Negotiating languages, identities and space in Hispanic Linguistic Landscape in Milan*

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Abstract

Based on a database composed of 1500 pictures, belonging to 401 analytical units from the Linguistic Landscape (hereafter: LL), and representing mainly the signs on the shop of migrant traders in two multi-ethnic neighbourhoods in Milan, this paper will describe the positioning strategies of Latin American (hereafter: LA) communities in a multilingual urban space, and the processes of identity negotiation in which they are engaged. We will use a scale-sensitive and contextualised interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of LL (Vandenbroucke 2015), combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The aim is to show how the presence of Spanish in the LL indexes the collective identities, as well as the language and social attitudes of the LA communities living in Milan. We will analyse the emerging practices of flexible multilingualism, or translanguaging (García and Otheguy 2014), as a creative response to linguistic differences and potential conflicts.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape; Latin American immigration; Spanish and Italian; language choice

1. Introduction

Milan can be considered a global city (Sassen 2005) with a high presence of long-term resident immigrants amongst the labour force, where many different ethnic communities, geographically intertwined in the suburbs, contribute to the related phenomena of superdiversity and transnationalism (Vertovec 2007, 2009), turning the previously monolingual landscape into a multilingual one. Attitudes towards the migrant presence, and their integration, among the city's institutions waver between instances of welcoming and of rejection. Language Policies, thus, vary from active promotion of foreign cultures to laissez-faire attitudes or even the prohibition of any expression of multiculturalism considered to be too blatant. Due to its rapid "transnationalization" (Vandenbroucke 2015), Milan has become an apposite site to explore glottopolitical dynamics, where the dominant monolingual ideologies clash with a multilingualism that, though ignored or even rejected by institutions, is very evident in the public space, and where potential conflict is mitigated by the ways people manage multilingualism in their daily lives (Arnoux 2000).

The urban LL (Landry and Bourhis 1997), for its sheer visibility, is a domain in which the conflicting interests at stake can easily be detected. From a glottopolitical point of view, LL is a useful research area, both for its top-down institutional dimension and for its bottom-up creation of complex arrangements of symbols and signs constructing hybrid identities that negotiate space, and spheres of influence and power, between groups that constitute a particular social context (Blackwood, Lanza and Woldemariam 2016). The analysis of LL can "expand the range of sociolinguistic description from, typically, (groups of) speakers to spaces, the physical spaces in which such speakers dwell" (Blommaert 2012: 5). LL can thus act as an important diagnostic

of social and linguistic change, even if not all the languages are equally visible: a silent LL can also be detected (Sáez Rivera 2014: 411).

Based on a database of 1500 pictures collected in 2016-2017, belonging to 401 analytical units from the LL, and representing mainly the signs on the shops of migrant traders, together with some interviews with shop owners, our paper will describe the positioning strategies of the LA communities in two multilingual and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods of Milan, and the process of identity negotiation in which they are engaged. Our analytical unit might be just a single sign within a spatial framework (e.g. a personal announcement on a lamp post) or a set of signs; in the case of shops, for instance, the unit of analysis is each establishment as a whole and not each sign (Cenoz and Gorter 2006: 71).

We will use a scale-sensitive and contextualised interdisciplinary approach to LL (Vandenbroucke 2015), combining quantitative/qualitative methods with multimodal analysis (Kress 2010). Our aim is to show how the presence of Spanish in the LL indexes the collective identities, as well as the linguistic and social attitudes of the LA communities living in Milan. We will analyse the emerging practices of flexible multilingualism, or translanguaging (García and Otheguy 2014), as a creative response to linguistic differences and potential conflicts. In particular, we will focus on the simultaneous presence, within a single display, of different messages addressed to specific recipients: the local Italian population, LAs from different countries of origin and other migrant groups in the neighbourhood.

2. Theoretical and methodological framework

Over the last twenty years, the study of LL has been an emerging field in sociolinguistics, and in recent times it has experienced a critical turn, moving from quantitative methodologies, focused on the coexistence of languages in a country or

region, to integrated interdisciplinary approaches based also on qualitative research methods: "The term 'linguistic' is now no longer just confined to verbal and written languages, but embraces the complexity of semiotic spaces as well as people as authors, actors, and users, all of which is part of LL analysis" (Barni and Bagna 2015: 7). According to what has been called the "third wave" in sociolinguistic studies, the language practices in which speakers place themselves in the social landscape (Eckert 2012: 94) and the actual communicative processes occurring, along with what they can reveal about the societal structures (Pappenhagen, Scarvaglieri, and Redder 2016), are also taken into account. In the framework of globalisation, superdiversity and transnationalism, LL can be considered as a processual and shifting object of study, which is continually redefined through discursive and social practices; this determines a clear need for an interdisciplinary approach, combining sociolinguistics with disciplines such as semiotics, geography, anthropology and urban sociology.

