



# What the Dialects Can Teach Us About Italian: The Case of Irpino

Aniello De Santo

Department of Linguistics  
Stony Brook University  
[aniello.desanto@stonybrook.edu](mailto:aniello.desanto@stonybrook.edu)

Center for Italian Studies  
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# Language as a Tapestry



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# Outline

- 1 Why a study of Dialects?
- 2 Raddoppiamento Sintattico
- 3 The Irpino Dialect
- 4 Field Experiments



# Languages of Italy

Table: From Sabatini, F. (1978)

<b>English</b>	<b>Better an egg today than an hen tomorrow</b>
<b>Standard Italian</b>	<b>Meglio un uovo oggi che una gallina domani</b>
Friulan	Mior un of ui che une gialine doman
Piedmontese	A l'e mej 'n euve ancheuj che na galin-a doman
Emilian	L'e mei un ov incu che la galeina edmeng
Tuscan	Megl'un ovo oggi he una gallina domani
Corsican	Medu oggi l'ou che dumane a jadina
Romanesque	Mejjo l'ovo oggi ch'a gallina domani
Campanian	Meglie ll'uove ogge c'a jalline rimane
Salentine	Megghiu i'd osce cca la caddina crai
Calabrian	Mieglu oje un 'uovu ca dumani ca dumani a gaddina
Sicilian	Megghiu oji un 'ovu ca rumani a jaddina
Sardinian	Menzus unu ou oje chi no una pudda crasa

# Languages vs Dialects

## A common misconception

Dialects are a corrupted version of the Standard Language



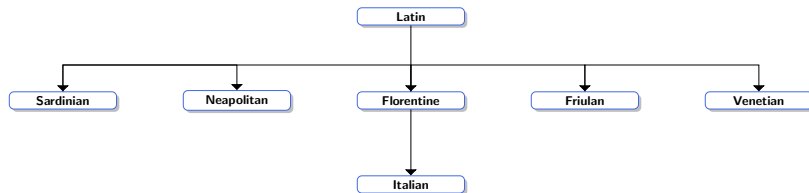
*A language is a dialect with an army and navy*

Max Weinreich (1944)

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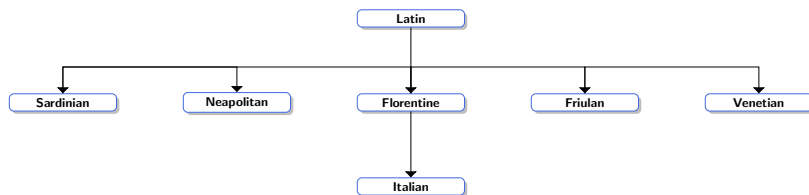
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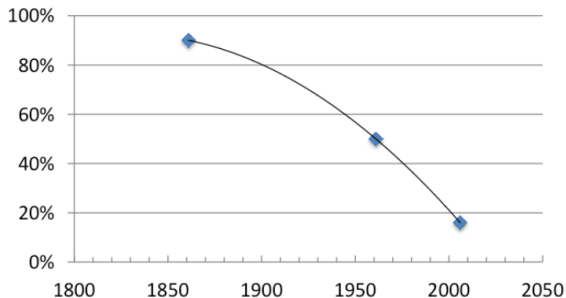


Figure: Speak exclusively or mostly "dialect" at home

- ▶ socio-political pressures
- ▶ migrations
- ▶ media

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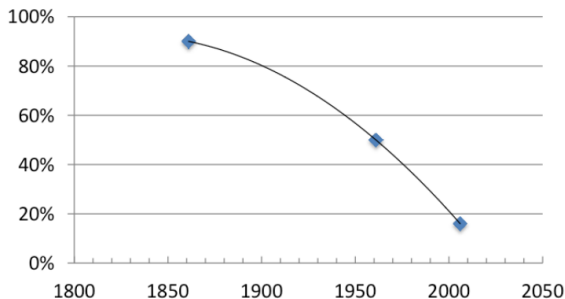


Figure: Speak exclusively or mostly "dialect" at home

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# Death of the Dialects?



