

Italian Communities Abroad

Italian Communities Abroad:

Multilingualism and Migration

Edited by

Margherita Di Salvo and Paola Moreno

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We dedicate this book to the memory of Alberto Varvaro.

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INTRODUCTION

FOR THE STATE OF THE ART ON LINGUISTIC
STUDIES OF ITALIAN COMMUNITIES
WORLDWIDE

MARGHERITA DI SALVO
UNIVERSITY FEDERICO II (NAPLES), ITALY
PAOLA MORENO
UNIVERSITY OF LIÈGE, BELGIUM

1. Research from the past¹

The interest in (socio)linguistic studies on Italian emigration dates back to prescientific studies carried out by Nardo Cibebe (1900), Livingston (1918), Vaughan (1926) and Menarini (1947), who were interested in forms of language contact in countries of immigration.² The suggestions made in their works became the subject of systematic research in the mid-20th century, thanks to the progress in theoretical and methodological sociolinguistic paradigms: from studies carried out in contact linguistics, particularly Weinreich's theoretical classification (1953) and its subsequent applications on other groups of migrants (respectively Haugen 1953, Clyne 1967),³ to macro-sociolinguistics,⁴ from interactional

¹ Though the study was jointly conceived by the two authors, the sections were written as follows: Di Salvo is the author of sections 1, 2, and 3, Moreno is the author of section 4.

² For a review of this topic see Favero and Tassello (1978), Vignuzzi (1983), Bettoni (1993), Lorenzetti (1994), Bertini Malgarini (1994).

³ To this theoretical perspective belong the works of Correa Zoli (1973) in California; Bettoni (1981), in Australia; Kinder, 1985, in New Zealand; Rovere (1974, 1977), in German-speaking Switzerland; Franceschi (1970) in Costa Rica;

sociolinguistics⁵ to the analysis of the forms of linguistic expressions of identity. Scholars sharing an interest in Italian spoken outside Italy have long researched topics such as language interference (Timiras 1955, Franceschi 1970, Ursini 1988, Meo Zilio 1995),⁶ *language attrition*⁷ (Gonzo and Saltarelli 1983, Bettoni 1991, Berruto et alii 1990, Berruto 1991, Kinder 1994, Sorace 2004, Raso 2004, Scaglione 2000, Celata and Cancila 2008), *language maintenance* and *shift* (Bettoni and Rubino 1996, Di Salvo 2012, Moreno and Di Salvo 2012), forms of language contact (Auer 1984; Auer and di Luzio, 1984; di Luzio, 1991, Panese 1992, Bierbach and Birken Silverman 2002), and linguistic behaviour and variety prestige within a linguistic repertoire (Bourhis and Sachdev 1984, Gibbons and Ashcroft 1995, Smolicz et alii 2001).

Renewed interest was also brought about by the movement from an existentialist view of identity towards a constructivist perspective (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998), which is at the base of a relevant number of works all of which highlight how code-switching is used by speakers to express their own identity (De Fina 2007a, Giampapa 2001, 2007, Fellin 2007, Ciliberti 2007, Pasquandrea 2008, Rubino 2014b, 2015).

These studies, although carried out from different points of view, contributed to a general overview of the many Italian communities abroad. However, the data provided by Vedovelli and Villarini (1998) show how some areas of immigration had been investigated more than others: 41% of the studies they quoted feature Italian emigration to other European countries, 28% to North America, with only 10% to Central and South America. A similar distribution was observed almost ten years later by Bettoni and Rubino (2010) who linked it to the coexistence of demographic, socio-economic and political factors such as the number of people in the Italian communities, the economic resources and the political awareness in the countries of immigration of the need to invest in research studies on migration. We also believe that the presence in some centres of researchers interested in Italian emigration should not be underestimated.

Villata (1980, 1981) on Francophone Canada; Vizmuller-Zocco (1995) for Canada; Haller (2001) for the USA; Di Salvo (2011) on the contact with British English.

⁴ See Bettoni and Rubino (1991), Clyne (1967), Di Salvo (2011), Moreno and Di Salvo (2015). See also the chapter by Di Salvo and Turchetta in Turchetta and Vedovelli (in prep.).

⁵ De Fina (2007a, 2007b, 2015), Ciliberti (2007), Pasquandrea (2008), Rubino (2014a, 2014b, 2015), Birken-Silverman (2001, 2004).