This change of perspective is parallel to the *spatial turn* that has occurred in the social sciences, leading to the conception of space as a social construction, in which discursive practices acquire great relevance (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010). From this point of view, LL becomes a *discursive scenario* (Maingueneau 2012) wherein interactions take place and a new sociolinguistic system can be created at a particular scale level, which can be seen through "both the microscopic characteristics of single signs and the systemic relationships between signs" (Blommaert 2012: 21). As we shall see, the emergence of Spanish in the Milanese LL demarcates places where the use of Spanish is not only normal but also promoted; its presence in the public space increases its symbolic capital within a field of forces that includes not only the local dominant language, Italian, but also different immigrant languages, such as Arabic and Chinese.

Moreover, the written use is connected to the oral use of the actors involved, thus creating a constantly dynamic linguistic environment.

LL creates a social space where languages compete, negotiating power relations and status. Apart from the occasional use of dialectal varieties of Italian, or prestigious international languages, such as English or French, the Milanese LL has traditionally been monolingual. This situation has slowly been replaced by an emerging multilingual environment in which the status of a given language can change according to the social space in which it is used. In educational spheres, for instance, Spanish has become one of the most studied and appreciated foreign languages; in contrast with the dominant peninsular variety taught in schools and universities, the different LA varieties negotiate their status within the LL of the suburban neighbourhoods in which LA migrants have settled. In spite of the current language policies in Italy, "which are completely oriented towards a static framework of national monolingualism" (Barni and Bagna 2016: 68), the LL testifies to a multilingual and superdiverse setting.

We do not consider the LL merely to be a set of linguistic signs, but rather as an interactive scenario of communicative acts. Following Cenoz and Gorter (2006), we assume that each LL unit can be divided into different subunits, each one comprising a variable number of signs. Whereas the commercial LL often presents complex sets of signs, the informal LL shows isolated signs, such as graffiti on the walls, personal notices, posters, advertisements and announcements attached to lamp posts or other structures. We interpret each LL unit as a whole, in which all signs contribute to create meaning within a complex communicative act, addressed to different recipients. An announcement of a musical event, for instance, can be seen both on non-specific structures and in different shop windows: in the latter case, it acquires an additional

contextual value within the framework of a different set of signs, according to the communicative intentions of the actors involved.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) socially-based theory of visual representation, we assume that the different elements (verbal and iconographic) in each LL unit can have compositional (or textual, in terms of visual layout), representational (or ideational) and interactive (or interpersonal) functions and meanings. From the compositional point of view, the different languages might be more or less *prominent*, depending on their position in the spatial frame, the size and colour of the typographic characters, etc.

The different combinations of images and words draw the attention of passers-by; the choice and distribution of languages is often intended to address different recipients. In the Milanese LL, we can find different examples of "Spanish only" units; but the mixed-language solution is also very common, in different combinations: sometimes the text is presented in two languages; sometimes only certain parts are translated, and in many cases we find different languages for different parts and meanings (see Reh (2004) for a general typology and Calvi (2018) for the case of Spanish in Milan). As we have mentioned, language choices and attitudes in multilingual settings depend on political arrangements, language ideologies and power relations (Barni and Bagna 2016: 55); we thus need to go beyond a simple description of the linguistic relationships between the different signs.

The concept of *translanguaging* helps us to focus on the social and communicative meaning of these choices; according to García and Otheguy (2014), this notion problematises the commonly accepted essentialist conception of boundaries between linguistic codes, presuming that bilinguals have only one complex linguistic repertoire. Some scholars have already applied this concept to the analysis of LL,

stressing the need for a dynamic and holistic approach to an emerging flexible

multilingualism (Gorter and Cenoz 2015; Zhang and Chan 2017).

In our corpus of images, the language boundaries are frequently blurred in

informal messages, whereas in commercial LL units the different languages often

appear separated, in distinct visual units. Even in these cases, we believe that

translanguaging is a useful concept to interpret the creativity by which the actors

negotiate social identities and mitigate potential conflicts between the various

languages. There is a clear intention to maintain a certain correctness in the different

languages, and to select each one of them when addressing specific messages to specific

audiences (typically, the LA community in general, a particular LA community, other

immigrant groups, the host society), following a clear *recipient design*. This concept,

proposed by conversation analysts (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) in order to

define the ability to adapt communicative behaviour to different recipients, refers to

face-to-face interaction (gestures, postures, actions, etc.), but the spatial orientation of

the LL and its "pointing" effect suggest a possible application to the analysis of the

multimodal composition of its units and the continuous negotiation of power relations in

which actors are involved. Commercial interests, of course, play an important role, but

we must also consider the social context in which many shop owners make clear their

belonging to a certain community, or even their politically activist stance.