# (Re)-discovering Italian Dialects

*Ora che sappiamo parlare italiano possiamo (ri)parlare dialetto.*

**Berruto**

- ▶ New importance of regional identities
- ▶ New spaces for communication:
  - ▶ Social-media
  - ▶ Sms, email, web
  - ▶ Advertisements
  - ▶ Graffiti, Independent Music, TV Shows (e.g. Gomorra)
  - ▶ even literary works (e.g. Andrea Camilleri)

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# Why a study of Dialects?

*Enshrined in a language is the whole of a community's history as well as a large part of its cultural identity. The world is a mosaic of visions. To lose even one piece of this mosaic is a loss for all of us.*

**David Crystal (2000)**

- ▶ Need for preservation and documentation
  - ▶ Italianization
  - ▶ Some dialects are still *more respected* than others
- ▶ Opportunity to study independent linguistic phenomena
- ▶ Understanding Italian Linguistics:
  - ▶ Micro-variations
  - ▶ Separate individual variations from regional ones



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A well-known process of Standard Italian

**Raddoppiamento Sintattico** consists in the lengthening (gemination) of the initial consonant after particular **stress-final words** (monosyllables and polysyllables).

cittá <b>v</b> vecchia	<b>vs</b>	scuola vecchia
perché <b>pp</b> iangi	<b>vs</b>	quando piangi
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## A caveat

**Raddoppiamento Sintattico** is a **well-attested** phenomenon in standard and regional varieties of Italian, but...

- ▶ Not taught in schools → speakers are not aware of it
- ▶ More restricted or absent in northern varieties

However...

### Evidence from orthography

chi sa	→	chissá
[ <i>who knows</i> ]		[ <i>goodness knows</i> ]

cosí detto	→	cosiddetto
[ <i>so said</i> ]		[ <i>so-called</i> ]

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## An Exception: /s/ + [consonant] Clusters

/s/ followed by a consonant seems to avoid Raddoppiamento

cittá **v**vecchia    **vs**    cittá **s**porca

verró **ss**olo    **vs**    verró **s**tanco

é **ff**reddo    **vs**    é **s**regolato

/s/ + [consonant] sequences in general seem to be special

### Article allomorphy

**a.**

il sole    "the sun"  
il sale    "the salt"  
il treno    "the train"

**b.**

lo scolaro    "the schoolboy"  
lo stipendio    "the stipend"  
lo sforzo    "the effort"

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# A considerations on /s/ clusters

We can group the consonants following initial /s/ based on "effort"

- ▶ t, b, p, d, c
- ▶ l, m, n, v

## Open Question

- ▶ Is Raddoppiamento Sintattico influenced by the "type" of consonant following /s/?  
→ e.g. is **stufa** [stove] different from **smalto** [nail polish] ?

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- ▶ Raddoppiamento Sintattico (RS) is a well-known but still not understood phenomenon
- ▶ RS interaction with s + consonant clusters is particularly puzzling
- ▶ Previous studies are confounded by individual and regional variations
- ▶ Dialects can provide important insights into the structure of Italian and its evolution

## Research Agenda

We can use a dialect to understand more about RS in Italian!



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→ **problem: factoring out regional variations**
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→ **a southern italian dialect could provide unexpected insights**
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# The Irpino Dialect





# Irpino and Raddoppiamento Sintattico

## /s/ palatalization

1.  $s \rightarrow \text{ʃ}$  in word initial position before  $\{p, f, k, t\}$
2.  $s \rightarrow \text{ʒ}$  in in word initial position before  $\{b, m, g, l\}$

## Restricted set of *trigger words*

Words with final consonant in the latin etima:

- ▶ *é* "is" (*lat. EST*)
- ▶ *cchiú* "more" (*lat. PLUS*)
- ▶ *tre* "three" (*lat. TRES*)

# Irpino and RS: Examples

## Palatalization

**s**gobbá → **ʒ**gobbá    "to work hard"

**s**carole → **ʃ**karole    "endive"



## Raddoppiamento

tre **ss**ordi    "three coins"

é **dd**uro    "(it) is hard"

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but not ...

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# Setting up the experiments

We want to test the following hypotheses:

- 1 is RS really affected by the kind of consonant following /s/?
- 2 is the set of *trigger words* actually restricted in Irpino?