⁶ See also Franceschini and Schimdt 1984, Prifti (2014), Schmidt (1990), Melchior and Krefeld (2008), Marzo (2004a, 2004b, 2005).

⁷ Wodak-Leodolter (1977) and Dorian (1981).

It is no coincidence, for example, that the boost in studies into Italian as a language of emigration in Switzerland can be traced back to Gaetano Berruto's stay in Zurich.

2. New migrants, new perspectives

In recent years the overview of Italian emigration has changed considerably. The changes it underwent together with the implementation of new interpretative paradigms contributed to redefine the subject of research and the perspectives by which it can be analysed so that recently new interests in the field of research have coupled with more traditional topics and methodological approaches.

Only in recent years, despite its consistency, has the phenomenon of new-migrations become a subject of study amongst linguists. I am referring in particular to the recent work by Vedovelli (2015) who, starting from the changed sociolinguistic characteristics of the new migrants (a higher level of education, an ability to read and write in Italian and competence in another language such as English), identified some elements which should be researched further:

- The impact of new linguistic environments on the new migrants, with particular reference to the stages and timing of L2 acquisition, in order to see whether the settlement trajectories and linguistic integration of migrants belonging to different migration waves coincide or not. In this perspective it is possible to assess the impact of some variables such as the role of a higher level of education in the new migrants, a more articulated linguistic repertoire at the time of departure, a previous knowledge of a foreign language such as English, the influence of various teaching methodologies, the possibility of accessing L2 teaching resources online, and lastly, the implementation of specific language policies aimed at migrant workers, especially in some North European countries;
- The relationship between migrants from different periods in the country of immigration, which appears to be highly complex and certainly problematic. On this point, Antonia Rubino (2014) recently showed that the new migrants do not relate to the migrants who preceded them and claim an impassable distance from them, which is exemplified in different linguistic behaviours. The new migrants in fact believe they can use both English and Italian without having to resort to mixed forms, which instead are

attributed, almost as a stigma, to migrants from earlier migration waves;

- The influence (in the historical communities) of the Italian spoken by the new migrants on the re-definition of the migrants' linguistic repertoires. Previous studies (Baldelli 1987, De Mauro et alii 2002, Giovanardi and Trifone 2012, Turchetta and Vedovelli in prep.) seem to indicate that current Italian could in fact increase the communicative functions within the community and concurrently favour the spreading of Italian amongst people who are not Italian;
- The linguistic situation of the children of new migrants, a topic which goes under the wider perspective of the maintenance of Italian;
- The aspects related to the readjustment, on a linguistic level too, of the new migrants returning to Italy. These can be viewed as carriers of (language) competences to the return areas.

It would appear that linguistic research needs to take into account the dynamics enabled by the new migration flows.

In particular, attention should be paid to intra-family dynamics which in new migrations are displaying new traits since contrary to historic migration, contemporary migration involves new protagonists (Colucci, in this volume). As shown by the *Rapporto Migrantes 2016*, Italian flows involve a growing number of people of different ages, with differing social and family roles, from children to pensioners all of whom are part of a trend of expatriation which is constantly growing:

Table 1 “Emigration Trend of Pensioners by Destination Area”

Continental Area	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Variation 2011-2015
Europe	1922	2189	2390	4059	3050	58,7
Africa	137	138	183	290	251	83,2
Asia	71	107	137	147	113	59,2
Oceania	55	58	57	223	377	585,5
North America	233	293	370	587	717	207,7
Central America	48	52	61	80	76	58,3
South America	185	222	259	263	321	73,5
Total	2651	3059	3457	5649	4905	85

Source: *Rapporto Italiani nel mondo 2016*

Table 2 “Presence of Minors and Elderly People by Area of Origin and Area of Destination”

Minors and Elderly People	First 5 Countries	First 5 Regions
Minors	Germany, Switzerland, Argentina, France, Brazil	Sicily, Lombardy, Lazio, Campania, Veneto
0-9 years old	Germany, Switzerland, Argentina, France, United Kingdom	Sicily, Lombardy, Lazio, Campania, Veneto
Elderly People	Argentina, Switzerland, France, Germany, Brazil	Sicily, Campania, Calabria, Veneto, Lazio
85+ years old	Argentina, France, Brazil, United States, Canada	Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Veneto, Lazio

Source: Rapporto Italiani nel mondo 2016

The growing presence of children and pensioners of Italian origin in the older established communities led to a redefinition of the linguistic repertoires present in the historic communities. Due to the presence of a growing number of Italian minors resident abroad, either migrants or born to families with a strong motivation to maintain the Italian language, it is ever more urgent to design and plan *ad hoc* initiatives so as not to repeat the mistake made in the past: that of losing a precious pool of users and Italophones.