Consequently, they rely on their entire linguistic repertoire in order to make meaning

and act within the social context.

After sketching the profile of recent LA migration to Italy and in Milan, we will

briefly describe our photographic database and the two neighbourhoods studied. We

will then analyse some LL units with the aim of highlighting the main frames of

meaning that characterise the emerging collective identities.

3. The context and our data

In Italy, after thirty years of massive immigration flows, there are 5 million foreign immigrants, equal to 8.5% of the total population. Spanish-speaking LAs represent about 350,000, equal to 7% of the foreign population[1]. Of these, approximatively 80,000 (equal to 23% of all the LAs in the country) live in the Metropolitan City of Milan and 160,000 (equal to 46% of all the LAs in the country) in Lombardy[2]. This concentration of LAs makes Spanish one of the main languages of immigration in Northern Italy and especially in certain cities, such as Milan and Genoa (in the Liguria region). Consequently, the visibility of the Hispanic LL is stronger in these areas, and testifies to the willingness of LAs to negotiate their collective identity within the public space by means of linguistic practices (Bonomi 2018).

In the Municipality of Milan, foreigners make up almost 20% of the entire population, of whom 17.2% are LAs, equal to 13% of the LAs in the country. LAs number about 45,000, and the two main groups, Peruvians and Ecuadorians, are among the more numerous national groups (see Table 1).

By looking at the situation on the different scales represented in Table 1, we can see some discrepancies resulting from local dynamics. On the scale of Milan as a whole, the higher proportion of foreign residents, including LAs, compared to the rest of the country depends on the intersection between the demand for labour, typical of a global city, and ethnic specialisations. Among these, the propensity to trade has important

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[1] Their presence increased significantly in the first decade of the new millennium, arousing the interest of various scholars (Vietti 2005; Boccagni 2009; Caselli 2009), and has since levelled off.

[2] The data we use refer wherever possible to the year of our research (2017) or to the previous year. They are taken from a variety of sources: two reports on foreign immigration in Lombardy (Cesareo and Blangiardo 2017), and on the establishment and closing down of foreign companies in Milan (Riva and Lucchini 2014), published by the Lombard Regional Observatory on Integration and Multiethnicity ORIM; statistical tables and reports released by the National Institute of Statistics ISTAT (www.istat.it), the Integrated Statistical System of the Municipality of Milan SISI (http://www.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/ist/it/amministrazione/datistatistici/sisi2) and the Study and Research Centre/Statistical Dossier on Immigration IDOS (http://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/index_en.php).

effects on the LL. Commercial activities are widespread among Chinese and North Africans but rather rare among LAs[3], who in Italy tend to work in the sectors of personal care, logistics, cleaning and construction.

Table 1. Main nationalities of foreign residents at different geographical scales (2017).

	Italy		Metropolitan city of Milan		Municipality of Milan	
1	Romania	1,168,552	Egypt	53,039	Philippines	41,557
2	Albania	448,407	Romania	48,806	Egypt	37,013
3	Morocco	420,651	Philippines	48,364	China	28,414
4	China	281,972	China	36,917	Peru	19,024
5	Ukraine	234,354	Peru	31,413	Sri Lanka	16,545
6	Philippines	166,459	Ecuador	25,130	Romania	15,105
7	India	151,430	Albania	22,705	Ecuador	12,941
8	Moldova	135,661	Sri Lanka	20,821	Ukraine	8,490
9	Bangladesh	122,428	Morocco	19,145	Morocco	8,060
10	Egypt	112,765	Ukraine	18,531	Bangladesh	7,927
(14)	Peru	99,110	-	-	Other LAs	14,689
TOT.	Foreign residents	5,047,028		446,923		260,421

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[3] Regional data on immigrants' jobs indicate the following percentages of shopkeepers for the migrant groups most present in Milan: China 26.1%, Egypt 11.4%, Morocco 8.8%, Peru 2.1% and Ecuador 0.6% (Cesareo and Blangiardo 2017: 289)