## Test [1]

Triggers followed by words starting with:

- ▶ /s / + {t,b,p,d,c}
- ▶ /s/ + {l,m,n,v}

## Test [2]

Words starting in single consonant preceded by:

- ▶ Italian RS triggers (e.g. all stressed monosyllable)
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# Choosing the right task

## Problems

- ▶ Avoid *priming effects* due to orthography
- ▶ Avoid *priming effects* due to italian pronunciation
- ▶ Force the exact sequence: *trigger word* + *target word*

## Four different Tasks

- ▶ Image description
- ▶ Italian to Dialect translation
- ▶ Reading
- ▶ Non existent words

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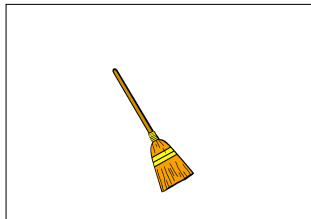
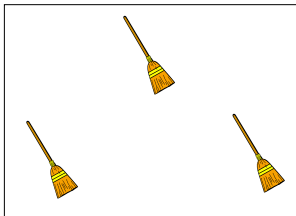
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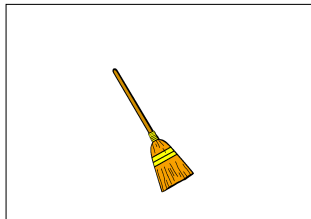
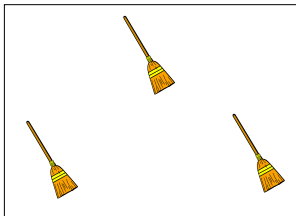


# Images



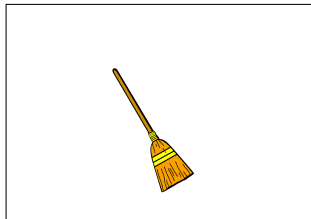
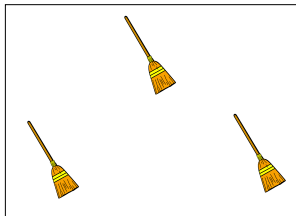
Expected pronunciation

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Expected pronunciation

tre ʃʃkope

na ʃkopa

# Reading

è stanco

fu stanco

Expected pronunciation

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è stanco

fu stanco

Expected pronunciation

é ʃtanco

fu ʃtanco

# Translation

un forno

piú forni

una lista

tre liste

la scarola

tre scarole

# Translation

Expected

un forno → nu f<sup>u</sup>urno

una lista → na l<sup>i</sup>ista

la scarola → a f<sup>u</sup>karola

Expected

piú forni → kiú ffurni

tre liste → tre lliste

tre scarole → tre f<sup>u</sup>ffkarole

# Nonce

Non existent words respecting Irpino natural sounds



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**chiù smurfi**

**sette smurfi**

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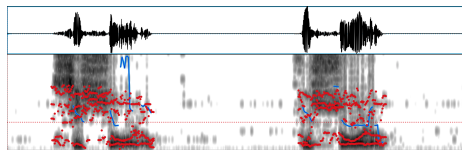
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# Data Evaluation I



# Data Evaluation II

- ▶ /s/ + {t,b,p,d,c} **vs** /s/ + {l,m,n,v}
  - ▶ Italian Triggers **vs** Reduced set
  - ▶ fillers
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- ▶ around 30 min of recording per speakers
  - ▶ some speakers had to be discarded due to *hyper-articulation* or noise
  - ▶ fluency on a *spectrum*:
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Raddoppiamento and /s/ + [consonant] sequences:

	+RS	-RS
/s/ + {t,b,p,d,c}		✓
/s/ + {l,m,n,v}		✓

Language documentation:

- ▶ Set of trigger words is more restricted than what reported
- ▶ Variation in palatalization
- ▶ Fluency depending on age, upbringing, exact position of hometown
- ▶ Interestingly, no variation due to gender

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- ▶ Influence of other phenomena (e.g. palatalization)
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- ▶ Continue the documentation effort.  
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# Aknowledgments

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Grazie!



# Production

1. Take an Italian word and translate:

$\text{pagare} \rightarrow \text{pagá}$  "to pay"

- 2 . "Negate" the translation (create a non existent work):

$\text{pagá} \rightarrow \text{ʃpagá}$

3. Add a *trigger* word:

$\text{ʃpagá} \rightarrow \text{pe' ʃʃpagá}$

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