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AUTHOR: Clivio, Gianrenzo P.; Danesi, Marcel and Maida-Nicol, Sara

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Chiara Meluzzi, University of Pavia-Free University of Bozen, Italy

SUMMARY

This book presents an introduction to Italian language and dialectology for non-Italian students. For this reason, each Italian example is followed by an English translation, and also by phonetic or phonological transcription, and by glosses. The book has a preface and five chapters. In the preface, Danesi and Maida-Nicol dedicate the book to Clivio, who passed away in 2006.

Chapter 1 is a general introduction to dialectology and Italian and its dialects. In the first part, dialectology is defined as "the study of dialects" (p. 11), themselves 'variants' of language since "there is a standard or model form of a language from which the dialect diverge" (p. 12). The authors present two main techniques of traditional dialectological analysis: the comparison of forms and structures between variants, and possible explanations of these differences. They also treat a major dialectological tool, dialect atlases, and method, the historical-comparative approach. The second part is a short history of Italian, from its origin in Vulgar Latin, to literary (Tuscan) Standard Italian (SI), and Italian dialectology. At the end of this chapter, the authors introduce the notion of 'diasystem', i.e. "systems (phonological, morphological, etc.) that reflect variation concretely" (p. 50, see Weinreich 1953).

Chapter 2 deals with the phonetic and phonological description of Italian and its dialects. After a short guide to key notions of phonetic and phonological analysis, the authors analyse the vowel and consonant systems of Italian and its dialects. The chapter is filled with examples, including phonetic transcription and English translation. The authors present the diachronic evolution from Latin to distinctly Italian features. For example, consonant gemination is described as "a distinguishing feature of Italian phonology generally, with respect to other Romance languages" (p. 89). Double consonants have phonemic status in SI, with minimal pairs like 'rossa' ("red") with /ss/ vs. 'rosa' ("pink") with /s/. The chapter concludes with a short introduction to suprasegmental phenomena, such as syllabic structure of SI and some striking prosodic features of Italian dialects.

Chapter 3 deals with other grammatical diasystems of Italian and its dialects, in particular morphology and lexicon. The morphological analysis focuses on

parts of speech (POS), both in diachrony (i.e. from Latin to SI) and in synchrony (i.e. between SI and the dialects). An example of diachronic evolution is the creation of definite articles in SI. An example of synchronic variation among dialects is the first person plural ending of present indicative verbs: SI '-iamo' (as in 'cantiamo' "we sing") becomes '-uma' ('cantuma') in Piedmontese and Lombardian, and '-emo' ('cantemo') in Venetian. The lexical analysis shows how many Italian words come from various diasystems: even if Italian lexemes come especially from Latin, there are ancient loanwords from Arabic (e.g. 'albicocca' "apricot"), French (e.g. 'mangiare' "to eat"), German (e.g. 'guerra' "war"), and recent ones from English (e.g. 'computer' or 'email'). Finally, many words entered SI from the Italian dialects, for example, Sicilian 'intrallazzo' ("illicit affair") or Roman 'caciara' ("confusion").

Chapter 4 deals with two main themes of dialectology, diglossia and language or dialect contact. For diglossia the authors deal with differences between SI and its dialects at all levels of analysis, from phonology to vocabulary (see Ferguson 1959). The authors cover some Italian immigrant communities in contact with other languages, especially in North America. The lexicons of these communities show many words borrowed from the languages of the host societies, and they show how these loanwords are adapted to the phonological and morphological system of Italian. An example of this adaptation is the form 'pusciare' from the English "to push", while in SI the normal form is 'spingere'. The chapter ends by introducing the notion of language as "identity code", an important feature of Italian spoken outside of Italy, but also of dialects still used in Italy in conversation or in computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Chapter 5 deals with the influence of CMC on language, and recent research on this topic. The authors also provide a short list of common Italian cyberforms, as 'c6?' for 'ci sei?' ("Are you there?") or 'xò' for 'però' ("but / however"). They also note that "dialect speech in Italy is undergoing a resurgence through the digital media" (p. 195). This could provide an opportunity for future research, since "dialects are taking on more and more symbolic value as identity-preserving codes" (p. 198).

EVALUATION

The authors present the book as an introduction for non-specialists and non-Italian scholars. For this reason, some topics are not explored in detail and some problems are simplified. Moreover, maps showing the distribution of the main linguistic phenomena in the Italian peninsula are very helpful, especially for non-Italians. Unfortunately, except for chapter 3, the book lacks a section on 'further readings' for those wanting to further investigate on specific topics.

Chapter 1 a very good, though brief, history of Italian with examples of early Italian texts, like the famous 'Indovinello Veronese' ("The Veronese Riddle"), accompanied by a good linguistic analysis showing major changes from Latin to

Italian. The explanation of relationships between SI and its dialects is very clear and helpful for non-Italian students, who will be able to easily grasp differences among Italian varieties in the peninsula.