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However, the LAs in Milan constitute a large and well-integrated community[5], predominantly female, with a relatively high average age (40-44 years) and a longer term migrant presence (10 years)[6]. This explains their representation in the LL of the city, which can be observed in detail at the local scale of the two urban sites studied in the present work: the area of Via Padova (district 2), towards the north-eastern outskirts of Milan, and that of Via Giambellino (district 6), towards the south-western outskirts[7].
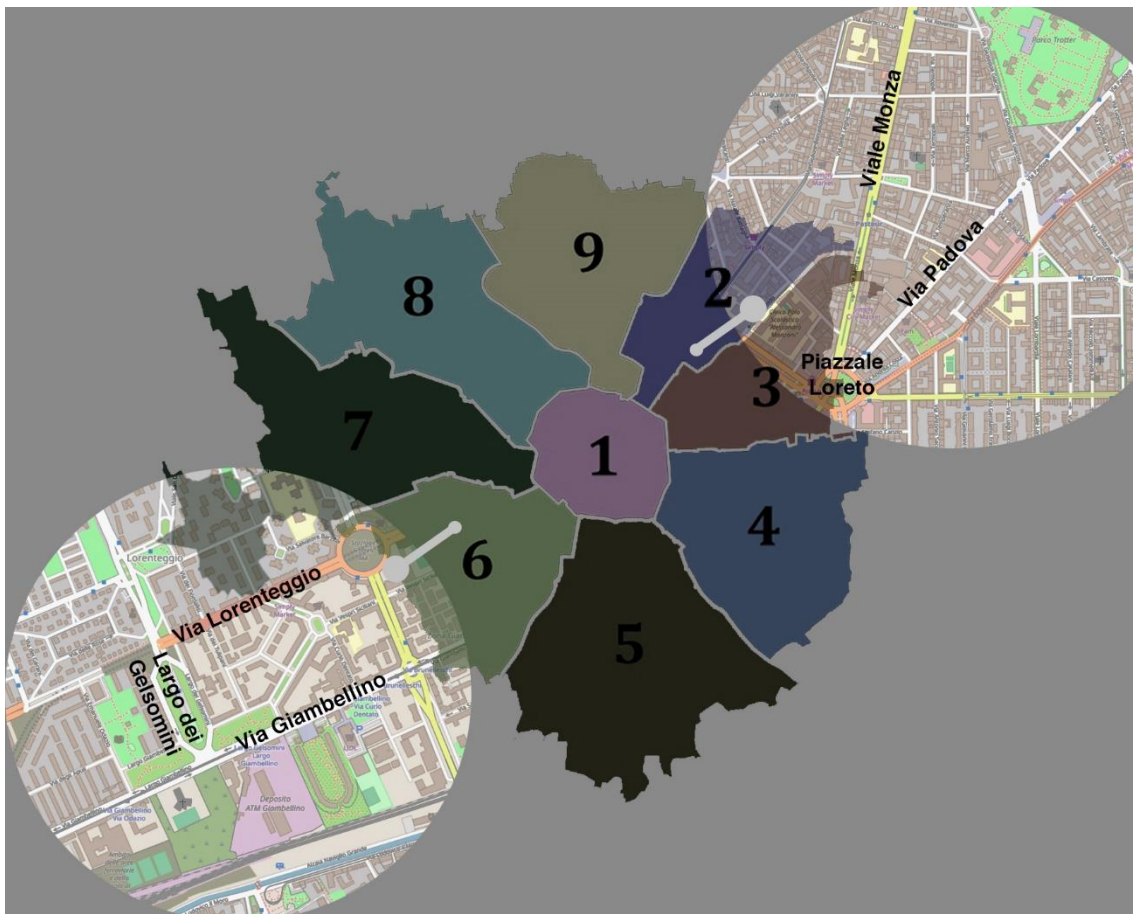

Figure 1. The municipal area of Milan and its 9 districts

In both areas, the number of legally resident immigrants increases towards the periphery and LAs are the third largest group after Asians and North Africans. A

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[5] All integration indices place LAs in second position among immigrant communities in 2016, preceded only by EU citizens from Eastern Europe (Cesareo and Blangiardo 2017: 92).

[6] Our interviews with foreign shopkeepers show a seniority of residence in Italy of more than 10 years at the moment of the start of their entrepreneurial activity.

[7] Milan is administratively divided into 9 Municipalities (districts) and 88 Local Identity Nuclei (neighbourhoods). The areas of Via Padova and Via Giambellino belong respectively to Districts 2 and 6 and to Neighbourhoods 19 and 49 (see Figure 1).

difference between the two areas emerges when comparing the percentages of foreigners in relation to the total population, which, around Via Padova, is the highest in the city (28.8%), while in the district of Via Giambellino it is 15.9%. Also in absolute values, the LAs in the district of Via Padova (7,174) are the most numerous, being almost twice as many as in the district of Via Giambellino (3,997). A second difference, linked to the commercial LL, is the relationship between the three main language groups to which the shopkeepers belong (Chinese, Arabic and Spanish speakers). In the two districts considered, the resident Spanish-speakers are in second place after the Arabic-speaking North Africans. Meanwhile, in the district of Via Padova they are almost as numerous as the North Africans, whereas in the district of Via Giambellino they are one third fewer than the North Africans. Chinese residents, in third position, are very active in trade and most represented in the commercial LL, yet they are less visible. In fact, Chinese shopkeepers compete with Italian shops and devise their communication strategies according to a "mimetic" recipient design that targets an undifferentiated clientele[8]. Finally, the largest geographical-linguistic group is that of the Filipinos, engaged in domestic services. Their entrepreneurial index is close to zero, and in their case, we can speak of a silent LL (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of residents speaking the three main languages in the LL, plus Filipino residents (2017).

