialects (e.g., speaker LT), in the collection provided by Cagnan (2011), only Venetian is explicitly present. It is indeed the case that a large portion of the Italian residents in Bozen came from Venetian dialectal areas, and in particular from the central Venetian area (Rovigo, Padova, and Verona).²⁰ It remains unclear as to why no words from other dialects are included in *Slang* even if it could be simply that this absence is related only to the lack of both a precise (i.e., linguistic) tagging system and also a more general dialectal attention provided by the editor, whose main interest remains speakers' perception only.

The data collected in the interviews may help in this sense. Indeed, many speakers distinguish between two domains, i.e. family and society, the last one also including school. The familial domain is the only one in which dialect is widely used, including by younger speakers, as seen in examples (2) and (4). However, the same speaker who states that he/she uses dialect within the family also emphasizes that no language other than Italian is spoken in Bozen (of course, by the Italian linguistic group). This is a case of *dilalia* (cf. Berruto 1995), which is typical for the Italian sociolinguistic situation: if diglossia (cf. Ferguson 1959) involves different domains of usage for different languages, namely Language A being used only in formal situations and Language B only in informal ones, then, in the case of *dilalia*, Language A could be used in informal situations as well, thus reducing Language B's domain to a certain extent. The Italian community of Bozen is thus characterized by a situation of *dilalia*, with the exceptional feature of not having a single dialect but many Italo-Romance dialects related to speakers' specific origins. In this sense, it could be said that dialects define the linguistic identity of each speaker as an individual or as a family.

In this context, the presence of an Italian slang assumes a different importance. As emerges from Cagnan's book, this slang is mainly characterized by the presence of Venetian and Trentino, which represent the largest part of Bozen population. Words and expressions collected in the book also appear in casual speech, at least as stated by the speakers, but seem to be used more by a certain generation: the 40-50 years old speakers who reside in the Italian districts, and in particular in Don Bosco. If dialectal words indeed pass from one generation to another via familial usage, this slang seems to be more related to a certain group of speakers, thus constituting a sort of "we-code", which aims to distinguish these speakers both from their German counterparts and the older speakers. The difference between Italian and the slang lies in the different functions assigned to language within the Italian community of Bozen. Recalling Edwards (2009: 55), it may be said that Italian in this context is perceived and used as an "instrumental tool", to communicate at a formal level and with people outside of the community, whereas slang seems to be "an emblem of groupness".

²⁰ See Zamboni (1974) for more details in this respect.

6. Conclusions and further perspectives

As illustrated at the beginning of this paper, the sociolinguistic situation of Bozen is very complicated and interesting from different perspectives, in particular for what it may reveal about the relationship between language and identity. It has been often pointed out that the data concerning the Italian spoken in Bozen are very lacunose, rough, and heterogenous. Despite these limitations, this paper has proposed a first survey of these materials in order to show if and how Italo-Romance dialects are perceived and used.

Indeed, Bozen speakers do perceive a presence of dialectal elements in their variety of Italian. Moreover, dialects, or at least some of them (e.g., Venetian), seem to characterize the speech of the Italian community. In answering our previous research questions, thus, it is possible to note that Italian speakers actually claim to perceive a dialectal influence in the Italian spoken in Bozen, and also to use dialects in their speech. However, this usage seems to be limited to within the family, even if specific words or expressions have become part of a shared 'slang' now used almost exclusively by middle-aged speakers (Cagnan 2011: 9). Among the various dialects that have characterized Italian immigration in Bozen, Venetian and, to some extent, Trentino dialects are the most prominent in the linguistic perception of the speakers, maybe only for demographic reasons, since many speakers came from this dialectal area. However, dialects are indeed perceived by some speakers, at least in the spontaneous declarations collected in the interviews.

These findings contrast with what is usually attested in the literature about the absence of dialects in the Italian variety of Bozen. As has been already pointed out, however, the statements provided by scholars were not based on any corpora of spoken Italian. In this respect, a data-driven approach, as adopted in the present work for the first time, argues in favor of the presence of Italo-Romance dialects in the Italian of Bozen at various levels of usage. In conclusion, one may say that dialects are part of the linguistic identity of the Italian community of Bozen, especially in those districts where Italian speakers represent the vast majority of the population (e.g., Don Bosco). In this sense, dialectal expressions may characterize this Italian variety in opposition not only to the German community, which has its own dialect, but also to other Italian varieties on the rest of the peninsula.

It is quite obvious that research on this topic is only at a very early stage, and that further and more precise investigations on Italo-Romance dialects in the Italian of Bozen are necessary to fully understand the complex relationships among Italian and dialects in this speech community. As has been stressed in this paper, the material actually at disposal is very rough, and only allows us to propose some claims which contrast to the previous, not data-driven studies. However, further research must be carried out, in order to build a specific and annotated corpus which also includes instances of spontaneous conversations among Bozen speakers. In this respect, further studies may concentrate on the actual use of dialectal words and expressions in everyday talk by collecting a wider corpus of spoken Italian. Ideally, such a corpus would also provide more informal contexts and conversations among two or more Italian speakers (perhaps also without the researcher present). As for Cagnan's (2011) book, a linguist may also be interested in investigating all those expressions which are been marked neither as German nor as Italo-Romance, in order to offer a more precise picture of the total amount of words and expressions taken from different linguistic backgrounds and summed up in *Slang*. It may also be interesting to check the actual diffusion of the words and expressions collected in *Slang*, in particular in order to verify if and how many words are understood and/or still used by the youngest generation of speakers (e.g., under 18 years old).

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