Chapter 2, an introduction to Italian phonology, is unfortunately very problematic and filled with phonetic and phonological inaccuracies. At the phonetic level, in the analysis of SI consonants (p. 84), the authors do not include the labiodental nasal [m], though a dental nasal has a labiodental articulation before the labiodental fricatives [f] or [v], as in 'anfora' ['amfora] ("amphora") or 'invano' [im'va:no] ("in vain"). Moreover, the decision to use non-IPA symbols in their transcriptions is awkward. And the authors use the same non-IPA symbol for different values: the symbol /ʎ/ (IPA /ʎ/?) on p. 63 is used to indicate the palatal articulation of /l/ before a palatal consonant as in 'falce' ("sickle"), while on p. 68 the same symbol is used for the palatal consonant itself, transcribed in Italian orthography as <gl-> as in 'figlio' ("son"). This introduces another problematic point: the palatal articulation of /l/ and /n/ before a palatal consonant. The authors assume that both the dental lateral [l] and the dental nasal [n] are palatalized before a palatal consonant. That is correct, but it is inaccurate to transcribe this palatalized articulation with the same symbol as the proper palatal consonants /ʎ/ and /ɲ/, that represent different sounds with a dorsopalatal articulation. As with 'falce' ("sickle"), a palatalized /l/ with an alveo-palatal articulation is quite different from the dorso-palatal /ʎ/ in 'figlio' ("son"), with a proper palatal lateral /ʎ/. The same can be said for the nasal, which presents a palatalized [n] in the word 'oncia' ("ounce"), but a different sound in 'gnomo', transcribable as [ɲo:mo]. In IPA, the palatalized consonants are usually transcribed with a small raised /j/ after the consonant (also Laver 1994: 323). Some Italian scholars prefer special symbols for the palatal articulation of /l/ and /n/ with the same value as IPA diacritics (see Canepari 2006: 81). In any case, it is problematic to use the same symbol for two phonetic values: this is a lack of precision which creates confusion for readers.

Moreover, the authors transcribe stress on the corresponding vowel instead of marking the stressed syllable as usually done; the word 'becco' ("beak") is transcribed as [bé-kko] (p. 64), not ['bek.ko]. Note as well that the authors consider the geminate consonants uniquely part of the second syllable (p. 107), while most phonological theories split consonants over the two syllables, with the first consonant closing the first syllable and the second consonant opening the following syllable as for the second transcription of the word "becco" above (also Nespor 1993). The analysis of "gemination" in Italian is controversial. Without pursuing the issue, I note simply that if the authors are following another approach to syllabification, it would be important to offer a short explanation of this choice, with references to the usual view. Finally, in the analysis of prosodic variation among Italian dialects, the authors conclude that "in this area of phonology there is a very little variation across diasystems" (p. 110). However, prosody is a major difference between northern and southern

Italian varieties and not only "a matter of degree", as the authors state, but a distinguishing feature among the varieties (e.g., Sorianello 2006).

Chapter 3 is clear and the material well-explained: the main morphological features of Italian are presented with tables and maps that clarify the theoretical discussion. Concerning syntactic variation, the authors also provide some references for further readings. It would have been useful to do the same for other levels of analysis and in particular for morphology, a rich topic in Italian dialectology (for a short introduction, see Grassi et al. 2005). The lexical analysis amply illustrates differences between northern, central and southern diasystems: for example, the verb "to kill" (SI 'uccidere/ammazzare') corresponds to 'matar' in Venetian, 'ammazzare' in Tuscan, 'accidere/scannari' in Sicilian (p. 145).

Chapter 4 clearly introduces major problems of contact linguistics. Particularly notable is the value given to the relationship between language and identity, especially among immigrants. The assumption that, in these contexts, dialects become part of an 'identity code' is supported by a wide range of examples. Unfortunately, the original copy I received contains a major production problem; pp. 169-172 were omitted, and pp. 69-72 were printed in their place. A second copy from the publisher did not include this problem.

Chapter 5 presents some recent work on CMC in Italian, opening the way to future research on this topic. The authors' assumption that "in the contemporary world, writing has taken on a Janus-faced nature" (p. 185) is fascinating. They also argue that it would represent the evolution of Italian language and its dialects today.

In conclusion, this book represents an introduction to Italian dialectology, as intended by the authors. Young scholars and non-specialists, especially non-Italians, can find a useful guide to Italian diachronic and synchronic variation. The examples are clear and well-laid-out, with useful glosses and translations to help students without knowledge of Italian. However, the problems highlighted in chapter 2 represent a weakness of the text, which would benefit from revision.

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ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Chiara Meluzzi is a doctoral student at the University of Pavia and the Free University of Bozen (Italy). After a Master's thesis on female language in Ancient Greek comedy at the University of Eastern Piedmont (Vercelli), for her PhD dissertation she is now working on the sociolinguistics of the Italian variety spoken in Bozen (South Tyrol). Her primary research interests include sociolinguistics, pragmatics, dialectology, language contact and historical linguistics.