Language Area	District 2 (Via Padova)	District 6 (Via Giambellino)
Arabic: North Africans	7,869	5,564
Spanish: Latin Americans (excluding Brazilians)	7,174	3,997
Chinese	4,950	1,263
Filipino (silent LL)	8,795	3,409

[8] In Via Sarpi, where the Chinese constitute the only mono-ethnic enclave in Milan, their shops present linguistic and cultural marks due to the presence of a substantial coethnic market. In general, however, the Chinese tend to start up commercial activities catering for a general public (tailoring, cheap houseware and clothing, electronics, cafés).

At this further reduced spatial scale, the LL research group of the University of Milan has created a photographic database of commercial shop signage and informal productions of immigrants in particular areas of the Milanese LL[9]. The initial nucleus of the database includes more than 1500 photographs collected in 2017 in the area of Via Padova. The LL units (foreign shops) are located by means of markers on a map of the city and linked to the images of the subunits and the signs that compose them[10]. A data sheet, useful for micro-statistical research and qualitative analysis, accompanies each item. In addition to address, date of collection and the general category of the unit (commercial, informal, institutional), the following elements are indicated in the data sheet: 1) the different languages detected; 2) their compositional status, depending on whether they are more or less dominant (by number of words) and/or prominent; 3) the commercial or other category that serves as a context to the individual signs; 4) (for signs only) their textual genre (shop sign, menu, poster, notice, etc.) and 5) any geographical-spatial reference that reinforces the cultural elements scattered in multimodal displays.

The quantitative analysis of the database will be completed and discussed in forthcoming works; however, in Table 3 some partial data about the Via Padova district summarise the main features of the local LL in that area.

Table 3 shows that, in the 277 immigrant shop units, the prevailing foreign languages are Chinese (64 units), Arabic (60 units) and Spanish (37 units), which does not reflect the demographic prominence of the LA community in this area. However,

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[9] The database follows the criteria previously established by a group of scholars and researchers of the University of Foreigners of Siena (Barni and Bagna 2009). We thank Monica Barni and Carla Bagna for sharing them with us in recent meetings.

[10] We also recorded on the map, with markers of a different colour, all the Italian shops in the area (325). These data confirm that in Via Padova foreign shopkeepers constitute a minority, as throughout Milan (SISI). According to data released from Confcommercio (Italian General Confederation of Enterprises), even in an area with a high density of foreigners, such as Via Padova, the proportion of Italian-owned companies is 57%, which rises to 63.9% if we consider the square meters of sales area occupied by commercial and service activities.

the presence of Spanish, although smaller than that of Chinese or Arabic, is evident. The LA entrepreneurs manage to mark the LL of the entire area, which, in fact, both the Milanese and the press call the *Latino* neighbourhood of Milan[11].

Table 3- Immigrants' shops and main languages in the LL in the area of Via Padova.

	Units total number	Chinese wording present	Arabic wording present	Spanish wording present	Italian, and/or other languages
Immigrants shops units	277	64	60	37	116
Foreign language informal units	124	4	7	45	68
Total number in immigrant LL database	401	68	67	82	184

There are also many informal announcements in the district, often written by Spanish-speaking people. Of 124 event flyers or job and housing search ads, 45 are produced by LAs, and only 7 and 4 by Chinese and Arabic speakers respectively. These data point to a *de facto* multilingualism, which reflects the polycentric model of the settlement of foreign communities throughout the city. The initial collaboration, perhaps unconscious, between different language communities that concentrated their commercial activities in the same streets or portions of streets (Riva and Lucchini 2014), has reached, over time, the "critical mass" necessary to spread multilingualism within the prevailingly monolingual LL. Later, however, the various groups started to compete to mark the territory symbolically, and to amplify (or attenuate) their public visibility according to strategies and positionings of which the LL is a faithful indicator (Uberti-Bona 2018). In the case of the Spanish-speakers of Via Padova, the choice of the public space as a channel for in-group and out-group communication, and the constant language and identity displays of the businesses, contributed to the greater visibility of a minority community.

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[11] In Via Padova there was also a discotheque named *Latin Boulevard*, now closed.