The different competences of Italian migrants belonging to various migration waves are also at the base of the tripartite model devised by Barbara Turchetta (2005) who reported a greater competence in Italian and in L2 in more recent migration waves, showing how the intergenerational transmission of Romance varieties becomes diversified according to the migration wave and the level of education of the migrants. The greater Italophony of more recent migration waves has become a subject of study consolidated and also renewed by the interpretative model proposed by Vedovelli (2011). Starting from *Storia linguistica dell'Italia Unita* by Tullio De Mauro (1963), Vedovelli proposed to rethink the linguistic history of Italian emigration in terms of *parallelism*, *discontinuity* and *language shift*, concepts which allow us to interpret language processes occurring abroad in relation to processes simultaneously occurring within

the Italian national borders, from the creation abroad of shared linguistic models (parallelism), to the diffusion of Italian forms coexisting in the migrant communities, to residual dialect (discontinuity), all the way to the disappearance of Italian (and of Italo-Romance dialects) from the linguistic repertoires of the descendants of Italian migrants. For them, in fact, Italian is well and truly a foreign language, often pursued (even on a symbolic and identity level) but no longer part of their active competence.

Italian has become a foreign language both for Italian descendants and for the numerous learners who, for reasons connected to the positive image of the *Italy* and the *Made in Italy* brand, decided to study Italian, as recent studies have shown. These studies investigated, on the basis of previous works (De Mauro et alii 2002, Giovanardi and Trifone 2012), the presence of Italian in Ontario both inside and outside the ethnic community, breaking away from earlier studies which had looked at language transmission within the family and the community network (Turchetta and Vedovelli, in prep.). Within this research project entitled “Lo spazio linguistico globale dell’italiano in Ontario” the two threads of research share the concept of linguistic space, introduced by De Mauro (1980), continued by Banfi (2008) and recently discussed by Vedovelli, who suggests talking about a *global linguistic space* stressing how this must be able “to recompose past events (starting from the Unification of Italy) with recent ones concerning Italian migration” and “to interpret appropriately what is happening in terms of migration movements and population shifts in the current global world” (Vedovelli 2013, 308).

The reference to a global dimension is also central to the transnationalist paradigm which prevails in various fields of study concerned with contemporary migrations: from sociology to anthropology, from history to demography.⁸ In the literature of sociolinguistic nature we can find references to this matter in the studies carried out by Sornicola on the seafarers of Procida where, through the accurate analysis of their life stories, it emerges how much the attachment to one’s native land can influence one’s linguistic behaviour. As Sornicola states (2013, 186-7):

People who grow up in transnational families know in various ways more than one language and culture and develop a sense of belonging to more than one society which in turn favours the emergence of multiple or stratified identities, in a different way from past emigration experiences. [...] With new migrations the relationship with the hosting country is also different since now it is possible to take part in the economic, social and

⁸ For an overview see Vertovec and Cohen (1999), Szanton Blanc (1992), Miranda (1997), Baldassar (2009), Corti (2009).

cultural dynamics with more ease, exploiting at best all opportunities without the strong pressure exercised by integration, which in the past complicated migration experiences.⁹

Moreover, as recent studies of second generation Italo-Australian migrants have shown (Baldassar 2009),¹⁰ transnational movements are reflected in the re-definition of the migration experience itself which rather than being perceived as a completed process, with a final settlement, presupposes continuous movement, albeit limited to a symbolic and cultural level.¹¹

3. Old topics, new perspectives

Recent works have also resumed topics widely debated in previous literature, reviewing them from partially new perspectives which can be traced back to the new theoretical models but also to the changes in the Italian communities abroad. An example is the case of the relationship between Italian and an Italian dialect in the context of extraterritoriality about which, as late as 2010, Bettoni and Rubino (2010, 469) maintained there were “more opinions than certainties”.

Empirical studies on different contexts (Moreno and Di Salvo 2012, Rubino 2014a) confirmed the role of the migration wave in the growing Italianization of the Italian varieties migrated abroad, suggesting that migrants (and more so new migrants) have a more diversified repertoire than that of those who preceded them and whose language competence when they left was virtually exclusively in the local dialect.

