

CoMe

*Studi di Comunicazione e Mediazione
linguistica e culturale*

Anno I / 2016



N. ISSN 2531-9809

In collaborazione con
la Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici di Pisa



SCUOLA SUPERIORE PER
MEDIATORI LINGUISTICI

Istituto riconosciuto con decreto Ministeriale 31.07.2003
Diploma equipollente al Diploma di Laurea in Scienze della Mediazione Linguistica

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Dissertation type: BA

Title: *“Linguistic Archaeology and Architecture of Contemporary Italian - ‘Language Contact’ in Pre-Roman and Post-Global Ages”*

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Languages: Italian and French

The strong need of communication belongs to each human being, both from ancient and current times. Considering that lots of languages coexist in a big natural space – the world –, infinite signs and ties create a complex ‘linguistic ecosystem’ allowing communication among people. This is characterised by a high degree of elaboration. In this context, sign complexity¹ shows how cultural and linguistic contacts seem to be unavoidable. They appear to be based on a profound willingness of one code to receive external material into its system and, at the same time, to discover its identity and richness. A linguistic loan is a suitable example of this process. As such, languages are similar to living organisms, which are supposed to change as a natural implication. That is why, dealing with languages, we cannot avoid mutation and evolution. In fact, thanks to ‘contact linguistics’ we know that a language cannot be isolated, entirely preserved, or closed by its geographical borders, since it is not diachronically limited.

The aim of this research is to demonstrate that all language contact phenomena are governed by the same set of underlying rules and in particular there are no extreme differences between ancient and contemporary phenomena. And though language has natural features, it is completely abstract and cannot be preserved. Linguists can only investigate how changes happen or what are the fields or the reasons which lead to a linguistic mutation.

The case study aims to understand the connection between ancient and contemporary spoken languages, pointing out how interferences among linguistic systems are a natural and universal condition, without space and time boundaries. The ultimate goal of this project is to demonstrate how every single word is an ethnic vehicle and has a cultural background often linked to a contact with other systems. This thesis is structured into two main segments: a written one and an audiovisual one. Even though the methodology is different,

¹ The notion is broadly inspired by that of ‘semiosphere’, the semiotic sphere where sign processes act and operate. The concept was coined by Lotman in 1985 and is now applied to many fields, including cultural semiotics and linguistics.

the research approach is similar: the two parts are complementary and have been carried out simultaneously.

In the first part of the thesis (Chapters I-V)², various phenomena related to linguistic interferences are examined. The perspective is to put side by side two different typologies of contacts that find their fulfilment in current spoken Italian: the ancient contact between Etruscan and Latin (archaeology of the Italian language) and the contemporary contact between English and Italian (architecture of the Italian language). The roots of this research lie on a simple observation: if in current spoken Italian there are even minimal traces of an ancient and mysterious language (Etruscan), this means that a remote linguistic contact – first with Latin and then with Italian – occurred. This has increased the linguistic richness and diversity of spoken Italian. Hence, Etruscan and Italian have gained the right to be analysed in parallel. Indeed, though time circumstances and human development appear extremely dissociated, both systems have experienced periods of splendour followed by decay and subjugation by other languages (Chapter I).

A simple consideration can be done by analysing two sentences with the same meaning but with different words:

- *questo fine settimana avrò un incontro con una persona di Cortona.*
- *questo weekend avrò un meeting con una persona di Cortona.*³

In the first one there are two Etruscan words ‘persona’ and ‘Cortona’, whereas in the second one two English words appear instead: ‘weekend’ and ‘meeting’. This witnesses that the lexical flux is hardly containable and that nowadays influence of the English language on the Italian language do not have to be considered as dangerous.

In this part, linguistic research cannot be isolated from history, sociology, and archaeology. Each field helps to give a better understanding of the idea that we are trying to develop. Moreover, dealing with language contact, different sectors are investigated because they are interconnected. Chapter III is crucial to understand the different ways in which linguistic interferences take place both in ancient and contemporary times. If Etruscan and nowadays societies are compared, it turns out that dissimilar areas are involved in the process of linguistic interferences. Chapters IV and V give a multifaceted vision of current Italian, focusing on Etruscan linguistic and cultural inheritances, English contamination, and present loans and other forms of interference due to technologies and new media.

² The first part of the thesis is written in Italian, the second one in French.

³ This weekend I will meet a person from Cortona.

The so-called ‘e-taliano’⁴ is characterised by a new medium in the contact process. However, according to several linguists this is not a real interference. Actually, technologies have only changed the way people interact without modifying words, but only adding new terms to the daily dictionary people can use.

The second part is split both written and audio-visual. The research topic is here investigated according to the experts’ opinions. In fact, an experimental didactic documentary has been realized. Its title is “*L’italiano, gli e-taliani*”⁵ and is a real experience of film production, audio-visual translation (into French) and voicing. In effect, this product has been conceived for French students of Italian language and so it is a useful tool to understand the condition of current Italian. Furthermore, French is known to be a conservative language with a purist attitude, which makes it very distant from the Italian attitude of accepting more loans.

Chapter VI introduces the experimental audiovisual product because it analyses the differences between dubbing and subtitling. In particular, a new way of filming is introduced: accessible filmmaking. This means thinking in advance how to make an audio-visual product accessible to people with hearing or visual impairments. The peculiarities of the product have made voice-over the most suitable technique for the final product.

Coming to the documentary, eight experts from different fields (Linguistics, Etruscology, Journalism) have been interviewed for a total amount of 240 minutes of video. During the editing phase only 30 minutes have been selected and divided in 5 parts that compose the documentary. The five parts are based on the following rationale: from a general notion of language contact towards specific conditions of current Italian, with considerations on purism and contamination. The final documentary succeeds in giving different points of view on the topic.

⁴ Linguist Antonelli uses for the first time this expression in his book “*Comunque anche Leopardi diceva le parolacce – l’italiano come non ve l’hanno mai raccontato*” (Mondadori, Milano 2014).

⁵ The expression is a play on words: ‘e-taliani’ is phonetically homophone to ‘italiani’ (plural form of Italian) and morphologically a reference to Internet-related expression such as e-mail, e-commerce, etc.

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