The same data collection model was used to study a smaller area in the southwest of Milan. This research is in an initial phase, but we provide some data for comparison with the district of Via Padova. Largo dei Gelsomini is a wide transit street perpendicular to Via Giambellino, where there are two hairdressing salons run by LA women. Out of 21 shops, the majority (12), are Italian while 7 are Chinese and 2 are LA. However, in the public spaces and in the commercial LL of the district, the presence of Arabic-speaking residents (over 5,500 North Africans) is predominant. LAs are still numerous (almost 4,000), and the communication strategies of the Spanish-speaking shopkeepers are similar to those of Via Padova, although they differ in detail. These features offer us "a level of systemic and structural description and interpretation" (Blommaert 2012: 136), which can be specified more precisely, with a further reduction in scale, by analysing some individual items of the LL: firstly, two examples from the Giambellino neighbourhood.

4. Microanalysis and results: Largo Gelsomini

The two hairdressing salons run by LA women in the south-east of the city, are located a short distance from Via Giambellino, historically a destination for Moroccans, who were among the first immigrant groups in Italy. Throughout the area, references to the cultural and religious identity of the Maghreb mark and delimit the public space and the LL, together with the widespread oral use of different spoken varieties of Arabic. It is therefore not surprising that the two hairdressing salons are located at the edge of the cluster of shops run by Arabic-speaking people, while the presence of neighbouring Chinese shops, including a hairdresser's, does not seem to create problems.

Italian is dominant and prominent in the first shop, which is named *Adani* after the Dominican woman who runs it (Figure 2)[12]. The communication strategy is mimetic

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[12] This and all photographic images are made by the authors.

and the shop seems Italian, judging by the services advertised, the sobriety of the colours used and the graphics in the shop window.

Figure 2. Shopfront. *Adani* hairdresser salon.

The shop sign contains only one Spanish word, *Peluquería*, written in a smaller font size to the right of the name. Preceding the name is the same word in Italian, *Parrucchiere*, and just above the awning its feminine form *parrucchiera*. In Italian, *parrucchiere* is a male hairdresser (*peluquero* in Spanish) and, by extension, the shop where the service is provided (*peluquería*). However, the names of Italian hairdressing salons in Milan are often in prestigious languages such as English or French (Hair Stylist or *Coiffeur*), or in the plural form *parrucchieri*, while the instances of *parrucchiere* are few, and *parrucchiera* is very rare.

Obviously, the owner wanted to translate the only Spanish word used in the display into Italian, but this proved difficult since the correct Italian word implies a male hairdresser. Eventually, she chose the Italian masculine form as the correct translation of the Spanish *peluquería*, and the feminine form as an affirmation of her gender identity and to reassure her female clients. The only other detectable mark of identity, with no commercial purpose, is located low down and without prominence in

the shop window. It is a plate with the geographical abbreviation *Rep. Dom.* (not linguistically marked since this is the same in Italian and Spanish) with a tiny profile of the Dominican Republic.

Both the owner and the customers confirm that the clientele is primarily Italian, followed by LAs and some people from other countries. However, all the customers speak Spanish (March 2017), showing that the use of this language is normal and legitimated in this place, even though the marks of identity are few.

The second hairdressing salon is located a few meters away and is run by two women from Ecuador and El Salvador (Figure 3). *Latin Fashion* has a bilingual Italian-English display, where Spanish is absent. However, the adjective *Latin* refers clearly to the linguistic and cultural dimension of *Latinos*, without specifying any nation and thus marking the shop as a social hub for LAs.

Figure 3. Shopfront. *Latin Fashion* hairdresser salon.

The Italian text in the window is targeted towards a universal clientele (men, women, children), emphasising convenience (discounts for pensioners) and specifying the Italian origin of the products used as an index of quality that might reassure Italian customers. The bright "Mexican pink" colour of the shop sign and awning evokes the positive and celebratory aspects associated with the *Latinos* and hints at a possible gender solidarity between owners and female clients[13]. *Latin Fashion* is physically projected into the public space of the street with a second shop sign, perpendicular to the shopfront and visible from a distance, an ashtray and a display rack containing free copies of the Milanese edition of the magazine *Guialatina*, a guide to Latin American businesses and services in Italy. On the page within *Guialatina* advertising the shop (Figure 4), Italian is still dominant, but there is also a short text in Spanish (*Peinados para Novias, Quinceañeras*, 'Hairdressing for Brides, 15th Birthday Parties') with a strong cultural significance. The photographs depict the owners in their shop, relaxed and smiling, to confirm and exhibit the values of sociability mentioned above.

Figure 4. *Latin Fashion* advertisement page in *Guialatina*.