On this point, Marzo (2015) and Gorla (2015) in their recent works carried out from different perspectives, attempted to contribute to the redefinition of the linguistic repertoire of the Italian abroad, partially taking into account what happened in Italy at the same time. The comparison between varieties spoken in the context of immigration and varieties spoken in Italy is at the base of the Heritage Language Variation and Change (HLVC) project,¹² coordinated by Naomi Nagy (University of

⁹ Our translation.

¹⁰ Cf. Baldassar (2009, 472). Along this line is also the research by Adele Miranda (1997).

¹¹ These aspects are also the base of some of the recent studies on return migration which suggested that the migration experience conditioned the language habits of returning migrants not so much according to the characteristics intrinsic to the varieties of their repertoire, but rather to the position each variety held in the family interactions (Tempesta 1978, Di Salvo 2014).

¹² See Nagy (2015, 2016), Nagy et alii (2014).

Toronto) whose aim is to study language variation and change in nine language varieties present in Toronto as immigrated languages, comparing them with the corresponding varieties spoken in the areas of origin of the migrants. This is also one of the objectives of the project “Translt-UK. Transnational Migrations: the Case of the Italians in the UK” coordinated by Margherita Di Salvo (Federico II University of Naples). The project, resuming the theoretical and methodological approach of past research work (Di Salvo, Moreno, Sornicola 2014; Moreno, in this volume) aims at analysing the Italian varieties present in England from both an internal and a sociolinguistic perspective by comparing the varieties used by migrants who returned to Italy and those which are spoken by Italians who instead never left in order to contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms of language variation and code switching.

4. The present volume

The present volume hopes to be included in the recent wave of paradigm renewal in the field of migration (socio)linguistics of Italian; a wide scientific community, ever more bold and motivated, takes part in this renewal process and the experts hereby gathered are some of its most active and rigorous exponents.

For a few years now our consideration has been based on the assumption that new methodological approaches must be founded firstly on an accurate historical evaluation of Italian migration in general and on the specific contexts in which it took, and is still taking, place, giving unique importance to the comparative analysis of various migratory situations, usually analysed only in specific contexts, which have rarely been compared with one another. For this reason we placed at the beginning of the volume two important chapters with a strong historical and historicizing slant. The chapter by Michele Colucci provides a very accurate overview, presented by decades, of Italian migration from the Second World War to this day, emphasising with plenty of data the changes that Italian migrants experienced over time and particularly the different macro-sociological, environmental and structural factors which conditioned this evolution. We then felt it important to include the chapter by Vincenzo Orioles, which takes stock of the contribution to new sociolinguistics—and particularly to migration sociolinguistics—provided by a great Italian linguist, the late Tullio De Mauro (see Orioles, in this volume). Both chapters help to place the arguments made collectively by all the contributors to this volume in a perspective which inevitably

connects linguistic analysis to historical evaluation, linking it also to the history of this field of study.

The second section of the volume compares different geographical areas such as major Australian cities (Rubino), Anglophone Canada (Di Salvo), Croatia (Šimičić) and Francophone Belgium (Aresti). It has not been possible in this volume to entirely cover all the various Italian settlement areas. The comparison between the relatively few cases included here shows how much scientific needs and recent acquisitions converge regardless of the area under consideration, the languages spoken and the policies adopted by the host countries. We regard as an important result of our collaborative research, the fact that Rubino and Di Salvo agree on the effort to identify within the traditional category of “migration generation” distinctions which require suitable linguistic survey tools. Rubino observes how necessary it is to take into consideration the remarkable differences between the “older second generation” (the children of Italian emigrants who were born in Australia between the 1960s and the 1980s) and the “younger second generation” (the children of more recent Italian emigrants), differences which originate from the changed linguistic context of the motherland and produce considerable differences both in the speakers’ language practice and in their representation of their own language abilities. Di Salvo follows this same direction, observing how different are the characteristics of the first generation of migrants who settled in Toronto after the Second World War in comparison with those of the new migrants, by and large the result of the so-called brain-drain phenomenon which occurred in the last decade. The chapter by Aresti, although focussing on an individual case, ends with the same consideration: the need for a renewal of the theoretical sociolinguistic framework which should by now take into account additional variables other than the traditional variables of genre, migration wave, and age. Through the concept of “minority within a minority”, well suited to the Italian communities of older settlement in some rural areas of Croatia, Šimičić reiterates the need for adapting the theoretical framework to specific contexts trying not to apply, undiscerningly and without historical-geographical contextualization, generic categories purportedly valid for any time, any place, and any type of migrant community.