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[13] This particular colour shade, called "Mexican pink", can also be seen in another *Latino* hairdressing salon in Via Padova (Calvi 2018), as well as in the flyer of an LA woman dentist in the same street.

5. Microanalysis and results: Via Padova

Both in Largo Gelsomini and in Via Padova, the communication strategies of LAs play on the creation of different messages for different recipients (mainly Italians and LAs, but also other immigrants). However, in Via Padova the ostentatious linguistic display reflects and promotes the perception of a public space in which the recipients are mostly LAs. Identity branding, almost always present in Spanish-language displays, are discreet and generic in Largo Gelsomini, but in Via Padova they are bolder and often include cultural or linguistic features that can only be understood by people of the same cultural background.

The perception of Via Padova as a Latino neighbourhood is not currently justified by the statistical data. However, until 2013 the LA presence in the area was more numerous than the North African community – albeit only slightly – and largely shaped the public space, just as happened with the historical and current preponderance of North Africans around Via Giambellino, despite the presence of large LA and Asian communities.

Out of the 37 units in our database, 20 show Spanish as a prominent and/or dominant language; in the case of restaurants (11 units), its presence is almost exclusive, due to the strongly symbolic value of food practices and rituals. Figure 5 shows the shopfront of *Criollo* restaurant, in which Spanish dominates and the presence of other languages is limited to a few words in international English ("Latin show restaurant") and Italian (*Cucina sudamericana*, 'South American cuisine'), aiming to attract a mixed clientele.

Figure 5. Shopfront. *Criollo* restaurant.

The generic offer of South American cuisine takes on a more precise target recipient in the design of the main shop window, which boasts Peruvian specialities. The display includes a set of signs, both verbal and iconographic, indexing Peruvian identity, such as the new country brand logo, with its spiral "P". A large centrally located roast chicken and chips, a favourite dish within the community, is accompanied by a bottle of Inca Kola, a national beverage. Other verbal elements emphasise the principal merits of this dish for the community: flavour, low cost and authenticity (*Auténtico sabor peruano*, 'Authentic Peruvian taste'; *más sabroso*, 'tastier'; *más económico*, 'cheaper'), but at the same time it tempts members of the wider community interested in new taste experiences with ethnic cuisine. This is especially apparent in the final statement: *Arte y cultura culinaria del Perú* ('Peru's culinary art and culture'). Thus, the language used embodies a guarantee of authenticity. Within the LL, different

communicative acts take place simultaneously, and the symbolic power of Spanish, as an international culinary language, increases its prestige in the *barrio*.

The name of the *Chorrillano* restaurant (Figure 6) is not immediately explicable to Italians or others who see it, since it refers to a non-touristic, coastal district of Lima, thereby underlining its seafood speciality. Nor can the words on the main sign be interpreted easily, pointing out the symbolic value of a social space: *Disfruta en familia de los mejores momentos en el mejor lugar* ('Enjoy the nicest moments in the nicest place with the family'). In an interview, the owner explained to us that the previous display emphasized the quality of the food (especially the *ceviche*), but now, with the greater familiarity with that dish, he prefers to appeal to a quiet, family clientele.

Figure 6. Shopfronts. *Chorrillano* restaurant.

A complete analysis of this LL unit, considering the management of bilingualism, can be read in Calvi (2018). What we want to add here, from the ideational (or representational) point of view, is the narrative and dynamic qualities of the display, which can also be appreciated diachronically. The main shop window includes publicity for different musical events, indexing another important shared cultural value in the community, i.e. a passion for music; thus, the owner affirms a

collective identity in the public space. At the same time, the sequence of the different announcements creates an effect of discursive polyphony (Ducrot 1986) and represents the evolution of social action.

The following picture (Figure 7) was taken in June 2018, when a special event caught the attention of the community: the participation of the Peruvian national football team in the World Cup. The poster announcing this event occupies the whole of a subunit which usually only displays the restaurant's name. Above the team floats the figure of Daniel Peredo, a football commentator who died a few days before the start of the World Cup, and who "will shout out the goals from heaven" (*gritará los goles desde el cielo*). This iconographic representation, also widespread in social networks, underlines and strengthens the transnational connection between the various Peruvian communities at home and across the world.

Figure 7. Peruvian national football team poster.

The third unit to be analysed consists of two subunits (Figures 8 and 9) and belongs to a travel agency, also offering administrative and fiscal consultancy, whose

owners are Peruvian. In this case, the language choice favours Italian, which is dominant in the subunit on the left, where all the services are listed in Italian.

Figure 8. Shopfront. *Mundo viajes* travel agency (left).

Figure 9. Shopfront. *Mundo viajes* travel agency (right).

The use of Italian is generally correct but reveals the influence of Spanish, for instance, in the case of *carga marittima* (Sp. *carga marítima,* It. *cargo marittimo*,

'shipping cargo'). Yet the services are not aimed at an Italian clientele; neither would the host community be interested in what is known as *invito turistico* ('tourist invitation'). This offers to families living back in the country of origin the opportunity to visit relatives in Italy, something that is becoming a popular choice in cases where the majority of the family resides in Italy and returning "home" would be too expensive. Besides the possibility of addressing other immigrants, it is evident that these kinds of services do not convey identity values. The potential clients addressed are (LA) immigrants who are able to use Italian for administrative and commercial transactions; the main sign in the subunit on the right hand side (*Servizi Globali,* 'global services', etc.) displays the same language choice. However, Spanish is prominent in the shop sign on the left hand side, where the name of the travel agency, *Mundo Viajes*, is displayed. The word *mundo* ('world') is generally associated with travel, but also indexes a space where a particular language can be used[14]. This focus gains prominence in a set of signs located in the shop window and on the main door (Figures 10 and 11), thus polarizing the attention of users when they go inside: together with other details on the different services, a poster can be seen which promotes a trip to Switzerland for a football match involving the Peruvian national team, together with three patriotic banners, which affirm a strong emotional bond with the country of origin (*Súmate a la ola blanquirroja*, 'Join the red and white wave'; *Ti amo, Peru*, 'I love you Peru'; *Vamos Peru*, 'Hooray for Peru').

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[14] The same word is used in the name of other shops, where the oral use of Spanish is normal, such as *Mundo latino* (Calvi 2016).

Figure 10. Peruvian patriotic banners.

Figure 11. Football match trip poster.

Thus, the social actors involved are expected to position themselves between

two languages, and to select one of them according to its transactional and/or symbolic

value. Figure 11 exhibits a "Spanish only" language choice, although some language contact phenomena can be distinguished, e.g. the use of *aseguracion* instead of *seguro* ('insurance'), following the Italian form *assicurazione*.

These traces of language contact and variation in the migratory context are more evident in informal LL units, due to a lower degree of linguistic control and awareness, and testify to the emergence of a flexible multilingualism, in which the boundaries between languages are fuzzy.

Figure 12 shows the stratification of signs in the informal LL, which expands into the interstices of the urban space. Spanish is by far the most represented language in the informal sphere, which includes event flyers, political posters, personal messages, advertisements and other typologies.

Figure 12. Personal Advert.

In this personal message, Spanish and Italian are deeply intertwined: *Se alquila cuarto cerca a MM Pasteur preferiblemente copias ecuatorianas* sounds Spanish and means 'Room for rent near the metro station Pasteur preferably to Ecuadorian couples',

but the influence of Italian can clearly be detected in prepositional use (*cerca a* instead of *cerca de*, It. *vicino a*) and in the word *copias*, an adaptation of It. *coppie*, used instead of *parejas* ('couples'). The new formation sounds odd from a monoglossic perspective (in Spanish, *copias* means 'copies'), but normal to the ears of this translanguaging community (García and Otheguy 2014; Gorter and Cenoz 2015).

6. Concluding remarks

The Hispanic LL in Milan often points to public and social places in which the oral use of Spanish is a widespread norm. The commercial and informal LLs produced by immigrants can be considered a visible interface between the private spaces of immigrant communities and the public space, where social and political dynamics intertwine (Delgado 2011). The qualitative study of LL at the micro level makes it possible to specify the characteristics and the "history" of contact in relation to local conditions. This analysis highlights the micro-spatial specificities between which urban superdiversity is articulated and at the same time guides the investigation into the causes and dynamics (including diachronic) of these specificities.

The two Spanish-speaking shops analysed in Largo Gelsomini display some features in common with the Spanish-speaking LL of Via Padova, though the two areas do not entirely coincide, particularly due to the limited presence of terms in Spanish in Largo Gelsomini. These two shops are located on the margins of the contiguous area strongly marked by the North African presence, and instead develop private or virtual spaces. Nevertheless, at least in the case of *Latin Fashion*, they compete for visibility and attempt, symbolically, to "occupy" increasingly large portions of space. Via Padova, on the other hand, is a space that, whilst shared with other groups, has been symbolically marked by the LA community, who have stamped it more firmly with their own identity.

The commercial LL is most often orientated towards inclusivity, but it is precisely through the variation from place to place – in communication strategies, identity and cultural markings, values and projections implied by multimodal displays produced by migrants –, that it is possible to grasp the tensions, the sensitive points, the potential lines of rupture of a precarious social order. In this framework, language choices take on symbolic values and promote a constantly dynamic language use, but they also tend to mitigate potential conflicts among groups, thanks to a flexible multilingualism.

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