The third section of the volume has two chapters which attempt to link linguistic considerations to other fields, examining on a theoretical level the empirical observations discussed in the previous section, which, as already mentioned, are not devoid of theoretical implications. Bagna studies the impact that the evaluations related to the existence of a global market should have on language policies and on the studies on Italophony.

The representation of the “Italianness” and the Italophony, which spread at global level thanks to trade names and brands, is a field of study which involves not only linguists but potentially also economists, providers of cultural policies, sociologists, etc. Moreno too insists on the importance of a dialogue between fields of study and takes the concept of a “migratory career”, originally developed in sociology, as a cue for a renewed theoretical look at migration sociolinguistics.

In taking leave of this volume, many doubts and concerns overcame those who set the framework and tried to carry out the project to the best of their abilities. We ask the reader for leniency with the inevitably incomplete nature of our analysis and in exchange we offer our commitment to address in future investigations the issues not yet dealt with, and least of all resolved, raised by research still in progress.

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SECTION ONE:

HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

ITALIAN EMIGRATION, FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR TO TODAY: DEPARTURE, RETURN, FLOWS

MICHELE COLUCCI

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (CNR), INSTITUTE OF STUDIES
ON MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETIES, ITALY

1. The reconstruction

The history of Italian emigration since the Second World War has been mentioned many times, but has never been systemized in a uniform framework, probably caused by the diversity of the flows which characterize this phase. Emigration, internal migration, return migration, new immigrants from overseas, gather in fact and follow each other, forming a mobility and a structural body which are not easy to reconstruct.

Focusing on departures overseas, we can readily say that the mass emigration resumed after 1945 determined a massive displacement of the population, which was directed towards destinations already followed in previous decades but also to new destinations.

Already, beginning from 1945, we know that people who passed the border in search of work were numerous. These first flows made their way to the neighbouring countries, in particular France and Switzerland: within a few weeks the mechanisms had been put into action, legal or illegal, tried and tested for decades, which had guaranteed the exchange of labour. To organize and facilitate a regular flow, by the end of 1945, the Italian Government undertook negotiations with France and Belgium and tried to sign bilateral agreements on labour recruitment (Ballini 2009). Furthermore, in 1945 a debate had begun in the country about the needs and limitations for the recommencement of the involvement of political, intellectual,

business and union forces (Colucci 2008, Rinauro 2009, De Clementi 2010).

The available data show that western European countries were the preferred destinations for Italian emigration which flowed over three years, namely from 1946 to 1948. During the period 1949-1950 departures for Europe on the other hand dropped in favour of those for transoceanic destinations. These then accounted for 72.7% and 82.6% of total expatriates, respectively. Departures to European destinations regained importance in the five years from 1951 to 1955, when around half of the total amount wavered with the sole exception of 1954, and increased significantly in the next year, remaining above 60%.

In 1956 the emigration agreement that Italy and West Germany had signed began to operate on 20 December 1955. The beginning of a new cycle of emigration towards West Germany caused the overall redefinition of Italian emigration geography in Europe: Germany would quickly become the country which topped the statistics on emigration, together with Switzerland (Barcella 2012, Castro 2008). In addition, the regulation of migration was tied to the formation of a united Europe. In 1957 Rome signed a treaty which instituted the European Common Market (Del Gaudio 1978). The signing of the Treaty had very important consequences on the legal and legislative level: it changed the status of migrant workers in some countries and initiated a new phase—albeit with many contradictions—the Community management of the labour movement: Italian workers had become EU citizens, at least in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg (Romero 1991).

More generally, the two-year period 1956-1957 marked, in all countries involved in the Italian immigration to Italy itself, the overcoming of the phase of reconstruction, with very significant consequences on their labour markets, and the evolution of migration. As noted by Federico Romero, the transition from the emigration of unskilled workers to that of semi-skilled workers represented one of the most immediate consequences of exceeding the post-war reconstruction (Romero 2004).

Emigration after the war depended on many social and economic variables, as well as the difficulties of integration in the countries to which they emigrated. Those leaving often only hoped to scrape together small amounts useful for planning their future and that of their own family. Those countries who received the immigrants, did not want them to remain for too long: the countries that welcomed manpower did so under strict conditions and by linking the immigrant presence to contracts of employment.